

# WHITNEY

Whitney Museum  
of American Art  
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# PRESS RELEASE



Installation view of *The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, June 28, 2019- ). From left to right: Joan Mitchell, *Hemlock*, 1956; Edward Ruscha, *Large Trademark with Eight Spotlights*, 1962; Jay DeFeo, *The Rose*, 1958-1966. Photograph by Ron Amstutz

## WHITNEY MUSEUM ANNOUNCES PLANS TO REOPEN THIS SEPTEMBER

**New York, NY, August 14, 2020**—Following its temporary closure on March 13, 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Whitney Museum of American Art today announced its plans to reopen to the public on September 3, 2020. Prioritizing the health and safety of its visitors and staff, the Museum will operate at no more than twenty-five percent of its total capacity to ensure proper physical distancing.

The Museum also announced that pay-what-you-wish admission will be offered to all through September 28, 2020. Due to limited capacity and to facilitate contactless entry into the Museum, all visitors will need to reserve timed-entry tickets in advance on [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).

“Cultural institutions like the Whitney are an essential part of the fabric of New York and are integral to its successful and safe reopening,” said Adam D. Weinberg, Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum. “Our priority is the health and safety of our staff and visitors. Over the past few months, our internal team has carefully developed safety protocols with guidance from health experts and collaboratively working with peer institutions across the city through the NYC Museums Reopening Task Force. We look forward to welcoming visitors back to the Museum with confidence that they can safely engage with our exhibitions and collection. I am especially pleased that we will be able to offer pay-what-you-wish admission during the month of September, making the Museum more accessible to New Yorkers.”

Enhanced sanitizing and cleaning protocols, state-of-the-art air filtration systems, one-way directional signage, and ground markings are among the new safety measures that have been implemented throughout the building. In accordance with city and state guidelines, all staff, volunteers, and visitors will be required to wear face coverings and practice physical distancing while in the Museum.

The Whitney also announced today the extension of critically acclaimed exhibitions. *Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945* and *Cauleen Smith: Mutualities* have been extended through January 31, 2021. *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist*, which originally opened on March 13 when the Museum’s temporary closure began, has been extended to November 1, 2020. The Museum’s billboard project at 95 Horatio

featuring Jill Mulleady's *We With Time into a Coil of Fright* has been extended through January 2021. The collection installations, *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019* and *The Whitney's Collection: Selections From 1900 to 1965* will also welcome visitors back to the Museum.

Scott Rothkopf, Senior Deputy Director and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator said, "When the Whitney closed in March, we were in the midst of some of our most popular and critically acclaimed exhibitions ever. I'm thrilled that audiences will have another chance to connect with *Vida Americana*. The themes of social, racial, and economic justice that the artists in this exhibition were addressing in their art nearly a century ago remain relevant today. Cauleen Smith's videos also feel especially timely in their beautiful meditations on Black feminist and spiritual histories, while resonating deeply with Agnes Pelton's transcendent abstractions. We can't wait to welcome visitors back to these shows and to our collection, and we remain as committed as always to supporting artists and providing a dynamic platform for their work and ideas."

David Hammons's *Day's End*, a new public art project commissioned by the Whitney, is scheduled to be completed in late fall 2020 in Hudson River Park directly across from the Museum. A related exhibition, *Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986*, will debut on September 3, and remain on view through October 25. The exhibition considers the artwork that inspired Hammons's sculpture, Gordon Matta-Clark's *Day's End* (1975), as well as artworks from the permanent collection that explore downtown New York as site, history, and memory. In 1975, Matta-Clark cut five openings into the original Pier 52 shed on Gansevoort Peninsula. Hammons's artwork, developed in collaboration with the Hudson River Park Trust, will be an open structure that precisely follows the outline, dimensions, and location of the original Pier 52 site.

"We are honored to be realizing David Hammons's public art installation *Day's End* this fall following the Museum's reopening. Hammons imagined this public artwork before the current pandemic crisis but its message is even more resonant today. It's an ode to memory, loss and yearning. The open form alludes to the history of the site, asks us to consider the passage of time, and celebrates New York's creativity and resilience. It represents a commitment to community, open dialogue, and civic good," said Weinberg.

To protect the health and well-being of staff and visitors, the Museum has made the difficult decision to cancel all on-site public and education programs, including guided tours and school visits, for the rest of 2020. The Whitney will continue to engage with audiences online via [whitney.org](http://whitney.org) and its social media channels. #WhitneyFromHome, the Museum's expanded digital experience, provides an intimate lens into stories behind the Whitney's art and artists and features programs such as Artmaking From Home and Art History From Home. Artport, the Whitney Museum's portal to Internet art, recently debuted American Artist's online project *Looted*, which temporarily replaces all of the images on [whitney.org](http://whitney.org) with textures of wood, effectively boarding up the Museum's website, while the backgrounds of the web pages change to black and the text on them fades.

On reopening, the Whitney will operate with new hours on Mondays, and Thursdays through Sundays. Member Days will take place from August 27–September 1 in advance of the public opening on September 3. Member-only hours will also be offered on Monday and Thursday evenings and weekend mornings throughout the initial reopening phase. For additional details about our visitor guidelines and new health and safety protocols, please see our [Reopening Fact Sheet](#).

For more information about the Museum's reopening plans or to reserve timed-entry tickets, please visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).

## **ABOUT THE WHITNEY**

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875-1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an ardent and pioneering supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which, from its earliest days, has championed the most innovative art of the United States. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and

influential in American art today. 2020 marks the ninetieth anniversary of the Museum's founding, and five years since the opening of the Whitney's downtown building on Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking District.

#### **HOURS AND ADMISSION**

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Beginning September 3, 2020, public hours are: Monday and Thursday: 11:30 am-6 pm; Friday: 1:30-9 pm; Saturday and Sunday: 1-6 pm. Member-only hours are: Monday and Thursday: 6-7 pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10:30 am-1 pm. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday. Admission is pay-what-you-wish through September 28, 2020. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Reserve timed-entry tickets in advance at [whitney.org](http://whitney.org). For more information on reopening visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org). For general information please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).

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## REOPENING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

All dates subject to change.

The following exhibitions have been extended:

- **Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist**, extended through November 1, 2020
- **Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945**, extended through January 31, 2021
- **Cauleen Smith: Mutualities**, extended through January 31, 2021
- **Jill Mulleady: We Wither Time into a Coil of Fright**, extended through January 2021
- **Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019**, extended through February 2022
- **The Whitney's Collection: Selections From 1900 to 1965**, extended through May 2022

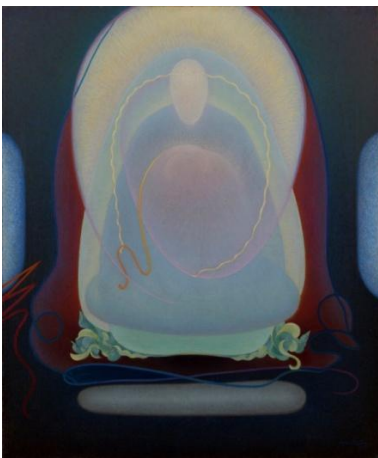
Dates for the following exhibitions have been confirmed:

- **American Artist: Looted**, July 21–October 2020
- **Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986**, September 3–October 25, 2020
- **David Hammons's Day's End**, Opens late fall 2020

## EXHIBITION DETAILS

### Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist

Through November 1, 2020



Agnes Pelton (1881–1961), *Untitled*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 36 3/16 × 24 3/16 in. (91.9 × 61.4 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Modern Painting and Sculpture Committee 96.175

Agnes Pelton (1881–1961) was a visionary symbolist who depicted the spiritual reality she experienced in moments of meditative stillness. Art for her was a discipline through which she gave form to her vision of a higher consciousness within the universe. Using an abstract vocabulary of curvilinear, biomorphic forms and delicate, shimmering veils of light, she portrayed her awareness of a world that lay behind physical appearances—a world of benevolent, disembodied energies animating and protecting life. Pelton's isolation from the mainstream art world meant that her paintings were relatively unknown during her lifetime and in the decades thereafter. This exhibition of approximately forty-five works, ranging from 1917 to 1960, forefronts a little-known artist whose luminous, abstract images of transcendence are only now being fully recognized.

*Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist* is organized by the Phoenix Art Museum, and curated by Gilbert Vicario, The Selig Family Chief Curator. The installation at the Whitney Museum is overseen by Barbara Haskell, curator, with Sarah Humphreville, senior curatorial assistant.

## Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945

Through January 31, 2021



Diego Rivera (1886–1957), *The Uprising*, 1931. Fresco on reinforced cement in a galvanized-steel framework, 74 × 94 1/8 in. (188 × 239 cm). Collection of Marcos and Vicky Micha Levy © 2020 Banco de México–Rivera–Kahlo/ARS. Reproduction authorized by El Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2020.

The cultural renaissance that emerged in Mexico in 1920 at the end of that country’s revolution dramatically changed art not just in Mexico but also in the United States. With approximately 200 works by sixty American and Mexican artists, *Vida Americana* reorients art history, acknowledging the wide-ranging and profound influence of Mexico’s three leading muralists—José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaró Siqueiros, and Diego Rivera—on the style, subject matter, and ideology of art in the United States made between 1925 and 1945. By presenting the art of the Mexican muralists alongside that of their American contemporaries, the exhibition reveals the seismic impact of Mexican art, particularly on those looking for inspiration and models beyond European modernism and the School of Paris.

Works by both well-known and underrecognized American artists are exhibited, including Thomas Hart Benton, Elizabeth Catlett, Aaron Douglas, Marion Greenwood, Philip Guston, Eitarō Ishigaki, Jacob Lawrence, Isamu Noguchi, Jackson Pollock, Ben Shahn, Thelma Johnson Streat, Charles White, and Hale Woodruff. In addition to Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros, other key Mexican artists in the exhibition include Miguel Covarrubias, María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, Mardonio Magaña, Alfredo Ramos Martínez, and Rufino Tamayo.

Organized by Barbara Haskell, curator, with Marcela Guerrero, assistant curator; Sarah Humphreville, senior curatorial assistant; and Alana Hernandez, former curatorial project assistant.

## Cauleen Smith: Mutualities

Through January 31, 2021



Cauleen Smith (b. 1967), still from *Sojourner*, 2018. Video, color, sound, 22:41 min. Courtesy of the artist, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, and Kate Werble Gallery, New York.

This exhibition is the first solo New York presentation of multi-disciplinary artist Cauleen Smith (b. 1967), whose work, which was featured in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, draws on elements of poetry, science fiction, and non-Western cosmologies to reflect on Afro-diasporic histories and new models of self-reliance and agency. The exhibition features two recent films, newly acquired for the Whitney’s collection, in an installation that reimagines

the future as a utopian space of care, acceptance, and mutuality. In *Sojourner*, women carry six banners bearing words by the jazz composer and spiritual leader Alice Coltrane, whose music forms the soundtrack for both films. The women walk in procession through locations including Noah Purifoy's Outdoor Art Museum in Joshua Tree. *Pilgrim* traces the artist's pilgrimage to Coltrane's ashram, Watts Towers in Los Angeles, and Rebecca Cox Jackson's Shaker communities in Philadelphia and Watervliet. In both films, Smith uses the camera and light as improvisational instruments to reveal the power of invention and generosity as resources to transform and rebuild.

Concurrent with *Cauleen Smith: Mutualities*, a group of Smith's banners will be newly installed in the Museum's lobby. Originally featured in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, the works are now in the Whitney's collection.

*Cauleen Smith: Mutualities* is organized by Chrissie Iles, Anne & Joel Ehrenkrantz Curator, with Clémence White, senior curatorial assistant.

### **Jill Mulleady: We Wither Time into a Coil of Fright**

Through January 2021



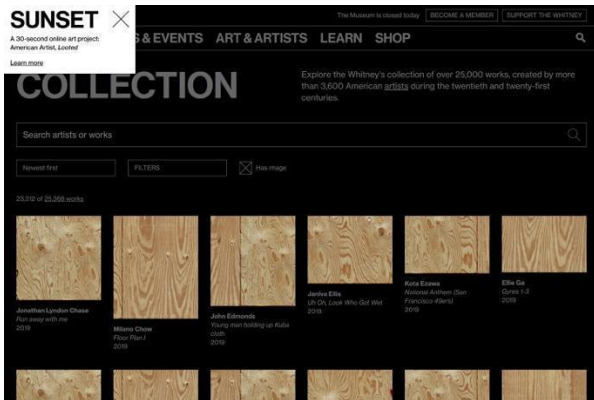
Jill Mulleady (b. 1980), *We Wither Time into a Coil of Fright*, 2019. Oil on linen, two panels, left panel: 66 1/8 x 35 3/8 in. (168 x 90 cm); right panel: 66 1/8 x 78 3/4 in. (168 x 200 cm), reproduced as vinyl print on billboard. Collection of the artist

Based in Los Angeles, Jill Mulleady (b. 1980) makes figurative, narrative paintings often with fantastical, surreal elements. Part of a series of public art installations, organized by the Whitney in partnership with TF Cornerstone and High Line Art, Mulleady's work is installed on the façade of 95 Horatio Street, across the street from the Whitney and the High Line on the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Street. For Mulleady, ideas and imagery drawn from both contemporary life and the history of painting are equally significant influences that she adeptly fuses within her work. For a recent cycle of paintings, Mulleady imaginatively combined her interest in the work of early twentieth-century painter Edvard Munch, using his paintings as a creative springboard for her surreal world-making, ultimately suggesting the possibility of the coexistence of multiple temporalities in a single composition. Combining this history with contemporary references to violence and our ongoing existential struggle, Mulleady acknowledges our collective anxiety about violence in the world and what this means for our sense of personal vulnerability.

*Jill Mulleady: We Wither Time into a Coil of Fright* is organized by Jane Panetta, Curator and Director of the Collection.

### **artport | American Artist: Looted**

July 21–October, 2020



Screenshot of *Looted* by American Artist for the Sunrise/Sunset series on artport.

*Looted* temporarily replaces all of the images on whitney.org with textures of wood while the backgrounds of pages change to black and the text on them fades. Created by American Artist (b. 1989), the artwork symbolically and literally boards up the Museum and its website in an act of both redaction and refusal. Looting, defined as “steal(ing) goods from (a place), typically during a war or riot,” has again become a flashpoint for discussion. Though it is crucial not to conflate looting with protest, some looting did occur in the shadow of the important and necessary recent protests in U.S. cities denouncing racial injustice and police brutality. While the property damage and theft was almost universally denounced, these acts of vandalism were also viewed by some as expressions of long-simmering frustrations and demonstrations against symbols seen as perpetuating state violence, systemic racism, and capitalist exploitation. American Artist extends the physicality of this tension between protest and looting to the online space. At a time when many storefronts and museums in New York City and around the U.S.—including the Whitney Museum—have (or had) been temporarily boarded, *Looted* underscores that no space can remain unaffected by demands for racial injustice. American Artist fundamentally asks how power, class, race, and property structure access to art.

*Looted* is commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art for its artport website and organized by Christiane Paul, adjunct curator of digital art.

### Around Day’s End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986

September 3–October 25, 2020



Gordon Matta Clark (b. 1943–1978), *Days End Pier 52.1* (Documentation of the action “Day’s End” made in 1975 in New York, United States), 1975, printed 1977. Gelatin silver print, Sheet: 8 × 10 in. (20.3 × 25.4 cm) Image: 7 9/16 × 9 7/16 in. (19.2 × 24 cm). Gift of Harold Berg 2017.132. Insert credit. © Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

On the occasion of David Hammons’s *Day’s End*, a major public artwork located in Hudson River Park to be completed in fall 2020, the Whitney will present a selection of works from the Museum’s collection that explore downtown New York as site, history, and memory. Central to this presentation is Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Day’s End*, the innovative project that inspired Hammons’s sculpture. In 1975, Matta-Clark cut several massive openings into the dilapidated building that existed on Pier 52 where Gansevoort Street meets the Hudson River. He described it as a “temple to sun and water.”

Matta-Clark's attempt to extract beauty and create poetic experiences in unlikely places exemplifies the aims of many artists working at the same time. The exhibition will include works by approximately fifteen artists who were active in overlapping downtown New York scenes in the 1970s and early 1980s. Their works intervene in the urban fabric of the city in various ways: Matta-Clark and Joan Jonas present the city itself as a character, pointing to New York as a place that embodies both presence and invisibility. For other artists, like Alvin Baltrop and Jimmy Wright, the periphery of the city became synonymous for historically marginalized populations; their depictions of the West Side piers and Meatpacking district reveal how queer life found community and intimacy in forgotten, and reclaimed, corners. And Martin Wong and others made visceral works that engage with the ways particular downtown neighborhoods, like the Bowery and Lower East Side, were impacted by deteriorating economic conditions. For these artists, as in David Hammons's new *Day's End*, the city acts as material, inspiration, specter, and provocation.

This exhibition is organized by Laura Phipps, assistant curator, with Christie Mitchell, senior curatorial assistant.

**Public Art Project: David Hammons: Day's End**

Opens late Fall 2020



Rendering of the project, *Day's End*. Courtesy Guy Nordenson and Associates

*Day's End*, a public art project by the immensely influential New York-based artist David Hammons (b. 1943), derives its inspiration and name from Gordon Matta-Clark's 1975 artwork in which he cut five openings into the original Pier 52 shed. Developed in collaboration with the Hudson River Park Trust, Hammons's artwork will be an open structure that follows the precise outline, dimensions, and location of the original shed—a ghost version of the original building. Like Matta-Clark's work, it will offer an extraordinary place to experience the waterfront and view the sunset. Affixed to the shore on the south edge of Gansevoort Peninsula, the structure will extend over the water, employing the thinnest possible support system. It will appear evanescent and ethereal, seeming to shimmer and almost disappear, changing with the light of day and atmospheric conditions. Hammons's *Day's End* also alludes to the history of New York's waterfront—from the heyday of its shipping industry to the reclaimed piers that became a gathering place for the gay community. Open to everyone, the artwork will allow easy access to the river's edge.



## Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019

Through February 2022



Liza Lou (b. 1969), *Kitchen*, 1991-96. Beads, plaster, wood and found objects, 96 × 132 × 168 in. (243.8 × 335.3 × 426.7 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Peter Norton 2008.339a-x. © Liza Lou. Photograph by Tom Powel, courtesy the artist

*Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019* foregrounds how visual artists have explored the materials, methods, and strategies of craft, beginning with works made after World War II when many artists embraced fiber arts and ceramics to challenge the dominance of traditional painting and sculpture. Over the next seven decades, artists have continued to explore techniques such as weaving, sewing, and pottery, and experimented with textiles, thread, clay, and beads, among other mediums. These works speak to artists' interests in domesticity, hobbyist materials, the decorative, vernacular American traditions, "women's work," and feminist and queer aesthetics. By employing marginalized modes of artistic production, they challenge the power structures that determine artistic value.

Drawn primarily from the Whitney's collection, the exhibition will encompass over eighty works by more than sixty artists, including Ruth Asawa, Eva Hesse, Mike Kelley, Liza Lou, Howardena Pindell, Robert Rauschenberg, Elaine Reichek, and Lenore Tawney, as well as featuring recent acquisitions by Shan Goshorn, Kahlil Robert Irving, Simone Leigh, Jordan Nassar, and Erin Jane Nelson.

This exhibition is organized by Jennie Goldstein, assistant curator, and Elisabeth Sherman, assistant curator, with Ambika Trasi, curatorial assistant.

## The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965

Through May 2022



Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), *Summer Days*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 36 1/8 × 30 1/8 in. (91.8 × 76.5 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Calvin Klein 94.171. © 2020 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

This exhibition, drawn entirely from the Whitney's collection, weaves its way through American art history by looking at formative movements, revisited and reimagined genres, and the achievements of single artists. The

Whitney Museum of American Art was established in 1930 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, an artist and benefactor, to advocate on behalf of living American artists. The collection Whitney assembled with the Museum's first director, Juliana Force, was art-historically rigorous and vibrantly idiosyncratic. Taking its cue from this history, the presentation begins with selections from the Museum's founding collection, and then examines—largely chronologically—art historical movements including Precisionism, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop; the genres of landscape and fantasy; and the singular contributions of, among others, Georgia O'Keeffe and Jacob Lawrence. In addition to galleries dedicated to icons of the collection, including Alexander Calder's *Circus* and Edward Hopper, the exhibition also features more recent acquisitions, including Norman Lewis's *American Totem* (1960). The exhibition looks at how singular artistic acts, placed in dialogue with others, help us to see the varieties of the American experience, pasts that need further study, and futures that are in the process of being made.

This exhibition is organized by David Breslin, DeMartini Family Curator and Director of Curatorial Initiatives, with Margaret Kross, senior curatorial assistant, and Roxanne Smith, curatorial assistant.

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