

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE

ROSE B. SIMPSON: COUNTERCULTURE OPENS AT THE WHITNEY ON JUNE 3



New York, NY, June 2, 2023 — *Rose B. Simpson: Counterculture* opens on the fifth-floor terrace of the Whitney Museum of American Art on Saturday, June 3. Simpson is a multidisciplinary artist who works across ceramic, metal, printmaking, painting, and performance, highlighting connections between our contemporary lives and the landscapes we inhabit. The exhibition at the Whitney will showcase five large-scale sculptural figures—including three works recently acquired for the Whitney’s collection—that offer a sage reminder of the ancestral past and natural wonder of the land we occupy.

“My goal with this presentation at the Whitney is to remind us that we are not independent,” says Simpson. “The inanimate are watching, and we are responsible not only to the present but to the ancestral spirits that inhabit a particular place.”

Simpson titled both the exhibition and the individual works *Counterculture* as a reference to the importance of communities that live separately from dominant cultures but still have significant cultural impact. The watchful figures serve as stand-ins for those that colonization has aimed to

silence, including the Lenape people, who inhabited much of present-day Manhattan and the surrounding area until they were forcibly displaced in the seventeenth century. The sculptures are adorned with hand-made jewelry with clay taken from the earth as a nod to the history of place and the natural world. Looking out over the city and the Hudson River, the five figures suggest an awareness of the world beyond our present reality.

In fall 2023, the terrace installation will be accompanied by a billboard on Gansevoort Street, across from the museum's entrance. In a collaboration between Simpson and the filmmaker Razelle Benally, the photographic image sets a figure against the New Mexico landscape, notably wearing a necklace similar to the ones worn by the figures on the terrace. Presenting the sculptures together with the billboard points to Simpson's ongoing commitment to working across media while also underscoring her insistent consideration of our relationships to the histories of particular and distinctive locations.

"Simpson is a major artist of her generation that thinks deeply about the relationship between sculpture and place, and it feels extremely meaningful to be presenting her monumental works in this dynamic outdoor location at the Whitney," says Jane Panetta, Nancy and Fred Poses, Curator and Director of the Collection at the Whitney Museum.

Presented in two phases, *Rose B. Simpson: Counterculture* will run from June 3 to August 13 and then close briefly before reopening from October 4 to January 21, 2024, with the addition of a billboard installation across from the Museum's entrance on Gansevoort Street. The works on view at the Whitney were previously part of an installation organized by the Trustees of Reservations in Williamstown, MA.

Rose B. Simpson: Counterculture is organized by Jane Panetta, Nancy and Fred Poses, Curator and Director of the Collection, with Roxanne Smith, Senior Curatorial Assistant.

[More information about Simpson and the exhibition can be found on the museum's website.](#)

Whitney Museum Land Acknowledgement

The Whitney is located in Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape. The name Manhattan comes from their word Mannahatta, meaning "island of many hills." The Museum's current site is close to land that was a Lenape fishing and planting site called Sapponckanikan ("tobacco field"). The Whitney acknowledges the displacement of this region's original inhabitants and the Lenape diaspora that exists today.

As a museum of American art in a city with vital and diverse communities of Indigenous people, the Whitney recognizes the historical exclusion of Indigenous artists from its collection and program. The Museum is committed to addressing these erasures and honoring the perspectives of Indigenous artists and communities as we work for a more equitable future. To read more about the Museum's Land Acknowledgement, [visit the Museum's website.](#)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rose B. Simpson (b. 1983, lives and works in Santa Clara Pueblo, NM) is a mixed-media artist whose work explores the impact, both emotional and existential, of living in the postmodern and postcolonial world. Growing up in a multigenerational, matrilineal lineage of artists working with clay, her practice is informed by indigenous tradition.

Androgynous clay figures adorned with found and manufactured objects are often at the base of Simpson's practice. The pieces are ruminations on family, gender, marginality, as well as the effects these aspects have on the understanding of self. While the choice to work in clay is a link to familial relationships, the inherited nature of the material also adds to the concepts being presented. Just as individuals are shaped by memory and experience, objects made of clay become a record of the process that shaped them. The resulting pieces are both powerful and vulnerable and offer intimate records of self-exploration.

Simpson has a BFA from the Institute of American Indian Art, an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design, and an MA in Creative Writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts. She has had recent solo exhibitions at The Fabric Workshop and Museum (Philadelphia, PA), ICA Boston (Boston, MA), the Wheelwright Museum (Santa Fe, NM), the Nevada Art Museum (Reno, NV), and SCAD Museum of Art (Savannah, GA). Museum collections include the Denver Art Museum, ICA Boston, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Nevada Art Museum, Pomona College Museum of Art, Portland Art Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

PRESS CONTACT

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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 early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for ninety years. 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, 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.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Public hours are: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:30 am–6 pm; Friday, 10:30 am–10 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am–6 pm. Closed Tuesday. Visitors eighteen years and under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. COVID-19 vaccination and face coverings are not required but strongly recommended. We encourage all visitors to wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth throughout their visit.

Image caption: Rose B. Simpson, *Counterculture*, 2022, at Field Farm, Williamstown, MA. Twelve dyed-concrete and steel sculptures with ceramic and cable adornments. Each sculpture: 128 x 24 x 11 inches. Commissioned by Art & the Landscape, a program of The Trustees, Massachusetts. Courtesy the artist, Jessica Silverman, San Francisco, and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. © Rose B. Simpson. Photograph by Stephanie Zollshan

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