

# WHITNEY

Whitney Museum  
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# PRESS RELEASE

## WHITNEY MUSEUM REIMAGINES COLLECTION IN NEW EXHIBITION EXPLORING INHERITANCE



**New York, NY, June 16, 2023** — Beginning Wednesday, June 28, the Whitney Museum of American Art presents *Inheritance*, an exhibition of nearly sixty artworks by forty-three leading artists that traces the profound impact of legacy across familial, historical, and aesthetic lines. Featuring primarily new acquisitions and rarely-seen works from the collection, this diverse array of paintings, sculptures, videos, photographs, drawings, and major time-based media installations from the last five decades asks us to consider what has been passed on and how it may shift, change, or live again.

*Inheritance* is organized by Rujeko Hockley, Arnhold Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and is on view in the Museum's sixth-floor galleries from June 28, 2023, through February 2024.

Drawing inspiration from Ephraim Asili's 2020 film of the same title, *Inheritance* takes a layered approach to storytelling by interweaving narrative with documentary and personal experiences with historical and generational events. The exhibition considers multiple meanings of inheritance, whether celebratory or painful, from one era, person, or idea to the next. A group of works examining the cycle from birth to death opens the exhibition, while other galleries take up different kinds of lineages, such as the ways artists borrow from and remake art history or unspool legacies of racialized violence and their recurrences.

"The poet Rio Cortez speaks of being 'framed by our future knowing'—even as we sit at this moment in time, we slide backward and forward, thinking not only of our foremothers but also of descendants we will never know," said Rujeko Hockley, Arnhold Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art. "*Inheritance* was inspired by questioning how we arrived at our current moment, as individuals and as a society, and where we might be going."

"With the inclusion of so many new acquisitions and works rarely on view at the Museum, *Inheritance* offers a unique opportunity to frame the Whitney's collection and to introduce new artists and works of art while making a powerful argument about the relationship between the past and present through this idea of inheritance," said Jane Panetta, the Whitney's Nancy and Fred Poses Curator and Director of the Collection.

Artists featured in this exhibition include Ephraim Asili, Sadie Barnette, Kevin Beasley, Diedrick Brackens, Beverly Buchanan, Widline Cadet, Andrea Carlson, Jonathan Lyndon Chase, Ralston Crawford, Mary Beth Edelson, John Edmonds, Kevin Jerome Everson, Chitra Ganesh, Todd Gray, Wade Guyton, David Hartt, Emily Jacir, Wakeah Jhane, Mary Kelly, Deana Lawson, An-My Lê, Maggie Lee, Sherrie Levine, Dindga McCannon, Ana Mendieta, Thaddeus Mosley, Lorraine O'Grady, Kambui Olujimi, John Outterbridge, Pat Phillips, Faith Ringgold, Sophie Rivera, Carissa Rodriguez, Cameron Rowland, Sturtevant, Hank Willis Thomas, Clarissa Tossin, WangShui, Kara Walker, Joan Wallace, Carrie Mae Weems, and Bruce and Norman Yonemoto.



## **Exhibition Overview — *Inheritance***

Organized thematically, *Inheritance* begins with an interdisciplinary selection of artworks exploring inheritance in its most commonly understood forms—the intrafamilial and the intergenerational. Works on view include Sadie Barnette’s installation *Family Tree II* (2022), Mary Kelly’s film *Antepartum* (1973), and photographs from Sophie Rivera’s *Double Exposure* series (1995), among others. In the installation *Rivers, First Draft* (1982, printed 2015), Lorraine O’Grady examines her experience growing up in New England as a child of Caribbean immigrants and her development as an artist.

As inheritors of past generations of makers, several featured artists look to influential art historical and political movements of the twentieth century, updating related artworks through shifts in medium, scale, and intent. John Edmonds’s photograph *Tête d’Homme* (2018) and Hank Willis Thomas’s sculpture *Strike* (2018) directly reference specific historical works, while Joan Wallace’s *Bob’s Your Uncle* (1991), on view at the Whitney for the first time, critiques the legacy of Minimalism.

In addition to intrafamilial and art historical inheritances, the exhibition considers some of the painful and difficult legacies that have shaped our society, specifically colonialism and the enslavement of Africans. In the five-channel video installation *...calling to me from the angry surface of some grey and threatening sea, I was transported* (2007), Kara Walker employs paper silhouettes, archival photographs, and other imagery to examine the history and long aftermath of slavery in the United States. Additional works include Kevin Beasley’s slab sculpture *The Road* (2019), An-My Lê’s photograph *Monument, General P.G.T. Beauregard, New Orleans, Louisiana* (2016), and Faith Ringgold’s lithograph *United States of Attica* (1971), to name a few.

Focusing primarily on the Global South and Indigenous communities around the world, the exhibition’s final section explores the inheritance of ancestral memory across generations, looking at some of the origins of culture and belief through geography, history, and ideology. Whether examining the retention of African iconographies and artistic traditions in diasporic communities, goddess archetypes, or Indigenous creation myths and mythological figures from the Americas, artists such as John Outterbridge, Ana Mendieta, and Andrea Carlson consider their continued presence and impact on the contemporary world.

Together, the artists and artworks in *Inheritance* tell a story of a resilient and shared human past, reverberating into the present and informing the future.

### **Free Public Programs**

A series of free virtual and in-person programs are offered in conjunction with *Inheritance*. More information about these programs and how to register will be available on the Museum’s [website](#) as details are confirmed.

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## PRESS CONTACT

For press materials and image requests, please visit our press site at [whitney.org/press](https://whitney.org/press) or 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.

### **Whitney Museum Land Acknowledgment**

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 Acknowledgment, [visit the Museum’s website](#).

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## 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 captions:

Sophie Rivera, *I am U*, 1995. Gelatin silver print, 38 5/8 × 38 9/16 in. (98.1 × 97.9 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist 2019.390. © Estate of Dr. Martin Hurwitz

Sadie Barnette, *Family Tree II*, 2022. Framed drawings on paper with spray paint, archival pigment print photographs, and collages with overlaid rhinestones totaling 34 works, and found couch with holographic vinyl, 195 × 204 × 34 in. (495.3 × 518.2 × 86.4 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Director's Discretionary Fund, Bill Gautreaux, the Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family Collection, and the Jackson Family Trust. © Sadie Barnette, courtesy of the artist and McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, San Francisco. Photograph by Henrik Kam

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