

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM APPOINTS MEG ONLI CURATOR-AT-LARGE AND PROMOTES CURATOR LAURA PHIPPS



New York, NY, June 20, 2023 — The Whitney Museum of American Art has appointed writer and curator Meg Onli to the position of Curator-at-Large. In this role, Onli will curate exhibitions, propose acquisitions, act as an ambassador and advisor on special projects, and contribute to the intellectual life and culture of the Whitney, where she is currently co-curator of the 2024 Whitney Biennial with Chrissie Iles, the Museum’s Anne and Joel Ehrenkrantz Curator.

The Museum is also pleased to announce that Onli will co-curate its upcoming Roy Lichtenstein exhibition with artist Alex Da Corte and the incoming Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum, Scott Rothkopf. Opening in 2026, the Whitney’s show will be the first Lichtenstein retrospective in New York in more than thirty years, the city in which the artist long lived and worked.

“This is truly a dream job,” said Onli. “I have always admired the Whitney’s long-standing history of field-defining exhibitions and support for emergent artist practices. I am very excited to be part of the life of the Whitney, and to collaborate and explore with the incredible team here. I am

also so appreciative of the flexibility of the role, which affords me the opportunity to focus on the creative and bring new ideas and perspectives to the Museum. It is humbling to represent my hometown of Los Angeles, and its leading art scene. I look forward to being an ambassador and building bridges between emerging and overlooked voices in the art world and the Whitney.”

“Meg is that rare innovative thinker who glimpses the future while respecting the past,” said Scott Rothkopf, Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator and incoming Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum. “I’ve already been dazzled by Meg’s thinking on the Biennial and know she has even more to contribute as the Whitney’s first Curator-at-Large in over a decade. As I prepare to become Director, I’m thrilled that Meg will officially join our outstanding curatorial team alongside newly appointed Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography, Drew Sawyer.”

Onli, an important voice in the art world and active participant in the Los Angeles art scene, was previously co-director and curator of the Underground Museum. Before that, she was the Andrea B. Laporte Associate Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania (ICA Philadelphia), where she curated exhibitions *Colored People Time: Mundane Features, Quotidian Pasts, Banal Presents, Jessica Vaughn: Our Primary Focus Is To Be Successful*, and co-curated the retrospective *Ulysses Jenkins: Without Your Interpretation*.

Onli is the recipient of a 2012 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant from Creative Capital for the Black Visual Archive, a project she founded in 2010 that reviews contemporary Black visual culture. She received a 2014 Graham Foundation Grant, and the 2019 Transformation Award from the Leeway Foundation. She was also the inaugural recipient of the Figure Skating Prize, awarded by Virgil Abloh’s Art Space, in 2021.

In the Curator-at-Large role—the first at the Whitney in nearly 15 years—Onli said she is eager to continue explorations of conceptualism and the construction of identity, as well as look at artists and art history through a contemporary lens.

The Whitney also announced that current Assistant Curator Laura Phipps—whose most recent project is the landmark exhibition *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: Memory Map*, a retrospective of one of the nation’s most influential Native American artists that is still on view through August 13—has been promoted to Associate Curator.

Phipps has held various positions since joining the Whitney in 2009. Phipps has taken an artist-centric approach to her curatorial career, often taking on complex projects and working hand-in-hand with artists. In working collaboratively with Smith on this monumental and overdue retrospective, Phipps authored the exhibition’s accompanying catalogue which is the largest and most comprehensive scholarly resource on Smith’s work and career to date. Phipps also organized the Whitney’s first convening of an intergenerational group of Native American artists, curators, and scholars for a public program that explored the ongoing and overarching concerns addressed in Jaune Quick-to-Smith’s work and throughout Native communities, including issues of land, sovereignty, and Indigenous knowledge and identity. As co-chair of the Museum’s

Indigenous Art, Artists and Audiences Working Group, Phipps has led institutional engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities and artists. She has shepherded gifts and purchases of works, for the Museum's permanent collection, by Indigenous artists like Rick Bartow and Sonya Kelliher Combs, as well as important figures like Oscar Howe, T.C. Cannon, Kay WalkingStick, and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith.

Other projects Phipps has worked on include *Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986*, *Virginia Overton: Sculpture Gardens*, *Legacy: The Emily Fisher Landau Collection*, *Glenn Ligon: AMERICA*, *Singular Visions*, *Wade Guyton OS*, *Sinister Pop*, *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective*, and *Whitney Biennial 2010*. She has also co-curated projects with Andrea Fraser, Michele Abeles, and the show *Flatlands* of emerging painters.

“For more than a decade, Laura has made incredible contributions to Whitney as a curator and colleague, with whom I’ve had the great fortune of working directly on many challenging exhibition projects,” said Rothkopf. “She brings deep insight, commitment, and care to her work with living artists, and her current exhibition of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith is a landmark in the history of the Whitney and the broader field of contemporary art. In her new role, Laura will continue this important work building our collections, engaging artists, and strengthening our program.”

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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 Saponckanikan ("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](#).

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 credit: Photo of Meg Onli by Bryan Derballa; Photo of Laura Phipps by Jörg Meyer

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