

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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MEDIA ALERT

ARTIST NANCY BAKER CAHILL TO DELIVER WALTER ANNENBERG LECTURE ON FEBRUARY 1, 2024



Nancy Baker Cahill is the first interdisciplinary digital artist to present the annual lecture. She will discuss digital art's potential and how it captivates viewers in new and surprising ways.

New York, NY, December 5, 2023 — The Whitney Museum of American Art announces that interdisciplinary artist Nancy Baker Cahill will present the [2024 Walter Annenberg Lecture](#) on Thursday, February 1, 2024, at 6:30 pm in the Museum's Susan and John Hess Family Theater and livestreamed on the Whitney's YouTube channel. For this Walter Annenberg Lecture, Baker Cahill situates digital art within an art historical context, identifies its subversive potential, and considers how new media art engages the public in transformative and unexpected ways. The artist and Scott Rothkopf, the Whitney's Alice Pratt Brown Director, will engage in a conversation following the presentation.

Working across augmented reality (AR), immersive video, blockchain, sculpture, and graphite drawing, Baker Cahill addresses systemic power and imagines more equitable futures.

Traditions of feminist land art and emerging scholarship around ecological imagination are central to her public art practice, which often highlights the climate crisis, civics, and body autonomy. Baker Cahill's *CENTO* points to the need for interdependence and coexistence in the face of climate collapse and invites audience contributions through participatory AR. *CENTO* was commissioned this year for artport, the Museum's online gallery space for net art.

"In my hybrid practice, the digital and analog dissolve into each other," says Baker Cahill. "This allows me to amplify sensory engagement and offers a visceral path through the conceptual territories I want to explore."

This annual lecture is given in honor of the late Walter H. Annenberg, philanthropist, patron of the arts, and former ambassador. Past Annenberg Lecture participants include Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (2023), Dawoud Bey (2021), Julie Mehretu (2020, presented spring 2021), Jason Moran (2019), Kara Walker (2018), Catherine Opie (2017), Martha Rosler (2016), and Frank Stella (2015).

Audiences can register for the Zoom livestream on [whitney.org](https://www.whitney.org).

About Nancy Baker Cahill

Nancy Baker Cahill (b. 1970) is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist whose hybrid practice spans research-based immersive experiences, video installations, and conceptual blockchain projects and focuses on systemic power, consciousness, and the human body. Her monumental augmented reality (AR) artworks extend and subvert the lineage of land art, often highlighting the climate crisis, civics, and a desire for more equitable futures. She is the Founder and Artistic Director of 4th Wall, a free AR public art platform exploring site interventions, resistance, and inclusive creative expression. Baker Cahill's work has been exhibited internationally at museums and galleries and has been profiled in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Frieze*, and *The Art Newspaper* and was included in *ARTnews*'s 2021 "Deciders." Recent exhibitions include *Slipstream: Table of Contents* at Vellum, LA (2022), which was acquired by LACMA, and her traveling mid-career retrospective *Through Lines* at the Georgia Museum of Art (October 28, 2023–March 21, 2024). Baker Cahill is an artist scholar alumnus of the Berggruen Institute; a 2021 resident at Oxy Arts's Encoding Futures, focused on AR monuments; and a TEDx speaker. In 2021, she was awarded the Williams College Bicentennial Medal of Honor and received the City of Los Angeles (COLA) Master Artist Grant. She is a 2022 LACMA Art and Tech Grant recipient.

About CENTO

Nancy Baker Cahill's [CENTO](#) consists of a monumental augmented reality "creature" hovering over the Floor 8 terrace of the Whitney Museum and an accompanying video imagining the creature's cave-like habitat. Ever-evolving through participatory AR, CENTO's serpentine body is lined with scales and fungal filaments, squidlike limbs, manta ray wings, a machine head, and vibrant feathers. Viewers are tasked with choosing one of the twelve feathers to add to CENTO, each providing a different evolutionary advantage crucial to the creature's survival, including communication, navigation, energy conversion, and memory. Evolved collaboratively, the interspecies being highlights the need for interdependence and coexistence in the face of the

climate crisis. The creature's hybrid anatomy accentuates the connections and mutual support needed to ensure the survival of life forms under changing conditions. *CENTO* takes its name from the term for a "collage poem," referring to poetry that consists of lines borrowed from a collection of writers' work. The artwork and its title pose the question of whether basic evolutionary needs could be fulfilled, or even exceeded, by a hybrid being imagined through a collage of human, machine, microorganism, and animal characteristics.

PRESS CONTACT

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WALTER ANNENBERG LECTURE

In honor of the late Walter H. Annenberg—philanthropist, patron of the arts, and former ambassador—the Whitney Museum of American Art established the Walter Annenberg Annual Lecture to advance this country's understanding of its art and culture. Support for this lecture and for public programs at the Whitney Museum is provided, in part, by GROW @ Annenberg, a philanthropic initiative led by Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, Vice President and Director of the Annenberg Foundation, and by members of the Whitney's Education Committee.



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](#).

MUSEUM 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, 11 am–6 pm. Closed Tuesday. Member-only hours are: Saturday and Sunday, 10:30–11 am. Visitors eighteen years and under and Whitney members: FREE.

Image caption:

Nancy Baker Cahill, *CENTO*, 2023. Top: screenshot from *CENTO* AR component; bottom: screenshot from *CENTO* video. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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