

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE

ADRIENNE EDWARDS APPOINTED ENGELL SPEYER FAMILY SENIOR CURATOR AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CURATORIAL PROGRAMS



The Whitney Museum of American Art expands the role of a celebrated curator.

New York, NY, February 22, 2024 — The Whitney Museum of American Art has appointed Adrienne Edwards to the position of Engell Speyer Family Senior Curator and Associate Director of Curatorial Programs. This promotion and the expansion of her duties will go into effect on Monday, February 26.

In her new role, Edwards will continue curating exhibitions, including the much-anticipated *Edges of Ailey*, opening on September 25, 2024, as well as leading a major research and collecting initiative. In addition, Edwards will report to the Director and advise on the Whitney's overall artistic program. She will take on strategic oversight of the Museum's Independent Study Program in partnership with ISP Director Gregg Bordowitz, fostering the development of its initiatives in its new home at the former studio of Roy Lichtenstein.

By expanding her role, the Museum recognizes Edwards's significant contributions to the Whitney and the broader field. She will hold a leadership role as part of the Museum's

upper-level management team charged with strategic planning and serve as a national and international ambassador for the institution.

“Adrienne is recognized around the world as one of the most visionary curators and thinkers of our time. Each of her shows forges an innovative new model of what an exhibition can be, particularly with regard to how performance exists in museums,” says Scott Rothkopf, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney. “As I look to the Whitney’s future, I am thrilled that Adrienne’s scholarship and instincts for new talent will help define our artistic program while she also partners with Gregg Bordowitz on the next chapter of the ISP as an incubator of interdisciplinary inquiry.”

“I am exhilarated by the possibilities this expanded role offers in support of my work across artistic mediums, with artists deeply committed to rigor and experimentation, and in the histories and fields of study so often overlooked because they defy classification,” says Edwards. “Since my arrival to the Whitney now nearly six years ago, the boundary-pushing exhibitions, commissions, and publications I have realized have been generously and consistently supported and championed by the Museum. The chance to be a part of the leadership team under Scott’s new directorship is a thrilling opportunity to imagine and manifest the possibilities of the Whitney’s future. I very much look forward to partnering with the visionary artist and director Gregg Bordowitz to plot the future of the storied Independent Study Program, particularly at this singular juncture in its history, having new leadership and a newly dedicated building at the Lichtenstein Studio.”

Edwards has been working as a curator at the Whitney since 2018. She co-curated *Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It’s Kept* and enhanced the strength and vitality of the Museum’s performance program. Since 2021, she has also served as the Whitney’s Director of Curatorial Affairs. In 2022, she was the President of the International Jury of the 59th Venice Biennale, as well as a jury member for the 40th anniversary edition of Videobrasil in 2023. She is currently organizing an exhibition and catalogue on the choreographer Alvin Ailey. *Edges of Ailey*, opening September 25, celebrates the life, work, and legacy of Alvin Ailey. Widely recognized for the dance company he founded in 1958, Ailey imagined and cultivated a platform for modern dance through his innovative repertoire, interdisciplinary sensibility, and support of other dancers and choreographers. Presented in the Museum’s expansive fifth-floor galleries, this multifaceted presentation encompasses a multimedia exhibition, daily performance program, and scholarly catalogue to offer a richly layered experience for understanding the artist anew.

Prior to the Whitney, Edwards served as curator of Performa in New York City and as Curator at Large for the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Edwards’s curatorial projects have also included the thematic intergenerational and interdisciplinary exhibition and catalogue *Blackness in Abstraction* presented at Pace Gallery (2016); the traveling exhibition and catalogue *Jason Moran* at the Walker Art Center, ICA Boston, and Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2018–19); “Moved by the Motion: Sudden Rise” (2020), a series of performances based on a text co-written by Wu Tsang, boychild, and Fred Moten at the Whitney; Dave McKenzie’s first solo museum exhibition in New York City *The Story I Tell Myself* and its pendant performance commission “Disturbing the View” (2021) at the Whitney; and the performance collective My

Barbarian's twentieth anniversary exhibition and catalogue (2021–22) at the Whitney and ICA LA. She was part of the Whitney's core team for David Hammons's public art monument Day's End.

For Performa, Edwards realized new boundary-defying commissions, as well as pathfinding conferences and film programs with a wide range of over forty international artists. While at the Walker, she co-led the institution-wide Mellon Foundation Interdisciplinary Initiative, an effort to expand ways of commissioning, studying, collecting, documenting, and conserving cross-disciplinary works. She also organized Frieze's Artist Award and Live program in New York in 2018, and chaired the Curatorial Leadership Summit 'Tendency: Wagering a Lexicon for the Morning' at The Armory Show in 2023.

Edwards has taught art history, performance, and visual studies at the CUNY Graduate Center, New York University, and the New School, and she has contributed essays to academic journals, artist monographs, group exhibition catalogues, and art magazines as well as other publications. She holds a Ph.D. in Performance Studies from New York University.

Edwards comes into her new position with a wealth of experience drawn from her established career. Collaborating with departments across the Museum, Edwards has also contributed to initiatives that speak directly to the Whitney's mission, including serving on the Equity and Inclusion Committee and contributing to the Collection Strategic Plan.

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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](#).

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. The Museum offers FREE admission and special programming for visitors of all ages every Friday evening from 5–10 pm and on the second Sunday of every month.

Image credit:

Adrienne Edwards; Photo By Bryan Derballa

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