

# PRESS RELEASE

## 2024 WHITNEY BIENNIAL TACKLES IDEAS OF “THE REAL” IN ITS 81ST EDITION OPENING MARCH 20

A graphic with a purple-to-orange gradient background. The text "WHITNEY BIENNIAL" is in the top half and "MAR 2024" is in the bottom half, both in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters.

# WHITNEY BIENNIAL MAR 2024

**New York, NY, March 11, 2024** — Opening March 20, *Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing* features the work of [71 artists and collectives](#), working across media and disciplines, representing evolving notions of American art. The 2024 Biennial marks the 81st edition of the Museum’s landmark exhibition series, the longest-running survey of American art, and addresses many of the most relevant ideas of our time.

Organized thematically, the exhibition presents artwork across most of the Museum’s gallery spaces and through a robust series of film and performance programs available at the Museum and online. The 2024 Biennial focuses on notions of “the real.” This examination of reality is highlighted through various throughlines and connections between artists, material, and ideas and acknowledges that today, society is at a critical inflection point. This apex has been brought on by the introduction of machine learning models to daily life and media, including the use of artificial intelligence, and society’s complex relationship to the body, the fluidity of identity, and the precariousness of the natural world.

Whitney Biennial 2024 co-organizers Chrissie Iles and Meg Onli began the process of building this Biennial in 2022 by meeting with and listening to artists from across the country and around the world. These artists reflected on their present moment and where their creative practices

stood in a world still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. During this listening tour, artist Ligia Lewis identified that she and many of her peers were trying to create, through their work, a “dissonant chorus” of different ideas in a fractured time. One of the greatest challenges Lewis identified within her peer group and society at large is how to meet one another in the face of differences—differences in geography, identity, history, and lived experience. Iles and Onli examined this notion of what it means to be different and congregate together and found it resonated not only with the present but also with the framework of the Whitney Biennial.

The subtitle of this Biennial, *Even Better Than the Real Thing*, reflects discussions Iles and Onli had with artists about ideas of reality and combats rhetoric around “authenticity” that is used to perpetuate transphobia and restrict body autonomy in the United States. While developing this Biennial, sweeping legal changes, from the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* to attacks on gender-affirming care, occurred. The exhibition title responds to these developments and draws allusions to the long history of deeming people of marginalized race, gender, and ability as less than real. Iles and Onli’s curatorial process and the artworks featured are animated by these unfolding histories and the techniques that artists use to confront them, from the use of unstable materials to subversive humor, expressive abstraction, and non-Western forms of cosmological thinking.

The 2024 Whitney Biennial is co-organized by Chrissie Iles, Anne and Joel Ehrenkrantz Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Meg Onli, Curator-at-Large at the Whitney, with Min Sun Jeon and Beatriz Cifuentes. The performance program is organized by Iles and Onli, with guest curator Taja Cheek. The film program is organized by Iles and Onli, with guest curators Korakrit Arunanondchai, asinnajaq, Greg de Cuir Jr., and Zackary Drucker.

### **Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing — Exhibition Overview and Select Works**

*Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing* presents the work of a multigenerational group of 71 artists and collectives working across media and disciplines to examine various throughlines that reflect the precarity of the past two years. The exhibition questions contemporary notions of reality and authenticity and acknowledges that society is at a critical inflection point influenced by the past, salient to the present, and imperative to the future.

The 2024 Whitney Biennial examines rapidly advancing technologies and machine learning tools. Artists **Holly Herndon** and **Mat Dryhurst** present work that is part of a project focused on training the data behind AI models, with the hope that AI can be used in creative, even liberating ways. Herndon and Dryhurst’s work will be presented in the galleries and via a text-to-image AI program on artport, the Whitney’s portal for Internet art and online gallery space for net art commissions.

The body and subjectivity as it pertains to queer identity, body sovereignty, motherhood, the aging body, and the trans body is a critical throughline of the 2024 Whitney Biennial. **Carmen Winant’s** work consists of 2,500 prints assembled to form a collective portrait of the ordinary,

daily tasks required to provide abortion health care—a project that became much more urgent with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. In conceiving the work, Winant worked across the Midwest and the South with the archives of special collections, university hospitals, and predominantly clinics in order to collect photographs of staff, physicians, and volunteers taken over a 50-year period. **Mary Kelly** will be presenting part of the final project of her career at the 2024 Biennial. The work titled *Lacunae* (2023), meaning blank spaces or missing parts, starts with the calendar. She uses this calendar as a framework to document her own aging and the passing of friends and loved ones and invites viewers to reflect on materiality as well as the body and its final passage or transformation. For **Jes Fan**, the body is a site of making. The four sculptures presented were created from 3D-printed CAT scans of the artist’s own body. In these sculptures, injury becomes an allegory of an interior state of being, suggesting that something precious might be generated by invisible wounds borne by queer bodies and bodies of color. On the Museum’s third floor, artist **Pippa Garner** presents an installation that references the ubiquity of mass-produced consumer goods and the ways that the marketing and design of these goods imply human-like qualities, such as personality and gender. The “impossible inventions” presented in the gallery adopt an almost “mad scientist” approach to the oddity of anthropomorphizing manufactured goods, imagining fantastical second lives for objects that have become obsolete. Some of the works reflect on the artist’s transition—or genderhacking, as she refers to it—which she began at the end of the 1980s.

Material agency and the use of unstable media is a throughline that several artists employ and will result in some works in the 2024 Whitney Biennial changing over time. **Suzanne Jackson’s** translucent paintings hang in space, suspended without canvas or visible support; the paint becomes an armature for itself. Made from acrylic paint applied in layers, each work is malleable and moves, changing shape over time. **Lotus L. Kang** presents a major installation that immerses viewers in a world situated between inside and outside, life and regeneration, and emptiness and fullness, suggesting a constant state of transformation. The installation consists of photographic films unfurling from steel joists suspended from the ceiling and a series of floor sculptures made of tatami mattresses and cast aluminum objects. The materials are industrial, portable, modular, and open to change. The installation will be exposed to sunlight throughout the run of the Biennial, which will cause the exposed film to undergo a “tanning” process and change color. Kang likens the film surface to skin and brings the material back to ideas of the body, particularly its porous relationship with environments. By doing this, the artist hints at an unfixed understanding of one’s body, diasporic identity, and the processes of memory.

**Eddie Rodolfo Aparicio** presents a newly commissioned monumental sculpture made primarily with tree amber that moves over time in relation to ambient sunlight and heat. The natural materials used in this work are from trees that were imported to Southern California in the 1950s and 1960s, around the same time as many Central Americans and Mexicans were brought there to work through joint immigrant labor programs. Eventually, the city of Los Angeles began removing the trees after realizing their roots lacked space to grow along city sidewalks, which coincided with an Eisenhower-era immigration policy that began to deport many of these workers who had arrived in the United States legally. Embedded in the amber are facsimiles of archival documents from El Salvador, relating to the mass killings by the military government in

the 1930s following the Indigenous rebellion of 1932. As the sculpture changes shape, the objects within it move, suggesting the ways memory and trauma are held in the body and shift over time.

Another persistent throughline in the 2024 Biennial is the psychological implications of architectural spaces and the systems of power that they represent. The 2024 Biennial will present the work of **Mavis Pusey**, including works that have not been seen since the 1970s. Pusey's work explores ideas of demolition of architecture and, specifically, demolition of buildings in NYC and the Chelsea neighborhood where Pusey lived and worked in the 1970s and 1980s, blocks away from the Whitney's current location. **Cannupa Hanska Luger's** work takes stereotypical Native American iconography of a tipi and flips the structure upside down to celebrate Native technologies and innovations created by the artist's ancestors and upend viewers' grounding in time and space to make way for imagined futures free of colonialism and capitalism, where broader Indigenous knowledge can thrive. In the Museum's ground-floor Lobby gallery, artist **Ser Serpas** presents sculptures made from natural materials and found objects that function as dual portraits, first of New York City, as seen through cycles of consumption and decay, and then as portraits of the artist herself through the expressive choices she has made. The Museum's Lobby gallery is accessible to the public free of charge as part of the Whitney Museum's enduring commitment to supporting and showcasing the most recent work of emerging artists.

Larger histories, particularly those of non-Western communities, and how myth, cosmologies, land, water, Earth, and geological ecosystems relate are also examined in the 2024 Biennial. **Dala Nasser** creates a space of reflection that intermingles history and myth, past and present, mourning, and the potential for collective mourning. This site-specific sculpture comprises a row of columns draped with bed sheets that create paintings made from charcoal rubbings of rocks found in the Adonis Cave and Temple on Mount Lebanon, north of Beirut. The sheets are then dyed with iron-rich clay from the banks of the Abraham River in Lebanon. **Rose B. Simpson's** work consists of four sculptural figures gazing at one another, creating a force field of protection and solidarity that stands in contrast to an unstable world. The work titled *Daughters: Reverence* (2024) conveys strength through the figures' formal relationship with each other and through their shared ancestry.

Five major new immersive video installations address the impact of war, dictatorships, colonialism, and the resurfacing of lost cultural histories. **Clarissa Tossin's** film *Mojo'q che b'ixan ri ixkanulab' / Antes de que los volcanes canten / Before the Volcanoes Sing* (2022), a collaboration with the Maya K'iche' Kaqchiquel poet Rosa Chávez and the Ixil Maya artist Tohil Fidel Brito Bernal, looks at ways in which contemporary Maya culture is activated by means of both reclamation and recreation. Presented nearby are 3D-printed copies of ancient Maya flutes that appear in the film. Ideas of restitution also appear in **Isaac Julien's** *Once Again... (Statues Never Die)* (2022), a five-screen film installation that includes a display of sculptures by Richmond Barthé and 2019 Biennial artist Matthew Angelo Harrison. The installation features interwoven stories addressing the dialogue between American collector Albert C. Barnes and the Harlem Renaissance philosopher Alain Locke, as well as appearances by the poet Langston

Hughes, in a critique of colonialism, cultural valuation, and queer desire. In choreographer **Ligia Lewis's** first video installation *A Plot, A Scandal* (2023), dancers use movement to explore histories of marronage and revenge. **Diane Severin Nguyen's** film installation *In Her Time (Iris's Version)* (2023–24) depicts an actress named Iris as she rehearses for a leading role in a historical war film about the Nanjing Massacre of 1937 by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). The immersive environment, where visitors recline on a daybed in a room surrounded by pink and purple ribbons, explores the ways history circulates in the present. **Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich's** *Too Bright to See* (2023–24) highlights the previously obscured life and work of Suzanne Césaire (1915–66), the Martinican writer and feminist thinker, and a key figure in the Caribbean philosophy known as Négritude, which fused anti-colonialist policies with Surrealist aesthetics. A light installation that is fused with the moving images onscreen suggests the mercurial weather and precarity of the Caribbean.

Sonic space and the use of sound are introduced in the 2024 Whitney Biennial like never before. In the Museum's main staircase and large freight elevator, artist **Holland Andrews** composed two site-specific sound works. The work located in the stairwell consists entirely of vocal sounds that, at times, have an ambient effect and, at other times, offer a range of harmony, dissonance, and melody. The artist manipulated the sounds using a pedal-operated effects processor so that their body would be involved in the process of creation. The work meditates on the sensation of receiving information on multiple channels as if the mind were switching stations on a radio. The work located in the elevator features voice and mechanical sounds, including those made by the elevator itself, to create a restorative space. Here, Andrews plays with our perceptions of the machine hum so that we might wonder if the sound is intentional or just the magic of the world, ultimately to discover that it is, in fact, both. For the 2024 Biennial, **JJJJJerome Ellis** was invited to score the exhibition, responding to its sounds, artworks, and spaces to create a musical composition. The project—which offers another interpretation of the Biennial and point of entry—requires the full installation of the exhibition in order for the artist to begin, and, once complete, will exist on the gallery walls as a set of drawings and notations. These musical scores will also inform a series of performances during the run of the show. **Constantina Zavitsanos's** installation is composed of blue-violet light, projected captions, and a ramp that plays speech modulated with infrasonics. Each element of this environment works with and against the limits of perception. The color violet is just within the visible light spectrum, while infrasonic sound waves are frequencies below the threshold of audibility, allowing them to be felt as vibrations but not heard. As visitors interact with the work, it will change the shape of the sound and vibrations, and the captions that transcribe them may also become more or less readable as visitors block the projected light. With this work, Zavitsanos seeks to make space for collective acts of sensing and feeling that highlight some joys of the cross-disability community.

### **Terrace Commissions**

The Whitney has commissioned two artists to present work on the Museum's fifth- and sixth-floor terraces, respectively. **Torkwase Dyson's** work is described by the artist as a “monastic playground” and is meant to be activated by visitors, who are invited to touch, sit on, and experience the work in a tactile way. This prompt for engagement speaks to Dyson's

conviction that liberation can be found at every register of movement and that “freedom is an ongoing spatial question of motion and imagination.” For Dyson, the intertwining of abstraction and Blackness is a central philosophical concern in her work and came out of an interest in public infrastructure. Dyson’s work on the Museum’s fifth floor is the first artwork presented in conjunction with the Whitney Museum’s [10-year partnership with Hyundai Motor](#) that enables artists to test their aspirations and incubate their creativity. **Kiyan Williams’s** outdoor sculpture represents the north facade of the White House and leans on one side, sinking into the floor. The sculpture is composed of earth. The artist selected this natural material for the work to reflect how the earth carries history, an idea that Williams explores extensively in their artistic practice. In this work, the artists point to the fragility of the political foundations of the United States, while the earth’s erosion embodies a critique of institutions at a moment when they are toppling. Looking on from nearby is a smaller sculpture of celebrated trans activist Marsha P. Johnson witnessing the erosion of the White House.

### **Public Art**

The work *Stuttering Can Create Time* is a public art installation presented at 95 Horatio Street, on the facade of the building across the street from the Whitney and the south end of the High Line. Created by the collective **People Who Stutter Create (PWSC)**, this work marks the collective’s first project together and activates the Whitney’s exhibition billboard as a place to publicly celebrate the transformational space of dysfluency, a term that can encompass stuttering/stammering and other communication differences such as aphasia, Tourette’s, and dysarthria.

### **Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing — Film Program**

The 2024 Whitney Biennial includes a robust film program featuring 25 artists, filmmakers, and collectives whose work explores the porousness of boundaries and identities. Presented across five separate screening days at the Museum, each program was developed by guest curators Korakrit Arunanondchai, asinnajaq, Greg de Cuir Jr., and Zackary Drucker, respectively. A select number of the films featured onsite for the 2024 Biennial will also be available to view online.

#### **Film Program Schedule:**

**April 12:** *Speaking in Camouflage: Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich*, curated by Greg de Cuir Jr.

**May 3:** *the land wants you*, curated by asinnajaq

**June 21:** *Dear Ghost, if a memory is false does it mean it does not have real consequences?*, curated by Korakrit Arunanondchai

**July 12:** *Sis, I Don’t Know: Remembrance a Summer Flower, International Portal of Artificial Maximum Results*, curated by Zackary Drucker

**September 20:** *Speaking in Camouflage: Christopher Harris*, curated by Greg de Cuir Jr.

**Greg de Cuir Jr.**, co-founder and artistic director of Kinopravda Institute in Belgrade, kicks off the series of film programs by featuring new and recent films by two key artists in contemporary Black avant-garde film in North America, **Christopher Harris** and **Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich**. Inuk artist and filmmaker **asinnajaq** gathers works by Samí, Mongolian, Chilean, and Native

American artists for a showcase grounded in place, land stewardship, kinship, care, and belonging, which open up dialogues between Indigenous artists based in the U.S. and Indigenous communities beyond its borders. Thai-born, United States–based artist **Korakrit Arunanondchai** presents films by a group of artists and filmmakers born in Asia for whom storytelling, dreams, animistic beliefs, and metaphors serve as tools to explore their conflicting desires towards the Western idea of modernization. Artist and producer **Zackary Drucker's** intergenerational film program unites filmmakers in conversation around love, desire, and loss.

More information about specific films, how to purchase tickets to in-person screenings, and how to view films online will be available on the Museum's website.

### **Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing — Performance Program**

The 2024 Whitney Biennial's performance program highlights the work of interdisciplinary artists, composers, choreographers, and musicians, and will include 5 performances presented in the Museum's theater. While sight tends to be the dominant sense experienced within museums, this Biennial performance program offers an alternate approach, forefronting sound. Guest curated by Taja Cheek, the performances are challenging, deliberate, and poignant, expanding on the explorations of identity, healing, autonomy, relationships to AI, and more.

#### **Performance Schedule:**

**April 27–28:** *The Long Count* by Debit

**June 8:** *Motor Tapes* by Sarah Hennies

**June 29–July 1:** *Speaker* by Holland Andrews

**July 20–21:** *FEELING\$ FEELING\$ FEELING\$* by Alex Tatarsky

**August 2–4:** *Offerings* by JJJJJerome Ellis

**Taja Cheek**, also known professionally as L'Rain, is a curator and musician. She has led performance programs and MoMA PS1 and worked closely with artists to realize projects at institutions like Creative Time, Weeksville Heritage Center, and The High Line, among others. She also co-founded a DIY rehearsal and performance space in her neighborhood in Brooklyn that primarily supports independent, improvised, and experimental music.

More information about the performances and how to purchase tickets to in-person performances will be available on the Museum's website.

#### **Tickets On Sale**

Visitors can purchase timed tickets for *Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than The Real Thing*, which opens March 20, 2024, on the [Museum's website](#).

#### **Catalogue**

*Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing* is accompanied by a 284-page exhibition catalogue published by the Whitney and distributed by Yale University Press. Edited by Chrissie Iles and Meg Onli, the catalogue features insightful essays by Iles, Onli, Eva Hayward, and Amber Jamilla Musser, along with a conversation among Iles, Onli, and Gregg

Bordowitz and a foreword by Scott Rothkopf. Anaïs Duplan, Almudena Escobar López, Mariana Fernandez, Mara Hassan, Josie Roland Hodson, Nolan Jimbo, Tausif Noor, and Yasmina Price contributed entries on the work of each artist in the exhibition. An innovative format allows readers to engage with the book's text from one side or immerse themselves in a generously illustrated section of full-page reproductions from the other side. The catalogue was designed by River Jukes-Hudson and Stephen Serrato of ELLA in Los Angeles. Copies will be available for purchase in the Whitney Shop, online, and at bookstores (\$50).

### **Free Public Programs**

A series of free virtual and in-person programs are offered in conjunction with *Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing*. More information about these programs and how to register will be available on the [Museum's website](#) as details are confirmed.

## **ABOUT THE WHITNEY BIENNIAL**

A constellation of the most relevant art and ideas of our time, the Whitney Biennial showcases contemporary artists working across media and disciplines, representing evolving notions of American art. Established by the Museum's founder, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, in 1932, the Whitney Biennial is the longest-running survey of American art. More than 3,600 artists have participated to date, including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lynda Benglis, Louise Bourgeois, Frank Bowling, Mark Bradford, Alexander Calder, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Raven Chacon, Ellen Gallagher, Jeffrey Gibson, Nan Goldin, Renee Green, Wade Guyton, Rachel Harrison, Jenny Holzer, Edward Hopper, Joan Jonas, Ellsworth Kelly, Mike Kelley, Willem de Kooning, Barbara Kruger, Pope. L, Jacob Lawrence, Carolyn Lazard, Zoe Leonard, Roy Lichtenstein, Glenn Ligon, Agnes Martin, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Julie Mehretu, Sarah Michelson, Joan Mitchell, Tiona Nekkia McClodden, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Laura Owens, Jackson Pollock, Postcommodity, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Martine Syms, Wu Tsang, Cy Twombly, Kara Walker, Andy Warhol, and David Wojnarowicz.

The 2024 Whitney Biennial is organized by Chrissie Iles and Meg Onli, with Min Sun Jeon and Beatriz Cifuentes. The performance program is organized by Chrissie Iles and Meg Onli, with guest curator Taja Cheek. The film program is organized by Chrissie Iles and Meg Onli, with guest curators Korakrit Arunanondchai, asinnajaq, Greg de Cuir Jr, and Zackary Drucker.

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## EXHIBITION SUPPORT

*Whitney Biennial 2024: Even Better Than the Real Thing* is presented by



The exhibition is also sponsored by

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Generous support is provided by Judy Hart Angelo; The Brown Foundation, Inc., of Houston; David Cancel and Family; Lise and Michael Evans; Kevin, Rosemary, and Hannah Rose McNeely; the John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation; The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation; The Rosenkranz Foundation; Marcia Dunn and Jonathan Sobel; and the Whitney's National Committee.

Major support is provided by The Keith Haring Foundation Exhibition Fund.

Significant support is provided by the 2024 Biennial Committee Co-Chairs: Sarah Arison, Paul Arnhold, Jill Bikoff, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Miyoung Lee, Joel Lubin, Michael Kassan, and George Wells; 2024 Biennial Committee members: Barbara Bluhm-Kaul and Don Kaul, Alexandre and Lori Chemla, Suzanne and Bob Cochran, Deepa Kumaraiah and Sean Dempsey, Sheree and Jerry Friedman, Ashley Leeds and Christopher Harland, the Kapadia Equity Fund, Dawn and David Lenhardt, the McCallum Family, Orentreich Family Foundation, Nancy and Fred Poses, Jonathan M. Rozoff, Katherine Sachs, Alice and Manu Sareen, Annette and Paul Smith, and Patricia J. Villareal and Thomas S. Leatherbury; and Susan and Matthew Blank, James Keith (JK) Brown and Eric Diefenbach, Jung and Nelson Chai, Jill Cowan and Stephen Davis, Martha and Paddy Farrell, Melanie Shorin and Greg S. Feldman, Charlotte Feng Ford, Cindy and Mark Galant, Christy and Bill Gautreaux, Debra and Jeffrey Geller Family Foundation, Peter H. Kahng, Cathy M. Kaplan, Lisa H. Kim and Eunu Chun, the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Iris Z. Marden, Marjorie Mayrock, Shelley and David Sonenberg, Gloria H. Spivak, Jackson Tang, and anonymous donors.

Biennial funding is also provided by endowments created by Melva Bucksbaum, Emily Fisher Landau, Leonard A. Lauder, and Fern and Lenard Tessler as well as the Adam D. Weinberg Artists First Fund.

Curatorial research and travel for this exhibition were funded by an endowment established by Rosina Lee Yue and Bert A. Lies, Jr., MD.

*New York* magazine is the exclusive media sponsor.

The Whitney Biennial and the Hyundai Terrace Commission are a multiyear partnership with Hyundai Motor. The Hyundai Terrace Commission is an annual site-specific installation on the Whitney Museum's fifth-floor outdoor gallery.

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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. 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.

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