

# WHITNEY

Whitney Museum  
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## PRESS RELEASE

### A NEW EXHIBITION AT THE WHITNEY EXPLORES EVOLVING POLITICAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPES



*Shifting Landscapes, opening November 1, is a timely examination of how artists capture a changing United States.*

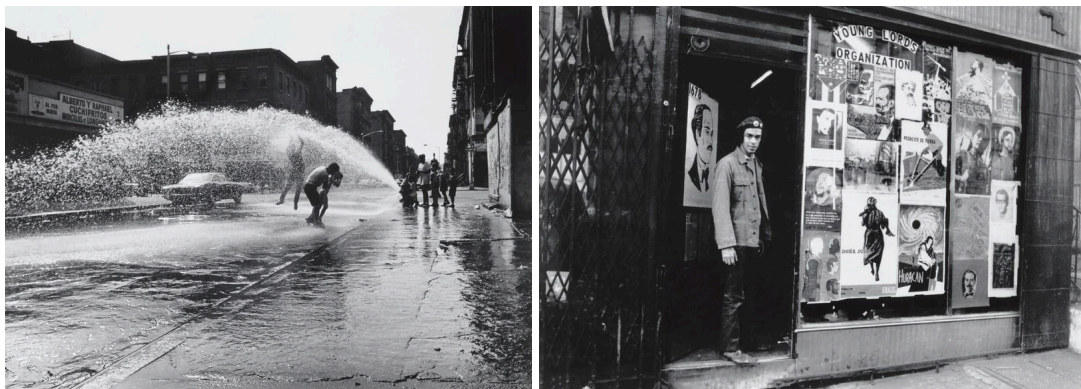
**New York, NY, October 18, 2024** — [Shifting Landscapes](#), opening at the Whitney Museum of American Art on November 1, explores how evolving political, ecological, and social issues motivate artists and their representations of the world around them. While the traditional art historical landscape genre has long been associated with picturesque vistas and documentary accounts of place, artworks drawn from the Whitney's collection for this exhibition, most on view at the Museum for the first time, suggest a more expansive interpretation.

*Shifting Landscapes* features 120 works by more than 80 artists, including [Firelei Báez](#), [Jean-Michel Basquiat](#), [Jane Dickson](#), [Teresita Fernández](#), [Gordon Matta-Clark](#), and [Purvis Young](#), spanning the 1960s to the present. Photographs, installations, films, videos, sculptures, paintings, drawings, prints, and digital artworks depict the effects of industrialization on the environment, grapple with the impact of geopolitical borders, and give shape to imagined spaces as a way of destabilizing the concept of a “natural” world. Organized in thematic

sections, these works bring the many meanings embedded in land and place into focus, foregrounding how we shape and are shaped by the spaces around us.

“*Shifting Landscapes* reflects the Whitney’s ongoing commitment to telling diverse stories in American art,” said Jennie Goldstein, Jennifer Rubio Associate Curator of the Collection; Marcela Guerrero, DeMartini Family Curator; and Roxanne Smith, Senior Curatorial Assistant at the Whitney. “Landscape—in its formal, social, and political implications—feels like a particularly dynamic and urgent subject today, and we are excited that over half of the works in this exhibition are new to the collection and on view at the Museum for the first time.”

*Shifting Landscapes* is on view from November 1 through January 2026 at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The exhibition is organized by Jennie Goldstein, Jennifer Rubio Associate Curator of the Collection; Marcela Guerrero, DeMartini Family Curator; Roxanne Smith, Senior Curatorial Assistant; with Angelica Arbelaez, Rubio Butterfield Family Fellow; with thanks to Araceli Bremauntz-Enriquez and J. English Cook for research support.



### **Exhibition Overview – *Shifting Landscapes***

Spanning the Museum’s entire sixth floor, *Shifting Landscapes* is organized according to distinct thematic sections. Some groupings are inspired by materials and approaches: sculptural assemblages formed from locally sourced objects, ecofeminist approaches to land art, and the legacies of documentary landscape photography. Others are tied to specific geographies, like frenzied cityscapes of modern New York and the experimental filmmaking scene of 1970s and 1980s Los Angeles. Others show how artists invent fantastic new worlds where humans, animals, and the land become one.

### **Altered Topographies**

The exhibition opens with an examination of the term “New Topographics,” which describes the stark style of landscape photography that debuted in the 1975 exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*. Documenting the effects of industrialization and suburbanization in America, Robert Adams’s [Outdoor Theater, Colorado Springs, Colorado](#) (1968–71), for example, records the residential sprawl along the Rocky Mountains in a straight-on and detached style. Recent photographs of the North American landscape by contemporary artists such as [LaToya Ruby Frazier](#), [An-My Lê](#), and Piliāmo’o carry on this aesthetic tradition with more pointedly political undertones. These works center the impacts of

colonization, war, and pollution to invoke the lived consequences of these intrusions on the body and the land, serving as ethical acts of resistance through documentation.

### **New York Cityscapes**

New York City serves as a subject in this section where works range from the early 1970s to 2020. Artists document and reflect on how the city has changed in the aftermath of significant economic, political, and catastrophic events. Examples of artistic experimentation amid the economic decay and social turmoil of the 1970s include Hiram Maristany's photograph [Hydrant: In the Air](#) (1963, printed 2021) and Anita Steckel's painting [Skyline on Canvas #1 \(Woman Pressing Finger Down\)](#) (c. 1970–74). In the 1980s and 1990s, as New York became more globalized, works such as John Ahearn's sculpture [Miss Kate](#) (1982) and Jean-Michel Basquiat's painting [Untitled](#) (1980) depict neighbors and the theater of daily life. A final group of works considers the unsettling images of tragedy and alienation in the wake of the September 11 attacks and COVID-19 pandemic: Keith Mayerson's painting [9-11](#) (2007), Salman Toor's painting [Man with Face Creams and Phone Plugs](#) (2019), and Orian Barki and Meriem Bennani's video [2 Lizards](#) (2020), among others.

### **Borderlands**

Rather than accepting the border between the U.S. and Mexico as a fixed and immutable geopolitical line, artists working in the region, whose works are displayed in this section, propose that this part of the American landscape is an *herida abierta*, or open wound, where loss and regeneration coexist. [Enrique Chagoya](#), for example, employs a satirical approach in his codices, made in the tradition of ancient Mesoamerican manuscripts to tell the history of Western civilization from the perspective of the colonized. Leslie Martinez draws inspiration from the rugged geography of their native south Texas by sewing rags and other recycled materials to their canvas [A Sublime Concealment of Time](#) (2023), evoking a landscape marked by pain but also healing. The works gathered here, including those by [Laura Aguilar](#), [Teresita Fernández](#), and [James Luna](#), consider political, cultural, and spiritual borderlands as manifestations of a landscape straddling two realities at once, revealing the creative forces that can grow from the grief of historical trauma, erasure, and omission.



### **Earthworks**

Earth art and ecofeminism—artistic and philosophical movements of the 1960s and 1970s—proposed new frameworks for how we experience our shared planet. Works on view in this section explore the interconnectivity of the natural world and humanity's place within it. While Earth art marked a conceptual turn toward engaging directly with the land, ecofeminism put forward ideas about appreciating and protecting the environment from anticolonial and feminist perspectives. Here, artists celebrate nature's vastness and ephemerality in works

ranging from the 1960s to the present day that stand as artistic counterpoints to human-centered thinking. Some artists, including [Carlos Villa](#), [Gordon Matta-Clark](#), and [Michelle Stuart](#), deal directly with natural forms, using organic materials or the landscape itself in diverse ways. [Nancy Holt](#) offers more embodied ways of experiencing the world, while [Carolina Caycedo](#) and [Maya Lin](#), among others, draw attention to regionally specific environmental concerns.

### **Southern Assemblage**

Working with materials sourced from their local environments, the self- and community-taught Black artists from the southeastern U.S. featured in this section have produced hybrid collage paintings, complex sculptures, and abstractly patterned textiles derived from their lived experiences. Martha Jane Pettway, one of a group of quiltmakers from Gee's Bend, Alabama, makes her art from functional remnants like scraps of relatives' clothes and sugar sacks, as seen in *Sweep* (1980). Similarly, Joe Minter's assembled sculpture [The First Fireplace](#) (1998) shares a visual vocabulary with the African Village in America, the immersive sculptural environment he began working on in his Birmingham, Alabama, backyard in 1989. In [Angel, City, and Eye Assemblage](#) (c. 1990–95), Purvis Young portrays the occupants of his historically segregated neighborhood in Miami on pieces of locally scavenged wood. Alabama artist and musician [Lonnie Holley](#), who since the late 1970s has practiced what he calls "improvisational creativity," makes sculptures and installations out of salvaged objects, while [Bessie Harvey](#) credits her sculptures, made from found wood and branches, to divine inspiration. Through these artists' visions, everyday materials are transformed into something enduring, carrying the stories of their origins forward.

### **Los Angeles in Film and Video**

Two works by Los Angeles film and video makers [Melvonna Ballenger](#) and [Ulysses Jenkins](#) depict complex representations of Black life in contrast to the film industry's detrimental stereotypes. In the late 1960s, a critical gathering of African and African American students formed at the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television, loosely grouped under the moniker L.A. Rebellion. Their films—including Ballenger's 1978 narrative short [Rain \(Nyeshia\)](#)—centered Black stories and experiences. Made five years later, Jenkins's [Without Your Interpretation](#) (1983) documents a performance staged along the LA River that used movement to critique American obliviousness to global societal ills.

### **Another World**

Uncanny and imagined landscapes propose alternative geographies where humans, animals, and nature inhabit one another. Mundo Meza's painting [Merman with Mandolin](#) (1984) and rafa esparza's sculpture [New American Landscapes. Self Portrait: Catching Feelings \(Ecstatic\)](#) (2017) exemplify how some artists decenter an anthropocentric worldview by rejecting any traces of an identifiable landscape. In other artworks, like Dalton Gata's painting [I Don't Need You To Be Warm](#) (2021), shape-shifting figures appear in fellowship with their environments. On the nearby sixth-floor terrace, [Alison Saar](#)'s bronze sculpture *Fall* (2011) embodies a woman of the harvest with a head of branches bearing pomegranates, a symbolic representation of autumn. Together, these works signal ways of resisting hierarchical power structures to advance new visions of the future and the beings that populate it.

### **Free Public Programs**

A series of free in-person and virtual public programs will be offered in conjunction with *Shifting Landscapes*. 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](http://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. 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 credits:**

Jane Dickson, *Heading in – Lincoln Tunnel 3*, 2003. Oil on Astroturf, 33 × 46 × 2 3/8 in. (83.8 × 116.8 × 6 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Eve Ahearn and Joseph Ahearn 2017.275. © Jane Dickson

Hiram Maristany, *Hydrant: In the Air*, 1963, printed 2021. Gelatin silver print, 16 × 20 in. (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Photography Committee 2022.61. © Hiram Maristany

Hiram Maristany, *Juan Gonzalez, Minister of Education of the Young Lords, at original storefront office headquarters*, 1969, printed 2021. Gelatin silver print, 12 5/8 × 18 1/8 in. (32.1 × 46 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art; purchase with funds from the Photography Committee 2022.68. © Hiram Maristany

Firelei Báez, *Untitled (Tabula Anemographica seu Pyxis Navtic)*, 2021. Acrylic and oil on archival printed canvas, 89 7/8 × 111 7/8 × 1 1/2 in. (228.3 × 284.2 × 3.8 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from Chrissy Taylor and Lee Broughton 2022.104. © Firelei Báez

Teresita Fernández, *Fire (America) 3*, 2016. Glazed ceramic, 72 × 144 × 1 1/4 in. (182.9 × 365.8 × 3.2 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee 2021.19a-c. © Teresita Fernández

María Berrio, *A Universe of One*, 2018. Collage, watercolor, and charcoal on canvas, 72 × 60 in. (182.9 × 152.4 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Gary and Anne Borman Trust 2019.306.  
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