

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM EXPANDS FREE ADMISSION TO ALL VISITORS 25 YEARS OLD AND UNDER



The new program—made possible with support by Whitney Board of Trustees members Julie Mehretu and Susan Hess—builds on the successful January 2024 launch of Free Friday Nights and Free Second Sundays, creating one of the most robust free admission programs in the United States.

New York, NY, October 22, 2024 — The Whitney Museum of American Art will become free for visitors 25 and under beginning in mid-December.

The new Free 25 and Under program builds on the Museum's popular Free Friday Nights and Free Second Sundays initiatives, launched in January 2024 offering free admission for all visitors between 5 and 10 pm on Fridays and all day on the second Sunday of every month.

The launch of those two programs—which offer free access to every exhibition on view at the Museum and to visitors from anywhere in the world—marked the most robust free admissions offering in the history of the Whitney Museum. In just under a year, the two programs have welcomed nearly 200,000 visitors. When all of the Museum's other free offerings are taken into account, approximately 300,000 people have visited the Museum for free in 2024.

With the addition of free admission for visitors 25 and under, the Whitney—already a leader in the field, providing free admission for visitors 18 and under for over a decade—offers one of the

broadest and most comprehensive free admissions programs among museums in New York and the United States, affirming the Whitney's commitment to broadening access to American contemporary art and culture, and to reaching new audiences.

“Since its founding the Whitney has been committed to supporting young and innovative artists, and we now hope to further support younger audiences, too, by addressing financial barriers that affect this group the most,” said **Scott Rothkopf, the Whitney's Alice Pratt Brown Director**. “I believe deeply in the cultural and social impact we can have by sharing the vitality and relevance of the Whitney's artistic program with young people from New York, the United States, and around the globe.”

In nearly a year, Free Friday Nights and Free Second Sundays have transformed the Whitney's audience. During these hours, the Whitney has seen double the average attendance that it sees during paid hours—with visitors being younger and more diverse on average. For example, on Friday nights, the average visitor age dropped 10 years, and the majority of visitors (over 60 percent) are BIPOC.

More than half of the visitors during those hours identified themselves as first-time visitors, and more than 80 percent of visitors 25 and under during these hours cite free admission as extremely important in their decision to attend. These figures are unsurprising since nationally, the 25 and under demographic is the most diverse generation in the nation and is coping with financial difficulties caused by a continued high cost of living, student loans, and other factors.



“The launch of our first two free admissions programs have had such an incredible impact on our audience that we wanted to go even further in making the Whitney one of the most accessible large museums in America,” said Rothkopf. “You can feel the amazing energy in the galleries on free days, and I couldn't be more excited to see that grow.”

Free 25 and Under is made possible with the generous support of two three-year gifts from Whitney Museum Board members, longtime supporter Susan Hess, and artist Julie Mehretu.

“We are so grateful for the support of our generous Board members, who care deeply about engaging new audiences,” said Rothkopf. “Even before I became Director last November, Julie

had been challenging me for years to think about expanding free admission as the single most important thing that the Whitney could do to further its mission. She has been the most incredible inspiration and advocate for this work, and I certainly share her passion when it comes to connecting audiences of the future with the power of art and ideas.” Rothkopf added, “Joining Julie, Susan Hess and her husband John have had a decades-long partnership with the Museum, supporting many exhibitions and transformative projects. They provided funding to create our theater and its adjacent gallery, which is one of the liveliest spaces in our museum, where audiences connect with performances, educational projects, and art making for all ages. I’m so grateful for their unstinting support.”

“You can’t have any conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion without providing access, and the culture can’t change and it can’t continue to grow without new and diverse voices having access to the culture being created at the moment,” said **artist and Whitney Board member Julie Mehretu**. “I’m super excited and grateful for Scott’s and the Whitney’s commitment to this program. I did not have access to contemporary art museums as a young adult, and when I moved to New York, I was waiting tables—it was hard to access contemporary art and culture, as it’s hard for so many grad students and young people. If you really want to push the discourse and evolve the discourse, many more people need to have access to be able to participate, and this program is a step in the right direction—and we need more.”



“Art and culture are a part of our DNA as New Yorkers, and I applaud the Whitney’s visionary commitment to expanding access to one of our city’s great cultural treasures through their free nights and now, free initiative for ALL people 25 and under, ALL the time!” said **NYC Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**. “Now, any time the museum is open, anyone 25 and under can walk in and engage with the Whitney’s remarkable collections, exhibitions, and programming (not to mention those fabulous views of the city). Engagement with the arts for young people in particular can be transformative, and the Free 25 and Under program will make sure that residents of all income levels and backgrounds can get the access they deserve to the world-class exhibitions and programming that the Whitney creates for audiences.”

Free Friday Nights and Free Second Sundays, which launched in January 2024, are made possible with generous support. Free Friday Nights are made possible by three-year gifts from Whitney Trustee Jen Rubio and her husband, Stewart Butterfield, and Whitney Trustee Paul Arnhold and his husband, Wes Gordon. Free Second Sundays are made possible by a

three-year grant from the [Art Bridges Foundation's Access for All program](#), which supports increased access to museums across the country and fosters engagement with local communities by reducing common barriers to access.

Details on upcoming Free Friday Nights and Free Second Sundays programs can be found at whitney.org/free-days-and-nights. A complete list of the Whitney's current [free and discounted offerings can be found here](#).

Free admission still requires tickets, as capacity at the Museum is always limited. Advanced tickets are strongly encouraged.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Generous support for Free 25 and Under is provided by Susan and John Hess and Julie Mehretu.

Free Friday Nights are generously supported by Jen Rubio and Stewart Butterfield and Paul Arnhold and Wes Gordon.

Generous support for Second Sundays is provided by Art Bridges Foundation's Access for All program.



ACCESS
FOR ALL

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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: Photographs by Filip Wolak

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