



Artist List for 2017 Whitney Museum Biennial Includes Henry Taylor, Lyle Ashton Harris, Pope.L, and Deanna Lawson

by [Victoria L. Valentine](#) on Nov 18, 2016 • 11:10 pm



Clockwise, from left, Deanna Lawson, Pope.L, Lyle Ashton Harris, Maya Stovall, and Cauleen Smith (center).

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART announced 63 individual artists and collectives participating in the museum's [2017 biennial](#). Largely informed by the contentious political climate and the socioeconomic issues dividing Americans, the exhibition will explore themes including "formation of self and the individual's place in a turbulent society." A survey of the state of contemporary art in America, the biennial features emerging and established artists whose work spans a wide-range of mediums, from painting, drawing, sculpture and photography to music, film, performance, activism, and video game design. African American artists **Lyle Ashton Harris**, **Deanna Lawson**, **Pope.L**, and **Henry Taylor**, are among the participants in this year's exhibition.

The 2017 Whitney Biennial is organized by Christopher Y. Lew, an associate curator at the museum, and independent curator Mia Locks. The pair traveled extensively, visiting artists, curators and galleries, viewing work, projects and performances to determine the exhibition's roster.

“Throughout our research and travel we’ve been moved by the impassioned discussions we had about recent tumult in society, politics, and the economic system. It’s been unavoidable as we met with artists, fellow curators, writers, and other cultural producers across the United States and beyond,” Lew said in a museum statement. Locks noted: “Against this backdrop, many of the participating artists are asking probing questions about the self and the social, and where these intersect. How do we think and live through these lenses? How and where do they fall short?”

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Biennial curators Christopher Lew and Mia Locks. | Photo by Scott Rudd, Courtesy Whitney Museum

The biennial is being presented for the first time in the museum’s new downtown building in the Meatpacking District. It’s also the largest-ever biennial. The exhibition fills two floors of expansive gallery space and select works will also appear in other spaces throughout the museum.

The previous Whitney Biennial, the last at the museum’s Madison Avenue location on the Upper East Side, made news when a collective of African American artists took exception to the practice of a white artist. Yams Collective, a

group of 38 artists formally known as HowDoYouSayYaminAfrican, withdrew from the 2014 Whitney Biennial because of what it viewed as racial exploitation in the work of Joe Scanlan, another biennial artist, who for years has presented himself as Donelle Woolford, a black female performance artist. He developed the persona and her work and hired black artists Jennifer Kidwell and Abigail Ramsay to portray her.

The Whitney Museum provided a statement to Hyperallergic about the incident: “While we understand and respect the decision of HOWDOYOU SAY YAMIN AFRICAN?, we support all the artists in the Biennial and the curatorial choices of the exhibition’s three curators. The Whitney Biennial has always been a site for debate — no matter how contentious or difficult — of the most important issues confronting our culture.”

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The forthcoming biennial is on view March 17-June 11, 2017. Adam D. Weinberg, director of the Whitney, expects it to be particularly lively and groundbreaking, citing the talents of the curators who have assembled a dynamic group of artists. He said: “Every Whitney Biennial is a galvanizing process for the museum, a tradition that goes back to the institution’s roots while retaining its freshness and immediacy. Endeavoring to gauge the state of art in America today, the biennial demands curators who are attuned to the art of the current moment and there is no question that Chris Lew and Mia Locks have their fingers on the pulse.”



Left, HENRY TAYLOR, *“He’s Hear, and He’s Thair,”* 2008 (acrylic and collage on canvas), sold for \$60,000 this week at a Phillips New York auction. Among the most prominent artists participating in the biennial, Los Angeles-based Taylor’s work was *on view at Blum & Poe* earlier this month. At right, The work of multidisciplinary artist Lyle Ashton Harris intersects the personal and the political. A 2014 recipient of the David Driskell Prize from the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, he lives and works in New York. Shown, LYLE ASHTON HARRIS, *“Lyle, London,”* 1992, 2015 (Chromogenic print). | Collection of the artist; courtesy the artist

A dozen African American artists were selected to participate in the 2017 Whitney Biennial:

Kevin Jerome Everson

Born 1965 in Mansfield, OH

Lives in Charlottesville, VA

Lyle Ashton Harris

Born 1965 in Bronx, NY

Lives in New York, NY

James N. Kienitz Wilkins

Born in 1983 in Boston, MA

Lives in Brooklyn, NY

Deana Lawson

Born 1979 in Rochester, NY

Lives Brooklyn, NY

Pope.L aka William Pope.L

Born 1955 in Newark, NJ

Lives in Chicago, IL

Cameron Rowland

Born 1988 in Philadelphia, PA
Lives in Queens, NY

Cauleen Smith

Born 1967 in Riverside, CA
Lives in Chicago, IL

Maya Stovall

Born 1982 in Detroit, MI
Lives in Detroit, MI

Henry Taylor

Born 1958 in Oxnard, CA
Lives in Los Angeles, CA

Torey Thornton

Born 1990 in Macon, GA
Lives in Brooklyn, NY

Kamasi Washington

Born 1981 in Los Angeles, CA
Lives in Los Angeles, CA

Leilah Weinraub

Born 1979 in Los Angeles, CA
Lives in Los Angeles, CA and New York, NY

VIEW full list of 2017 biennial artists. CT

READ a conversation between artists Deanna Lawson and Henry Taylor in BOMB magazine.

BOOKSHELF

Forthcoming in March, an exhibition catalog will accompany the 2017 Whitney Biennial and feature contributions by the exhibition's curators, a conversation between the curators and the museum's director, a roundtable with biennial filmmakers, and pages devoted to each of the artists and their work. "Henry Taylor" was published to coincide with the artist's show at MoMA PS1 in New York. Taylor was in residence at the museum for months preceding the show, creating the paintings that appeared in the exhibitions, portraits of ordinary and extraordinary people.