

ARTNEWS

New Museum To Open Themed Show 'Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon' This Fall

BY [Andy Battaglia](#) POSTED 05/30/17 10:22 AM



Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, *Toxic*, 2012 (still, detail).
COURTESY THE ARTISTS, ELLEN DE BRUIJNE PROJECTS, AND GALERIE MARCELLE ALIX

The New Museum in New York will play home to battles of the sexes—or at least artistic conversations among them—with a fall exhibition likely to be a talking point for the season and then some: “Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon.” Opening September 27 and running into January 2018, the group show will occupy three floors of the museum with gender-addressing work by more than 40 artists active in different mediums. The exhibition is curated by Johanna Burton, the New Museum’s

director and curator of education and public engagement, along with assistant curators Natalie Bell and Sara O’Keeffe.

“I’ve thought about questions of identity and subjectivity my whole life,” Burton told *ARTnews*, “and I started thinking about a show to take up questions that focus on gender, not at the exclusion of other markers of identity but as something particularly present in media with a wider-spread awareness of a profound shift in terms of how people have moved from thinking about gender as a binary into more of a spectrum model. A number of the best artists working right now are taking up gender as a way of reconfiguring how we make meaning of it and what kind of vocabulary we use. I think of it as a show that is wanting to really engage questions that feel both very urgent and very present in the context of today.”

Work in the exhibition, all of it either new or very recent, will come from artists including Morgan Bassichis, Nayland Blake, Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, Vaginal Davis, Ektor Garcia, House of Ladosha, Candace Lin, Christina Quarles, Tschabalala Self, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Sable Elyse Smith, Wu Tsang, and others. A catalogue will be published, with archival materials and transcripts of roundtable talks between members of the show’s advisory committee, which includes Lia Gangitano, Ariel Goldberg, Jack Halberstam, Fred Moten, and Eric Stanley.

Burton said the exhibition was conceived in part to resonate with the New Museum’s past, upon the 40th anniversary of the downtown institution’s founding in 1977. She positioned it among past gender- and sexuality-focused shows with pride of place in the museum’s lineage, including “Extended Sensibilities” (1982), “Difference” (1984–85), “Homo Video” (1986–87), and “Bad Girls ” (1994).

A description of the exhibition says the organizing principle “will consider how even a fluid conception of gender is nonetheless marked by ongoing power negotiations and cannot be understood outside its complex intersections with race, class, sexuality, and disability.” And Burton said the title is meant to be provocative: “It’s a tough moment for productive discourse around identity,” she said. “A trigger is a mechanism that, with a little bit of force, sets off a huge amount of potential reactions, both for better and for worse.”

“Trigger” invokes certain weaponized aspects of identity, as well as signals of material of a sensitive nature. As for the other? “Tools,” Burton said, “are something you can use to deconstruct or reconstruct—or construct anew.”

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