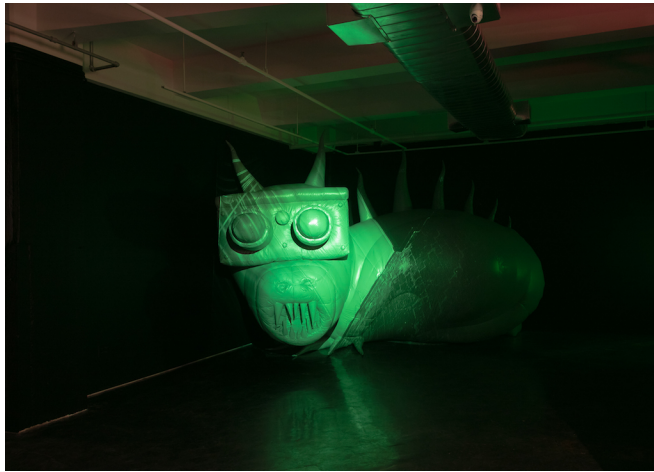


ARTnews

Art in General, Crucial New York Alternative Space, to Close Because of Covid-19

By Alex Greenberger October 15, 2020 2:33pm



Postcommodity was among the artists to participate in Art in General's esteemed commissions program.

Art in General, a 39-year-old alternative space that has formed a crucial nexus of the New York art scene since its founding in the 1980s, will close permanently as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, its leadership said Thursday.

In a joint statement, board president Leslie Ruff and director Irene Mei Zhi Shum wrote, "Although we have taken critical measures to adjust to the new normal, the financial constriction due to the Covid-19 pandemic has proved formidable, severely affecting our ability to fulfill our mission of presenting new work by emerging and mid-career artists to the New York area."

One year shy of reaching its 40th anniversary, Art in General will close out its programming with online presentations of prints focused on the forthcoming U.S. Presidential election and materials from the space's archives.

The news marks a sudden ending to a space that showed cutting-edge art and in doing so became reputed for quietly boosting little-known artists,

many of whom have since risen to fame, such as Emma Amos, Sanford Biggers, and Cecilia Vicuña. Artists such as Tania Bruguera, Glenn Ligon, Paul Pfeiffer, and many more also appeared in cutting-edge group shows there at early stages in their respective careers.

A long time resident of Lower Manhattan, Art in General was founded in Tribeca in 1981 by artists Martin Weinstein and Teresa Liszka, and relocated to Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood in 2015. In August, the organization moved to Jersey City as part of a partnership with Mana Contemporary.

The late curator Holly Block served as its longtime director, helming the space from 1988 to 2006, when she departed to lead the Bronx Museum of Arts. In 2005, Block initiated Art in General's commissions series, which has hosted artists whose work is not widely known in the U.S. and largely unsupported by the art market. Artists to have participated in that program include Zach Blas, Dineo Seshee Bopape, Brendan Fernandes, Sharon Hayes, Jill Magid, Shana Moulton, Postcommodity, and Katrin Sigurdardóttir.

As part of the closure, Art in General has begun distributing its archive. Block's papers from when she was director and documents related to the space's founding will go to the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, and a complete set of publications have been donated to New York University's special collections.

The space's closure is reflective of the larger blow being weathered right now by New York City art nonprofits. According to a recent survey by SMU DataArts, small organizations in the city lost between 20 and 30 percent of their annual revenue on average because of the pandemic.

"In this difficult time for us all, we offer our sincere thanks to you—our alumni artists, guest curators, visitors, former staff and donors—for your passion and dedication, interest and support during the last forty years," Ruff and Shum wrote. "You made this amazing journey possible."