

# The Defining Artworks of 2022



**BY THE EDITORS OF ARTNEWS**

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GRAPHIC BY KAT BROWN. IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY THE ARTIST; COURTESY NEON FILMS; ©SIMONE LEIGH/PHOTO TIMOTHY SCHENK/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY; VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; ©OSTRICH ARTS LTD./COURTESY OSTRICH ARTS LTD AND CRISTEA ROBERTS GALLERY, LONDON; COURTESY CHRISTIE'S; VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In 2022, art roared back. Blockbuster exhibitions returned, and the world's top art festivals, including the Venice Biennale and Documenta, did as well. Historical study of past works continued apace, and new artworks were added to the canon. Although artists had been making art with the same passion during the pandemic as they did before, this year the energy was especially palpable.

Across the world this year, artists continued exploring the ways that racism, colonialism, and misogyny shape society, and they did so as vitally as ever. Their work offered powerful views into alternate universes devoid of these poisonous prejudices while also staring down realities that must be contended with.

Along the way, it became obvious that the study of art history must change too. Artists of color and women artists who had been dealing with these topics for decades were suddenly seen anew, and the works they produced seemed ever more notable. With the understanding that nothing is fixed, experts also upended past conceptions about famous works, even at one point discovering that a beloved abstraction had been hanging upside-down for years.

To look back on the past 12 months in art-making, below is a survey of some of the most important artworks made or presented in a new light in 2022.

25. Alithia Haven Ramirez, *Google Doodle* (2022)
24. Winslow Homer, *The Gulf Stream* (1899/1906)
23. Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *Fig. VIII. W 22mm* (2022)
22. Rebecca Belmore, *ishkode (fire)* (2022)
21. Camille Turner, *Nave* (2022)
20. Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Flute* (1665–70)
19. Banu Cennetoğlu, *right?* (2022)
18. Hélio Oiticica, *Subterranean Tropicália Projects: PN15* (1971/2022)
17. Cecilia Vicuña, *Brain Forest Quipu* (2022)
16. Raven Chacon, *Three Songs* (2021)

## 15. Xaviera Simmons, *Align* (2022)



Xaviera Simmons, *Align*, 2022. Photo : Courtesy Queens Museum

At the center of the Queens Museum's atrium-like exhibition space stands a massive rectangular room, measuring some 40 feet. Painted on its exterior, in capital white letters on a black background, is a powerful manifesto by artist Xaviera Simmons that reads, in various parts, "Crisis makes a book club," a clear nod to "a group of very wealthy, very influential and very seasoned white women in the arts, philanthropy and academia" who started book clubs geared toward leaning about racism and how to be anti-racist in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020, as **she told** the *New York Times*. Her aim is to point out that simply reading these books, especially from positions of privilege, power, and safety, will not spur progress. Action and activism really need to take place for change to come about that will ensure the survival of Black, Indigenous, Brown, and queer and trans people. This work is meant as a wake-up call for white allies. This time around, maybe they'll do more than just read. —*Maximiliano Durón*

14. Charles Gaines, *Moving Chains*, 2022
13. Zineb Sedira, *Dreams Have No Titles* (2022)
12. Ernie Barnes, *The Sugar Shack* (1976)
11. Hew Locke, *The Procession* (2022)
10. Baan Norg Collaborative Arts and Culture, *The Ritual of Things* (2022)
9. Jumana Manna, *Foragers* (2022)
8. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (1982)
7. Precious Okoyomon, *To See the Earth Before the End of the World* (2022)
6. Piet Mondrian, *New York City 1* (1941)
5. Michael Heizer, *City* (1970–2022)
4. Laura Poitras, *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* (2022)
3. Coco Fusco, *Your Eyes Will Be an Empty Word*(2021)
2. Paula Rego, "Abortion Series" (1998)
1. Simone Leigh, "Sovereignty" (2022)