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The 20 Most Influential Young Curators in the United States

ARTSY EDITORIAL
BY ALEXA GOTTHARDT
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The role that curators play, like the art they care for, is constantly evolving. As culture shifts, moving with changes in the social and political landscape or technological innovations, so does the art being produced. And it is a curator's job to reflect those developments,

f uncover overlooked histories, and bring to light the creative work that resonates with our present moment.

t Here, we gather 20 curators across the U.S. who are not only revealing the conditions and conversations driving artmaking now, but also shaping the direction that art and culture will take in the future—and ensuring the public has access to a broad array of artistic voices. It is no coincidence that this list is relatively diverse and overwhelmingly female. As culture gradually overturns its male-dominated, Eurocentric past, it's the curators who are representing expansive, multifarious points of view that are creating the most relevant and influential exhibitions.

Amanda Hunt

POSITION

Associate Curator, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“inHarlem: Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk, Rudy Shepherd,” Studio Museum in Harlem in partnership with Morningside Park, Marcus Garvey Park, St. Nicholas Park, and Jackie Robinson Park

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Cameron Rowland: 91020000,” Artists Space, New York

Photo by Sharon Suh.



After several years at the alternative art space LAXART, where she helped produce both the “Pacific Standard Time Performance and Public Art Festival” and “Made in L.A. 2012,” the first biennial to hit Los Angeles, Hunt was tapped by the Studio Museum in Harlem. Since then, she’s racked up an impressive list of exhibitions and projects within the museum’s walls and beyond. Last year she conceived and organized “A Constellation,” an impressive 26-artist show exploring African diasporic history, and this year she has realized “Rashaad Newsome: THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO SEE” and “Tenses: Artists in Residence 2015–16.”

Her proudest moment of 2016, however, came with the launch of “inHarlem: Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk, Rudy Shepherd,” four ambitious public works embedded in four of Harlem’s historic parks—and the Studio Museum’s first public art project. Leigh’s transportive trio of mud huts in Marcus Garvey Park and Newkirk’s glistening, opalescent curtains in St. Nicholas Park are highlights, in particular. And there’s more still to come from Hunt this year. Opening on November 17th, don’t miss two group shows at the museum, “Black Cowboy” and “The Window and the Breaking of the Window.”

Dena Beard

POSITION

Director, The Lab, San Francisco

LOCATION

San Francisco

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Jacqueline Gordon,” The Lab

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Lutz Bacher: Magic Mountain,” 356 Mission, Los Angeles

Photo by Mark Mahaney.



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In 2014, Beard abdicated her post at the Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive (where she worked on projects with artists ranging from Trevor Paglen to Barry McGee) to take the reigns at The Lab, a storied and beloved experimental non-profit space in San Francisco’s Mission District. Beard’s overarching goal for The Lab has been “to give living wages to artists.” Making good on her promise, the institution has financially supported residencies and commissions by creatives that push the boundaries of sound, sculpture, performance, film, technology, and more.

This year’s residents and commissions have included Senyawa, an Indonesian experimental music duo; Fritzia Irizar, a Mexican artist and filmmaker; and Jacqueline Gordon, a multimedia artist who, during her tenure at the The Lab, has created a moveable set activated by a series of sound installations, shapeshifting artworks, and staged performances conceived by visual artists, dancers, composers, and choreographers from her San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York communities. It remains on view until October 31st. Next up: Dora García’s “The Hearing Voices Lab,” an interactive project that will explore the phenomenon of “hearing voices,” drawing connections between mental illness, activism, and creative inspiration.

Mia Locks

POSITION

Curator, 2017 Whitney Biennial

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Greater New York,” MoMA PS1

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Hanne Darboven: Enlightenment,” Haus der Kunst in Munich

Photo by Scott Rudd.



By the time 2017 rolls around, Locks will have co-curated two of New York’s most influential survey shows of the past five years: MoMA PS1’s quinquennial “Greater New York” in 2015, and next year’s Whitney Biennial. Since a career-defining stint at MOCA, Los Angeles, from 2010 to 2013, Locks has excelled at connecting contemporary art practices to overlooked historical narratives and artists. While at MOCA, she cut her teeth with curator Bennett Simpson on “Blues for Smoke” (2012), which unearthed the connections between blues music and artmaking, and “Bob Mizer & Tom of Finland” (2013), which resurfaced homoerotic art practices from the 1940s through the ’80s.

In “Greater New York” (2015), along with co-curators Peter Eleey, Douglas Crimp, and Thomas J. Lax, she embedded contemporary artists into a powerful exploration of the performative and political work of New York artists in the 1970s and ’80s. While on staff at PS1, she also steered important exhibitions of work by emerging artists Math Bass, Samara Golden, and IM Heung-soon. We’re anticipating a strong showcase from next year’s Whitney behemoth, which she is co-curating with Christopher Lew.

Erin Christovale

POSITION

Curator, Black Radical Imagination; curator, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery

LOCATION

Los Angeles

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“S/Election: Democracy, Citizenship, Freedom,” Los Angeles Municipal Gallery

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Wu Tsang: The Luscious Land of God is Sinking,” 356 Mission, Los Angeles

Photo by Jamie Costa.



RELATED ARTICLE



In Black Artists' Pursuit of Equality, These 17 Art-World Leaders Are Changing the Game

Christovale is prolific, to say the least. This month alone, you can visit two exhibitions she's conceived: "S/Election: Democracy, Citizenship, Freedom" at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, where she was recently named curator, and "A Subtle Likeness" at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries. In 2014, she also made her mark in New York with "a/wake in the water: Meditations on Disaster" at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts in Brooklyn. Given her strong output, it's no surprise that Christovale is making a name for herself as a curator who tackles themes of identity, race, and historical legacy with gusto.

What's more, she also helms Black Radical Imagination, a roving experimental film program that she co-founded with artist Amir George. This past summer, it brought a series of shorts, which looked at the future of Afro-Mexican identity, to Guadalajara, Mexico; it wrapped with a youth filmmaking workshop on the ideologies of Afrofuturism. "That was an important moment for me in understanding the transcendence of Black American culture and the power of art in aiding critical dialogues about the constructs of identity and race," says Christovale of the trip. On November 20th, Black Radical Imagination will bring a series of shorts to New York's MoMA PS1.

Justine Ludwig

POSITION

Director of Exhibitions / Senior Curator, Dallas Contemporary

LOCATION

Dallas

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Laercio Redondo: Past Projects for the Future,” Dallas Contemporary

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Laura Poitras: Astro Noise,” Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; “Black Sheep Feminism: The Art of Sexual Politics,” Dallas Contemporary

Photo by Nick Glover.



In 2012, at the age of 26, Ludwig mounted the first U.S. museum exhibition of then-on-the-rise sculptor Francis Upritchard’s work—at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati (CAC). Since then, Upritchard has been picked up by New York’s Anton Kern Gallery and had solo shows at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and Whitechapel Gallery in London, while Ludwig went on to lead the curatorial department at Dallas Contemporary.

With stints at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, the Rose Art Museum, the MIT List Visual Arts Center, and CAC under her belt, Ludwig has realized several ambitious commissions by emerging and under-recognized contemporary artists—most of them hailing from locations outside of the art-world capitals of New York, London, and Berlin. In the past year, she’s brought to life Alaska-based Paola Pivi’s first U.S. museum solo, Mexico City-based Pedro Reyes’s “For Future Reference,” and Brazilian artist Laercio Redondo’s “Past Projects for the Future” (a version of which Ludwig curated at Rio’s Museum of Modern Art in 2015).

Matthew Abess

POSITION

Curator, Wolfsonian, Miami

LOCATION

Miami

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Margin of Error,” Wolfsonian

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Harun Farocki. Empathy,” Fundació Antoni Tàpies,
Barcelona

Photo by World Red Eye.



Abess has one of the country’s most idiosyncratic collections at his fingertips, one filled with all manner of material culture, from propaganda posters to iconic transportation signage to commemorative mugs with political undertones. The native Miamian has passionately mined the 180,000-object collection since his appointment as the Wolfsonian’s curatorial research assistant in 2010. Since then, he’s climbed the museum’s ranks and organized several of its most ambitious thematic exhibitions, including last year’s “Margin of Error,” which explored cultural responses to the fear of accidents and catastrophes. For the show, Abess corralled a fascinating cohort of over 200 safety posters, industrial artifacts, paintings, sculptures, and more “to interrogate our footing in this world,” he explains.

As the Wolfsonian gears up for a game-changing, 20,000-square-foot expansion, Abess, along with the Wolfsonian team, will spend much of the next several years conceptualizing a large-scale reinstallation of its permanent collection. In 2020, when the expansion is unveiled, Abess and a colleague will open “Vices,” a show connecting colonialism and class to our cultural obsessions with caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and chocolate—all through the lens of visual culture.

Lauren Cornell

POSITION

Curator and Associate Director, Technology Initiatives,
New Museum, New York

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“2015 Triennial: Surround Audience,” New Museum

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

The exhibitions at Participant Inc, New York

Photo by Benoit Pailley.



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The New Museum’s Internet-Obsessed Triennial is a
Touchstone for a Generation

In the museum landscape, Cornell has played a central role in leading the “art x technology” charge. Before being promoted to the role of Curator and Associate Director, Technology Initiatives, she helmed Rhizome, a pioneering website and New Museum affiliate that supports artists who engage with digital culture and the internet. Last year, Cornell’s findings during her time as Rhizome executive director were published in the tome *Mass Effect: Art and the Internet in the Twenty-First Century* (2015), co-edited with Ed Halter.

Her most recent curatorial coup, however, was the New Museum’s buzzy “2015 Triennial: Surround Audience,” for which she produced complicated and career-defining commissions from artists such as Juliana Huxtable, Martine Syms, Shadi Habib Allah, Aslı Çavuşoğlu, and many more. Since then, Cornell has co-curated a solo show of Puerto Rican artist Beatriz Santiago Muñoz’s films at the New Museum and a stunning group show, “Invisible Adversaries,” which used the work of radical feminist artist VALIE EXPORT as a jumping off point, at Bard College’s Hessel Museum of Art. Now, Cornell is piloting the second edition of Open Score, the New Museum’s annual symposium addressing the state of art and technology.

Claire Tancons

POSITION

Independent curator

LOCATION

New Orleans

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“etcetera: un rituel civique,” Le Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse, France

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

The Trinidad Carnival



Photo by Santiago Rodriguez Tarditi.

Hailing from the French West Indies and based in New Orleans, Tancons explores festivals and processional performances as acts of artmaking, cultural expression, and resistance. In this vein, she has curated ecstatic, powerful performative projects for Prospect New Orleans (2008–09); the Gwangju Biennale (2008), where Tancons was invited to participate by its artistic director Okwui Enwezor; the Cape Town Biennial (2009); and the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art (2013), to name just a few. More recently, Tancons conceived *Up Hill Down Hall* (2014), a carnival in the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall to examine, as she explains, carnival as a “countercultural movement that transformed into a multicultural festival and a performance art form with mass appeal.”

This fall, Tancons is in the process of realizing the first segment of “etcetera: un rituel civique” (2016), a multipart project she is producing for Printemps de Septembre in Toulouse, France. The festival investigates civic ritual in contemporary France. She is also in the final preparatory stages of *Tide by Side* (2016), a processional performance that will inaugurate Faena Forum in Miami Beach during Art Basel in Miami. The project “highlights the importance of cultural communities in the creation of new urban developments,” as Tancons explains, and is an exuberant collaboration with artists, architects, and art collectives Arto Lindsay, Gia Wolff, Carlos Betancourt, Carnival Arts, Los Carpinteros, Marinella Senatore, and more.

Robert Snowden

POSITION

Independent curator

LOCATION

Portland, Oregon, and New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Lutz Bacher: The Secret Garden,” Yale Union, Portland

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Open Plan: Cecil Taylor,” Whitney Museum of American Art

Photo courtesy of Robert Snowden.



In 2011, Snowden co-curated a strange and wonderful retrospective of Ad Reinhardt’s scathing 1940s comics, which poked fun at the New York art world. It was first shown idiosyncratically on a top floor of New York’s Chrysler Building, and later headed to ICA London and Kunstverein Amsterdam. It was also indicative of Snowden’s curatorial approach, which is to mine forgotten histories and undersung aspects of artists’ practices, in particular. More recently, the curator helped to establish Yale Union, a nonprofit contemporary art space in Portland, Oregon, housed in a former laundry factory.

As Yale Union’s head curator from 2012–2016, Snowden produced experimental projects, special commissions, and in-depth shows with artists such as sculptor Park McArthur, printer William Oorebeek, assemblage artist Yuji Agematsu, and experimental musician and artist Charlemagne Palestine, among other creators of all stripes. “Lutz Bacher: The Secret Garden,” an exhibition of new work by the artist, is on view now and marks Snowden’s last project with Yale Union before he heads back to New York to work as an independent curator. In the meantime, he’s finishing a publishing project with artist R.H. Quaytman and Orchard Gallery, and working on a book with playwright and director Richard Maxwell.

Lanka Tattersall

POSITION

Assistant Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

LOCATION

Los Angeles

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Hito Steyerl: Factory of the Sun,” Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Geta Brătescu: Retrospektive,” Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg

Photo by Myles Pettengill.



After a long run on the East Coast—where she received her master’s degree at Columbia University, worked for several years in MoMA’s painting and sculpture department, and began her doctorate at Harvard (she’s in the process of polishing off a dissertation on Sigmar Polke’s work of the 1960s)—Tattersall returned to her hometown of L.A. last year, when MOCA tapped her for its curatorial team, which was then just two people. In her short time at the institution, she’s begun to take the reigns of its performance program.

Last summer, she co-curated “Step and Repeat,” a three-day extravaganza bringing together experimental music, performance art, comedy, and poetry by the likes of Juliana Huxtable and Geo Wyeth, and she’s now working with L.A.- and London-based performance and video artist Patrick Staff on a new commission. The biggest feather in Tattersall’s hat to date, however, might be the organization of Hito Steyerl’s stunning U.S. premiere of *Factory of the Sun*, a mind-bending installation that places the viewer inside a landscape resembling computer innards or a cyber playhouse.

Dina Pugh

POSITION

Independent curator; Curator, Facebook; Founder and Creative Director, Triple Base Creative

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Metamorphosis,” an immersive art, music, and technology experience by Hisham Bharoocha and Santtu Mustonen, House of Vans, Brooklyn (with agency Imprint Projects)

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Bruce Conner: It’s All True,” MoMA; “The Castle of Perseverance,” Crush Curatorial, Amagansett, NY

Photo courtesy of Dina Pugh.



It’s safe to say that Pugh, who has worked in numerous realms of the art world, is a polymath. She spent the first three years of her career at San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, went on to co-found Triple Base Gallery in 2005, pivoted to establish creative agency Imprint Projects in 2011, and has been an independent curator and producer all the while. Her unbridled creative energy has most recently been channeled into curatorial projects for Facebook, where she organizes site-specific installations for the tech giant’s campuses across the country.

Working alongside Drew Bennett, who runs Facebook’s global Artist in Residence program, Pugh brings local artists into Facebook’s offices in New York, San Francisco, Austin, Seattle, Detroit, Chicago, and more. “Some of my favorite upcoming projects are by artists who have extremely bold and independent creative voices, yet have been flying under the radar of the art world for years,” Pugh says. These include the New York-based Xenobia Bailey, who is creating a large-scale crochet and fiber-optic installation at Facebook New York, and Aleph Geddis, who is forging a monolithic sculpture resembling carved Native American totems, for Facebook Seattle.

Jamillah James

POSITION

Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

LOCATION

Los Angeles

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Hammer Projects: Simone Leigh,” Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Alex Da Corte: Free Roses,” MASS MoCA; “Kerry James Marshall: Mastry,” MCA Chicago

Photo by Paul Mpagi Sepuya.



James made art-world headlines this past August when she was named curator of the new ICA LA, a relocated and reimagined Santa Monica Museum of Art. Prior to her trumpeted appointment, she'd made her mark on the Los Angeles art landscape at the Hammer Museum, where she not only shepherded the first L.A. solo shows of contemporary visionaries Simone Leigh and Njideka Akunyili Crosby into fruition, but was also integral in realizing the exhibitions at Art + Practice (such as a show by Alex Da Corte), the arts and social services foundation established by influential artist Mark Bradford.

At the ICA LA, with executive director Elsa Longhauser, James will develop the burgeoning kunsthalle's programming, which will be housed in a brand-new 12,700-square-foot building in L.A.'s arts district. While the much-anticipated exhibition schedule for the museum, which opens its doors in fall 2017, hasn't yet been announced, James gave us a teaser, which hints at an exciting future for the space: an exhibition exploring the life and work of Mexican artist Martín Ramírez, whose obsessive, psychedelic drawings from the 1950s haven't yet gotten their due.

José Carlos Diaz

POSITION

Milton Fine Curator of Art, Andy Warhol Museum

LOCATION

Pittsburgh

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Athi-Patra Ruga,” Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Alex Da Corte: 50 Wigs,” Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark

Photo by Carlos Betancourt.



Since the Andy Warhol Museum’s longtime director, Eric Shiner, left his position last year, the institution has undergone a somewhat tenuous changing of the guard. But the Pittsburgh mainstay seemed to find its footing this past February when Diaz, previously curator of exhibitions at Miami’s Bass Museum, joined the institution. At the Bass, Diaz worked with established artists like Sylvie Fleury on site-specific commissions, while simultaneously (and successfully) building a platform for emerging local and international practices.

In the last year alone, he organized ambitious installations by French textile artist Jérémy Gobé, South African performance artist Athi-Patra Ruga, and Miami-based sculptor and designer Emmett Moore. As he embarks on his tenure at the Warhol, Diaz plans to ramp up his engagement with established and emerging, local and international voices alike. To kick off his tenure, he is organizing the first-ever museum solo for Iranian artist Farhad Moshiri.

Rujeko Hockley

POSITION

Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn Museum

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Crossing Brooklyn: Art from Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, and Beyond,” Brooklyn Museum

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Non-fiction,” Underground Museum, Los Angeles;
“Michael Richards: Winged,” Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

Photo by Elena Olivo.



Hockley’s 2014–2015 exhibition “Crossing Brooklyn” is an apt touchstone for her curatorial approach, through which she has been known to cogently connect art practices driven by community and social engagement. The show brought together 35 Brooklyn-based artists and collectives who “have an impact beyond the studio and the museum.” An exhibition that Hockley is currently toiling over, however, might be her greatest passion project to date. “We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85,” which is slated to open in April 2017, is a “culmination of years of work and wishing, dating back to graduate school and even earlier,” as she explains.

The ambitious show will build a comprehensive narrative around the art and influence of black women artists (Camille Billops, Beverly Buchanan, Lorraine O’Grady, Howardena Pindell, Betye Saar, and Carrie Mae Weems among them) who, during the beginnings of second-wave feminism, “worked beyond and at times in antagonism to Eurocentric narratives of feminism and feminist art,” she says. Hockley also sits on the board of Art Matters, a New York-based nonprofit that supports artists whose work intersects with advocacy of different kinds.

Eva Respini

POSITION

Barbara Lee Chief Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

LOCATION

Boston

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Walid Raad,” MoMA, ICA/Boston, and Museo Jumex

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Kerry James Marshall: Mastry,” MCA Chicago; the installation at the new Tate Modern’s Switch House

Photo by Liza Voll.



Respini has been a champion of photographic and new media practices since the early years of her career in MoMA’s curatorial department, when she organized the 2012 blockbuster mid-career retrospective of Cindy Sherman. Two years later, in 2014, she reminded the art world of Robert Heinecken’s indelible influence, mounting a buzzy retrospective—the first since his death in 2006—of the California photographer’s boundary-defying work. After taking on the role of Chief Curator at ICA/Boston in 2015, she organized Lebanese conceptual artist Walid Raad’s first major North American museum survey, which is currently on view at Museo Jumex after stops at ICA/Boston and MoMA.

Her long-term goals for ICA are the expansion of its international program, especially of art made in the Middle East (a blind spot for the museum, historically), and a deeper engagement with artists working with technology and new media, inspired by Boston’s prominent role in the tech community. She’s currently in the throes of planning a major exhibition that speaks to the latter: “Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today,” slated to open in 2018.

Diana Nawi

POSITION

Associate Curator, Pérez Art Museum Miami

LOCATION

Miami

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Nari Ward: Sun Splashed,” Pérez Art Museum Miami

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Marrakech Biennale 6: Not New Now”; “Kerry James Marshall: Mastry,” MCA Chicago

Photo by Mylinh Trieu Nguyen.



RELATED ARTICLE



Nari Ward Reimagines the Immigrant Experience through Art

Nawi was hired by Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) in 2012 after she'd spent several years at the Guggenheim working on its Abu Dhabi Project. At PAMM, she was integral in readying the museum for its much-anticipated 2013 opening and has since generated a steady stream of elegant, timely shows with emerging and mid-career artists. After organizing solos with Miami-based Adler Guerrier and Cairo and New York-based Iman Issa, Nawi unveiled her most ambitious project yet: “Sun Splashed,” a stunning survey of Nari Ward’s prolific practice, his largest to date.

The show paid homage to Ward’s exploration of identity (including his Jamaican roots and his life as an artist in New York) and environment through immersive architectural installations, as well as sculptures and photographs, forged largely from found objects. Nawi just opened a show of Danish collective SUPERFLEX’s recent film *Kwassa Kwassa* (2015), and is preparing for upcoming shows at PAMM with British artist Haroon Mirza and Jamaican painter and sculptor John Dunkley, who was active in Kingston in the 1930s and '40s. It will be Dunkley’s first ever exhibition outside of Jamaica.

Thomas J. Lax

POSITION

Associate Curator, Department of Media and Performance Art, Museum of Modern Art, New York

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Greater New York,” MoMA PS1

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

The exhibitions and programs at RAW Material Company, Dakar

Photo by Paul Mpagi Sepuya.



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MoMA PS1’s Multi-Generational “Greater New York” Is as Flawed as It Is Successful

Lax was just 29 when he was appointed to his current position at MoMA in 2014, but he arrived with seven years at the Studio Museum in Harlem under his belt. There, he revealed his deep passion for performative practices and so-called “outsider” artists with two trailblazing shows: “Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art” (2013–14), which tracked black performance art from the 1960s to today, and “When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American South” (2014), which questioned the exclusory term “outsider art” by bringing together both self-taught and formally educated black artists.

Since his arrival at MoMA, he’s co-curated the 2015 installment of “Greater New York” and edited the first-ever monograph on the shape-shifting work of artist and choreographer Ralph Lemon, Lax’s “artist guru,” as he says. Over the next two years he’ll be busy with “Return the World,” a Spring 2017 show that will use art made since 2010 to explore how artists are responding to our current sociopolitical climate, and a major 2018 exhibition and performance program that will “reconsider the relationship of music, visual art, film, and dance in New York in the 1960s,” Lax says.

Ruba Katrib

POSITION

Curator, SculptureCenter, New York

LOCATION

New York

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“The Eccentrics,” SculptureCenter

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“David Hammons: Five Decades,” Mnuchin Gallery,
New York

Photo by Talia Chetrit.



Since Katrib joined SculptureCenter’s curatorial team in 2012, her program has served as a launching pad for countless artists working across sculptural practices. Case in point: This year, she featured three ambitious projects by emerging artists Anthea Hamilton, Jessi Reaves, and Rochelle Goldberg. After the exhibitions closed, Hamilton was nominated for the U.K.’s prestigious Turner Prize (for the show she realized with Katrib), Reaves exhibited at gallery Bridget Donahue, and Goldberg was included in a group show at the Whitney.

During her tenure, Katrib has made a concentrated effort to expand the discourse around sculpture to include elements of performance, new media, and marginalized demographics—to considerable success. She’s currently in the process of working with the Cercle d’Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (Congolesse Plantation Workers Art League), with whom she’ll show sculptures made by artist plantation workers based in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo.

Joseph Becker

POSITION

Associate Curator of Architecture and Design, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

LOCATION

San Francisco

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“Typeface to Interface,” SFMOMA

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

Jonathan Schipper’s “Cubicle,” Rice Gallery, Houston;
“Space Program: Europa,” Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco

Photo by Don Ross.



RELATED ARTICLE



Up and Coming: A Young Curator Shows Us How Design Can Transform Space—Starting with His Own

Becker arrived at SFMOMA in 2007 with a bachelor’s degree in architecture and a passion for all facets of design and visual culture. Since then, he’s become an indispensable fixture in the museum’s design department, having organized innovative group shows, like 2012’s “Field Conditions,” which brought together creatives, such as Tauba Auerbach and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, who work at the cusp of art and architecture, and authoritative retrospectives, like 2013’s “Lebbeus Woods: Architect,” which firmly placed the inventive, influential Woods within the art-historical canon.

An exhibition that Becker curated with the museum’s Architecture and Design curatorial lead Jennifer Dunlop Fletcher, “Typeface to Interface,” just closed at SFMOMA. It corralled together a diverse array of graphic design works since 1950 to tell a visual story about the shift from analog to digital communication. Now, Becker is hard at work preparing for “Tomás Saraceno: Stillness in Motion – Cloud Cities,” a site-specific, immersive environment by the internationally-renowned artist and former MIT Visiting Artist that, as Becker explains, “challenges us to consider an airborne alternative to our urban future.”

Naomi Beckwith

POSITION

Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

LOCATION

Chicago

RECENT CAREER HIGHLIGHT

“The Propeller Group,” Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

FAVORITE SHOW SEEN LATELY

“Carmen Herrera: Lines of Sight,” Whitney Museum of American Art

Photo by Maria Ponce.



“I’m most proud of the projects where I conspired closely with artists to solve a nagging question,” explains Beckwith, who has been producing ambitious, boundary-pushing exhibitions since her appointment to the MCA’s curatorial team in 2011. But her career didn’t start there. While at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2010, she caught the art world’s attention and set the tone for her curatorial approach with “30 Seconds Off an Inch,” a 42-artist exhibition that brought together practices informed by black culture and everyday materials.

At the MCA, Beckwith has only strengthened her commitment to forging connections between contemporary art and culture at large. In the past two years, standout exhibitions have included “The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now,” which explored the influence of the 1960s African American avant-garde on current creative output, and, up now, the first-ever survey of the Ho Chi Minh-based, politically minded collective The Propeller Group. As the MCA Chicago preps for its 50th birthday in 2017, Beckwith is in the beginning stages of planning a project with abstract painter Howardena Pindell, who—like the MCA, as Beckwith points out—has been working with art for 50 years.

—Alexxa Gotthardt

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The 20 Most Influential Young Curators in Europe

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