

## ART &amp; DESIGN

# Whitney Edits a Tale of a Nation

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Inside Art

By **CAROL VOGEL**

Frank Stella's "Gran Cairo" (1962). The Whitney plans a Stella retrospective in 2015-16.  
 Frank Stella/Artists Rights Society, New York

A year away from opening, the new home of the Whitney Museum of American Art is still a construction site, but it is already a vivid presence in Manhattan's meatpacking district, and curators have mapped out months' worth of exhibitions there.

The first show to go on view next spring — an opening date has not yet been set — will tell the story of 20th- and 21st-century American art entirely through the Whitney's permanent collection. It will include many prominent favorites: Alexander Calder's "Circus," Edward Hopper's "Early Sunday Morning," Andy Warhol's "Green Coca-Cola Bottles," Georgia O'Keeffe's "Music Pink and Blue No. 2," Jasper Johns's "Three Flags." There will also be plenty of work by artists of later generations — Cindy Sherman,

Richard Prince, Kara Walker — who are "now considered pillars of contemporary art," said Donna De Salvo, the Whitney's chief curator.

Using all 60,000 square feet of the gallery space, including outdoor terraces and rooms for film and video, the exhibition will even capture what American artists have been producing for the last decade.



"Blues" (1929), by Archibald Motley, who will be the focus of a show at the Whitney in 2015-16. With its space doubled, the museum will have room for more exhibitions.  
Collection of Mara Motley and Valerie Gerrard Browne, Chicago History Museum

The building, designed by Renzo Piano, calls for “an entirely new mind-set,” Ms. De Salvo said as she surveyed a capacious gallery, strewn with wires, that has high ceilings and views of the Hudson.

The new structure has more than twice the space of the Whitney’s Marcel Breuer building on Madison Avenue, which allows the museum to take stock of its holdings, she said. “A lot of the collection will be a mystery to the public, either because things have not been on view for decades or, in the case of acquisitions, have never been shown at all,” Ms. De Salvo explained.

The exhibition, to remain on view for around four months, will explore how the meaning of “American” has changed over the years. Artists who live and work in the United States may have been born elsewhere (or vice versa) yet play important parts in an ever-expanding national mix.

The artworks will be arranged chronologically. Making its first appearance at the museum since 1994 will be “V-yramid,” a recently conserved sculpture and video installation from 1982 by Nam June Paik. The room-size piece consists of 40 television sets stacked like a ziggurat, with blurring images and a soundtrack of rock and traditional Korean music.

New acquisitions in the show will extend beyond today’s trendy names and help deepen the diverse narratives woven into the history of American art. For example, the Whitney plans to exhibit a terra cotta head from 1947 by the African-American sculptor Elizabeth Catlett, associated with the Harlem Renaissance. It has never been shown before.

More space will allow for more exhibitions. Scheduled for the fall and winter of 2015-16 is the first full-scale survey of paintings by another figure of the Harlem Renaissance, Archibald Motley, known for his colorful scenes of urban life in Chicago. Running concurrently will be the first full-scale Frank Stella retrospective in this country since the Museum of Modern Art organized one in 1970. (MoMA organized a smaller Stella show 17 years later.)

“A lot of younger artists are particularly interested in Stella’s work,” Ms. De Salvo said, “because of his formal innovation and unending willingness to explore color, form and space.”

Also planned for that period is a show of contemporary art from the collection of the married art advisers Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner, who pledged their American art trove to the Whitney two years ago (and their holdings of European artists to the Pompidou Center in Paris). The exhibition will reflect the full range of their collection.

In the spring of 2016, the Whitney plans shows devoted to the artist and filmmaker Laura Poitras and to David Wojnarowicz, the painter, photographer, filmmaker and AIDS activist who was prominent in the East Village art scene of the 1980s.

Because of the complex logistics of the move, Ms. De Salvo said, the next Whitney Biennial will not take place in 2016, as it normally would, but a year later. She said the exact dates have yet to be determined. The current biennial runs through May 25.

## **THROUGH GOOGLE GLASSES**

Always looking to embrace the next big thing, the New Museum says the Google Glass eyewear brand will be the lead sponsor of its 2015 Triennial, which opens next February.

The Triennial explores the work of emerging artists around the world, and this edition is being organized by Lauren Cornell, a curator at the museum, and Ryan Trecartin, the Los Angeles artist and filmmaker.

“The show is very much about the future,” said Lisa Phillips, the New Museum’s director. Neither she nor Janine Gianfredi, who oversees marketing for Google Glass, whose software connects to the Internet, would specify how much money Google was providing for the show.

They did say that the Glass eyewear would be available to visitors at the exhibition. How it will be used is still being discussed and tested, they added. Ms. Gianfredi said she imagined that the viewing experience might in some way replace the conventional audio tour.

Concerns have been raised about the potential of the Glass software to collect information in a way that invades users’ privacy, and the headwear has yet to achieve mainstream acceptance.

But Ms. Gianfredi said that through its apps and social media, Google had identified a consumer appetite for new ways of using technology to create, view and appreciate art. A onetime New Yorker, she said she considered the New Museum a good fit for a trial run. “It is very experimental,” she said.

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