

Portland Museum of Art selects artists for exhibition about 2020

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By Bob Keyes

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Twenty-four artists and one artist collective have been chosen for the Portland Museum of Art's exhibition about the turmoil and upheaval of 2020. The juried exhibition, "Untitled, 2020: Art From Maine In A _____ Time," will open in February.

Artists living and working in Maine were encouraged to fill in the blank in the exhibition's title by submitting art for consideration that speaks to the uncertain and unsettled nature of this historic moment, and they responded en masse. More than 900 artists submitted work, said Jaime DeSimone, curator of contemporary art at the PMA and curatorial liaison for this exhibition.

The five jurors settled on 25 artists after many long digital meetings. "They were given the impossible task to survey 900 submissions and come out on the other side," she said. "I think the jurors did a phenomenal job being extremely thoughtful and considering all the different conversations in our communities and around the globe today, and how artists are really active in the studio right now, inspired not only by the pandemic, but civil unrest, the political situation, climate change and other issues."



Titi de Baccarat, shown at work in February, is among 24 artists and one artist collective chosen for the Portland Museum of Art's exhibition about the turmoil and upheaval of 2020. *Michael Kelley / The Forecaster*

The exhibition will open Feb. 12. If the pandemic forces the museum to close before then, the PMA will present the work online. If nothing else, 2020 has taught the museum to adapt to the circumstances, DeSimone said. "There will be no public opening, no performances, no installations on site. As we have been doing since March, we will have a robust digital presence of the show online, and we will do everything we can to highlight the artists' work and provide visibility that way," she said. "We recognize that not all people will be comfortable coming into the museum when this opens in February, depending on where the COVID-19 numbers are."

The artists selected are:

Ryan Adams, ARRT! (Artists' Rapid Response Team!), Henry Austin, Greta Bank, Steve Bartlett, Rachel Church, Titi de Baccarat, Anna Dibble, Christopher Dudley, Rosamond Gross, Celeste Henriquez, Greg Jamie, Eleanor Kipping, Enrique Mendía, Meghan Mitchell, Elijah Ober, Ashley Page, Veronica A. Perez, Julie Poitras Santos, Joshua Reiman, Charles Schreiber, Sally Stanton, Giles Timms, Deborah Wing-Sproul and Evelyn Wong.

The roster includes new, emerging and established artists. "Some names might be new, but all of these artists are ready for their shining moment. This will be an introduction for all of us. The whole purpose of the exhibition is to show a collective response of artists throughout

the state, and I think this does it well.”

The exhibition will include a range of media, including sculpture, painting, video, craft and social-practice art, which involves collaborative, community-driven work. In a news release, the museum said the art in the exhibition “will create opportunities for empathy, togetherness, and impact during a time when we need it most.”

Members of the Artists’ Rapid Response Team will show examples of yard signs, banners and posters that they made for various protests and demonstrations. Dibble will exhibit work that she has created related to climate change, and de Baccarat will show art about his personal journey from Africa, family and heritage.

Santos will exhibit what she calls “prompts for walking,” or poetic scores that operate as invitations to viewers to look up, down, ahead and behind and to consider “what we find beneath our feet, the uncertainty of the future, histories we trail behind us, and guidance from the sky,” she said. Her project is based on a series that she created this summer at Speedwell Projects in Portland.

To be considered, all art had to be made in Maine in 2020. The jurors were artists from across Maine communities, including Katherine Bradford, Cody Castle-Stack, Jeremy Frey, Séan Alonzo Harris and Ayumi Horie.

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