

## PRESS

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### THE ARMORY SHOW ANNOUNCES CURATORIAL TEAM FOR THE FAIR'S SEPTEMBER 2021 EDITION AT THE JAVITS CENTER

**Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Claudia Schmuckli, and Valerie Cassel Oliver will lead  
The Armory Show's 2021 curatorial initiatives**

For its September 2021 edition, the first to be held at the state-of-the-art Javits Center, The Armory Show continues its commitment to curatorially driven programming. These initiatives—the Focus and Platform sections of the fair, as well as the Curatorial Leadership Summit—are an essential part of The Armory Show. Each one offers a unique perspective through which visitors can engage with critical issues and culturally significant themes in the context of modern and contemporary works of art. For the inaugural year at the Javits Center, Focus and Platform will join Galleries and Presents under one roof in a cohesive and integrated floorplan designed to optimize the fair experience for exhibitors and collectors alike. **Wassan Al-Khudhairi**, Chief Curator, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, will curate the **Focus** section; **Claudia Schmuckli**, Curator-in-Charge of Contemporary Art and Programming, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, will curate the **Platform** section; and **Valerie Cassel Oliver**, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, will chair the **Curatorial Leadership Summit**.

**Nicole Berry**, Executive Director of The Armory Show, said:

*For our 2021 curatorial program, we are thrilled to be collaborating with these three distinguished curators and look forward to the incredible insights and unique perspectives they'll bring to the next edition of the Armory Show. In addition, we're privileged to once again convene curators from around the world at our annual Curatorial Leadership Summit. Fundamentally, we are a platform for the art community to gather for connections, dialogue, and exchange, and this symposium enables curators to come together for timely conversations about important challenges and issues. Recent*

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*events have further underscored how important it is to share such ideas across the sector, and we look forward to welcoming our visitors and curators for these vital exchanges in 2021.*

Further background on the 2021 curatorial program and the newly appointed curators are as follows:

**Wassan Al-Khudhairi**, Chief Curator, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, will curate **Focus**, dedicated to solo- and dual-artist presentations of today's most relevant and compelling artworks. A highlight of the fair, Focus provides additional opportunities for galleries to exhibit at The Armory Show by offering a subsidized rate. Previous curators of Focus have included Jarrett Gregory, Curator, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (2017); Gabriel Ritter, Curator, Minneapolis Institute of Art (2018); Lauren Haynes, Curator of Contemporary Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas (2019); and Jamillah James, Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2020).

**Claudia Schmuckli**, Curator-in-Charge of Contemporary Art and Programming, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, will curate **Platform**, dedicated to large-scale and site-specific presentations. Works in this section will be placed throughout the Javits Center, allowing for moments of pause and reflection. Introduced in 2017, Platform has previously been curated by Eric Shiner, Executive Director, Pioneer Works (2017); Jen Mergel, former Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2018); Sally Tallant, President and Executive Director, Queens Museum (2019); and Anne Ellegood, Executive Director, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2020).

**Valerie Cassel Oliver**, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, will chair the fourth **Curatorial Leadership Summit (CLS)**. Convening curators from around the world, the summit is a day-long, invitation-only symposium, which fosters innovation in the curatorial community through exploring, debating, and challenging some of the most critical topics in the arts and culture landscape. A public keynote presentation follows the closed-door session. In addition to the on-site summit, Valerie will chair two Virtual CLS events in the spring of 2021 leading up to the fair. Previous chairs of the CLS have included Naomi Beckwith, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2018); Dan Byers, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University (2019); and José Carlos Diaz, Chief Curator, The Andy Warhol Museum (2020).

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The 2020 Virtual CLS program has featured Sally Tallant, President and Executive Director, Queens Museum, and Suhanya Raffel, Museum Director, M+ Hong Kong.

The dedicated themes for the fair's curated sections are forthcoming.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **The Armory Show**

The Armory Show is New York's art fair and has been an essential part of the city's cultural landscape since 1994. A dedicated member of the art community, we promote profitable exchange and facilitate meaningful discovery. The Armory Show presents the world's leading international galleries who showcase an array of modern and contemporary art and artists.

The Armory Show 2021 will launch the fall arts season and bring the international art world to New York for the inaugural edition at its new location at the Javits Center in September. The VIP Preview for the 2021 fair will take place on September 9, before opening to the public from September 10-12.

### **Wassan Al-Khudhairi**

Wassan Al-Khudhairi is the Chief Curator at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, where she has organized *Derek Fordjour: SHELTER*, *Stephanie Syjuco: Rogue States*, *Bethany Collins: Chorus*, *Paul Mpagi Sepuya*, *Lawrence Abu Hamdan: Eartwitness Theatre*, *Guan Xiao: Fiction Archive Project*, *Hayv Kahraman: Acts of Reparation*, *Trenton Doyle Hancock: The Re-Evolving Door to the Moundverse* and *SUPERFLEX: European Union Mayotte*. Prior to her position at CAM, Al-Khudhairi was the Hugh Kaul Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Birmingham Museum of Art where she organized the first large-scale exhibition of the museum's contemporary collection, *Third Space / shifting conversations about contemporary art* and the accompanying publication which received the 2019 AAMC Curatorial Award for Excellence. She was invited to be a Curator for the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Art Biennial in Taiwan in 2017 and Co-Artistic Director for 9<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennial in South Korea in 2012. Serving as the Founding Director of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar, Al-Khudhairi oversaw the opening of the Museum in 2010 and co-curated *Sajjil: A Century of Modern Art* and curated *Cai Guo-Qiang: Saraab*. In 2020, Art Table awarded Al-Khudhairi the New Leadership Award.

## **Claudia Schmuckli**

Claudia Schmuckli is the inaugural Curator-in-Charge of Contemporary Art and Programming at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Since joining in the fall of 2016, she has developed a dynamic program of exhibitions, commissions, and acquisitions in dialogue with the institution's sites, buildings, and collections in view of a self-critical reassessment of the Museums' histories and identities. Previously, Schmuckli was Director and Chief Curator of the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston. Most recently she curated *Specters of Disruption*, an exhibition drawn from the Museums' Collections connecting the geological and colonial underpinnings of the de Young Museum to the current conditions in Northern California, and *Uncanny Valley: Being Human in the Age of AI*, the first major museum exhibition in the United States to reflect on the political and philosophical stakes of artificial intelligence from an artistic perspective. Forthcoming exhibitions in 2021 include *Wangechi Mutu: I am Speaking, Are You Listening?* at the Legion of Honor and *Judy Chicago: A Retrospective* at the de Young in August 2021. Other projects include interventions at the Legion of Honor by Alexandre Singh, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Sarah Lucas and Urs Fischer, and projects by Lisa Reihana, Leonardo Drew, Ranu Mukherjee, Matt Mullican, and DIS at the de Young.

## **Valerie Cassel Oliver**

Valerie Cassel Oliver is the Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Prior to her position at the VMFA, she was Senior Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, where she worked from 2000-2017. In 2000 she was one of six curators selected to organize the Biennial for the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Her 2018 debut exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was a 50-year survey of work by Howardena Pindell entitled *Howardena Pindell: What Remains to be Seen*. The exhibition, which she co-organized with Naomi Beckwith, the Manilow Senior Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, was named one of the most influential of the decade. Most recently, Cassel Oliver organized the exhibition, *Cosmologies from the Tree of Life* that featured over thirty newly acquired works from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. She is currently developing the group exhibition, *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture and the Sonic Impulse*, scheduled to open at the VMFA May, 2021.

Cassel Oliver is the recipient of a Getty Curatorial Research Fellowship (2007); the High Museum of Art's David C. Driskell Award (2011); the Arthur and Carol Kaufman Goldberg Foundation-to-Life Fellowship at Hunter College (2016) and the James A. Porter Book

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Award from Howard University (2018). From 2016-17, she was a Senior Fellow in Curatorial Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and, in Spring, 2020 she participated in the University of Texas at Austin's View Points series with Hamza Walker.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR MEDIA

### Fair Dates

#### VIP Preview Day (by invitation only)

Thursday September 9, 2021

### Public Days

Friday September 10 – Sunday September 12, 2021

### Press Images

[thearmoryshow.com/press/images](http://thearmoryshow.com/press/images)

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