Exhibitions

The All-Woman ‘Whitney Houston Biennial’ Is Back, and It’s No Joke

Curator Christine "C." Finley promises the 2017 edition brings the "Greatest Love of All"

Sarah Cascone, March 15, 2017

Kira Nam Greene, *Grab It by the Papaya*. Courtesy of the Whitney Houston Biennial.
Big contemporary art survey shows all tend to have one thing in common: a predominance of male artists. This year’s Whitney Biennial in New York may be a more representative showcase of the current state of American art (both in terms of race and gender) than is the norm, but curator and artist Christine “C.” Finley is showing up the highly anticipated event with an exhibition of her own: the second edition of the cheekily named Whitney Houston Biennial, which features women artists exclusively.

The show is named, of course, for the beloved singer and actress Whitney Houston, who died in 2012. The inaugural outing in 2014 took its name from the Grammy winner’s 1994 hit “I’m Every Woman,” while this year’s show is titled “Greatest Love of All,” after the 1986 Houston single. (Like the Whitney Museum of American Art, which delayed its biennial a year following the opening of its new Meatpacking home in 2015, the Whitney Houston Biennial took a time-out in 2016.)

“We have less square footage but more than double the artists, which sounds crazy,” Finley told artnet News of this year’s alterna-biennial in a phone conversation. “When I say it’s a salon-style show, I mean it’s like art wall paper!”
The exhibition has moved from an artist’s studio in DUMBO, Brooklyn, to 325 Broadway, the home of chashama, a curatorial non-profit run by Anita Durst (yes, of the Durst Dursts) that hosts exhibitions in unused real estate space. “We’re feeling fancy!,” Finley joked.

While it’s easy to see the Whitney Houston Biennial as some sort of protest of the more established exhibition on which its name is a play, Finley said it was not meant as any sort of critique. “We’re grateful for the Whitney, because without it this show wouldn’t be as funny,” she insisted, pointing out that in order for young artists to one day show at the more famous Biennial, they have to exhibit their work at smaller, scrappier outfits like hers.
2017
Whitney Houston Biennial:
Greatest Love of All

THIS ALL WOMEN’S
BIENNIAL
WITH TAKE PLACE ON
325 WEST BROADWAY NYC
MARCH 19-29TH 12-8PM
OPENING RECEPTION:
MARCH 19TH 4-8PM

Whitney Houston Biennial flyer. Courtesy of the Whitney Houston Biennial.
This year’s 125 participants include many artists returning from 2014, as well as women whom Finley discovered over the intervening three years, be it through art fairs or Instagram. Each was invited to submit a proposal, and in addition to her own work, each artist has contributed a text honoring another woman, be it a family member or a historical figure, who helped pave the way for them.

“This allows the women who are in the show to think about their own legacy,” said Finley, proudly calling the exhibition “super generational” as well as “an exciting and encouraging platform for people to be able show some fresh work.”

It’s also a time where women’s issues are coming to the fore, with millions participating in the Women’s March in January following the inauguration of President Donald Trump, and worldwide celebrations of International Women’s Day on March 8.

“[The current political climate] makes [the Whitney Houston Biennial] more important,” Finley acknowledges, “but it was always going to be awesome when you get this many women together.”

“A lot of women are like ‘this is our time,'” she added. “I want to respond to that rather than the negative experiences women have had in the past.”

Although the 2017 biennial doesn’t open until March 19, Finley is already looking forward to 2019, and says she has already enlisted two young curators to help run it. She plans to then entirely hand off operations in 2021, but doesn’t see that as limiting the biennial’s potential. “I’m looking forward to going forever,” she insisted.
See the full list of participating artists below.

Marzena Abrahamik
Nick Alciati
Aurora Andrews
Storm Ascher
Amna Asghar
Karen Azoulay
Ingrid Baars
Isabelle Baldwin
Meegan Barnes
Chloe Bass
Rachelle Beaudoin
Elizabeth Bick
Mx Justin Vivian Bond
Genevieve Bormes
Mitsuko Brooks
Jude Broughan
Lauren Camarata
Maureen Catbagan
Tara L. Cavanaugh
Natalee Cayton
Alana Celii
Sophia Chai
Kiran Chandra
Shahrzad Changalvaee
Jesse Chun
Maxi Cohen  
Liz Collins  
Daryl Daniels  
Desiree Des  
Cat Del Buono  
Patricia Domínguez  
Liz Dosta  
Jessie Edelman  
Melissa Eder  
Ari Elefterin  
Zoe Elefterin  
Sessa Englund  
Deanna Erdmann  
Florencia Escudero  
Gianna Leo Falcon  
Caroline Falby  
Gianna Leo Falcon  
Adriana Farmiga  
Angel Favorite  
C. Finley  
Daphne Fitzpatrick  
Becky Flanders  
Britta Fluevog  
Lucy Fradkin  
Mary Goldthwaite  
Daniela Gomez
Christina Graham
Sophie Grant
Kira Nam Greene
Dana Grossmann
Megan Hays
Clarity Haynes
Patrice Helmar
Sarah Heinemann
Haley Hughes
Lorra Jackson
Emily Janowick
Robin Kang
Miatta Kawinzi
Ambre Kelly
Jenny Kemp
Sylbee Kim
Orrie King
Amy Khoshbin
Rya Kleinpeter
Dominika Ksel
Kristina Lee
Phoebe Legere
Mia Legg
Alexandra “Sasha” Lerman
Liz Ligouri
Marissa Long
Tora López
Sandra Mack-Valencia
Nadja Verena Marcin
Nicole Maloof
Rachel Mason
Chanel Matsunami Govreau
Saira McLaren
Glendalys Medina
LuLu Meng
Qiana Mestrich
Tracy Molis
Sharon Molloy
Linda Montano
Sarah Moran
Gala Mukomolova
Jasmine Murrell
Qinza Najm
Amanda Nedham
Alex Nuñez
Alexis O’Hara
Keri Oldham
Nasrah Omar
Francena Ottley
Juliana Paciulli
Megan Pahmier
Valincy-Jean Patelli
The Whitney Houston Biennial will be on view at chashama, 325 West Broadway, March 19–29, 2017.