

"Emerging Artist Award", *Galerie Magazine*, Fall 2019, 109.



# RAGEN MOSS

LOS ANGELES | SCULPTURE

Light and dark, transparent and opaque, interior and exterior—the interplay of opposites motivates sculptor Ragen Moss. Rendered in polyethylene, her multidimensional works, often shaped to resemble torsos in a nod to traditional sculpture, invite you to look within, move around, and experience them. “I make work that engages what it means to have both a beating heart and a thinking mind,” says Moss. The result is sculptures inside sculptures, each opening up to reveal another intriguing layer, achieved through hand-carving and the application of colors and patterns. Sometimes, she even includes text from the law, as she also happens to be a practicing attorney.

**“HER BIOMORPHIC  
FABRICATIONS ARE  
BEAUTIFUL FORMS**

Jeffrey Brown and Anne Azzi Davenport, “What this year’s Whitney Biennial says about contemporary American art”, *PBS NewsHour*, June 28, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/what-this-years-whitney-biennial-says-about-contemporary-american-art>



## What this year’s Whitney Biennial says about contemporary American art

Jun 28, 2019 6:20 PM EDT

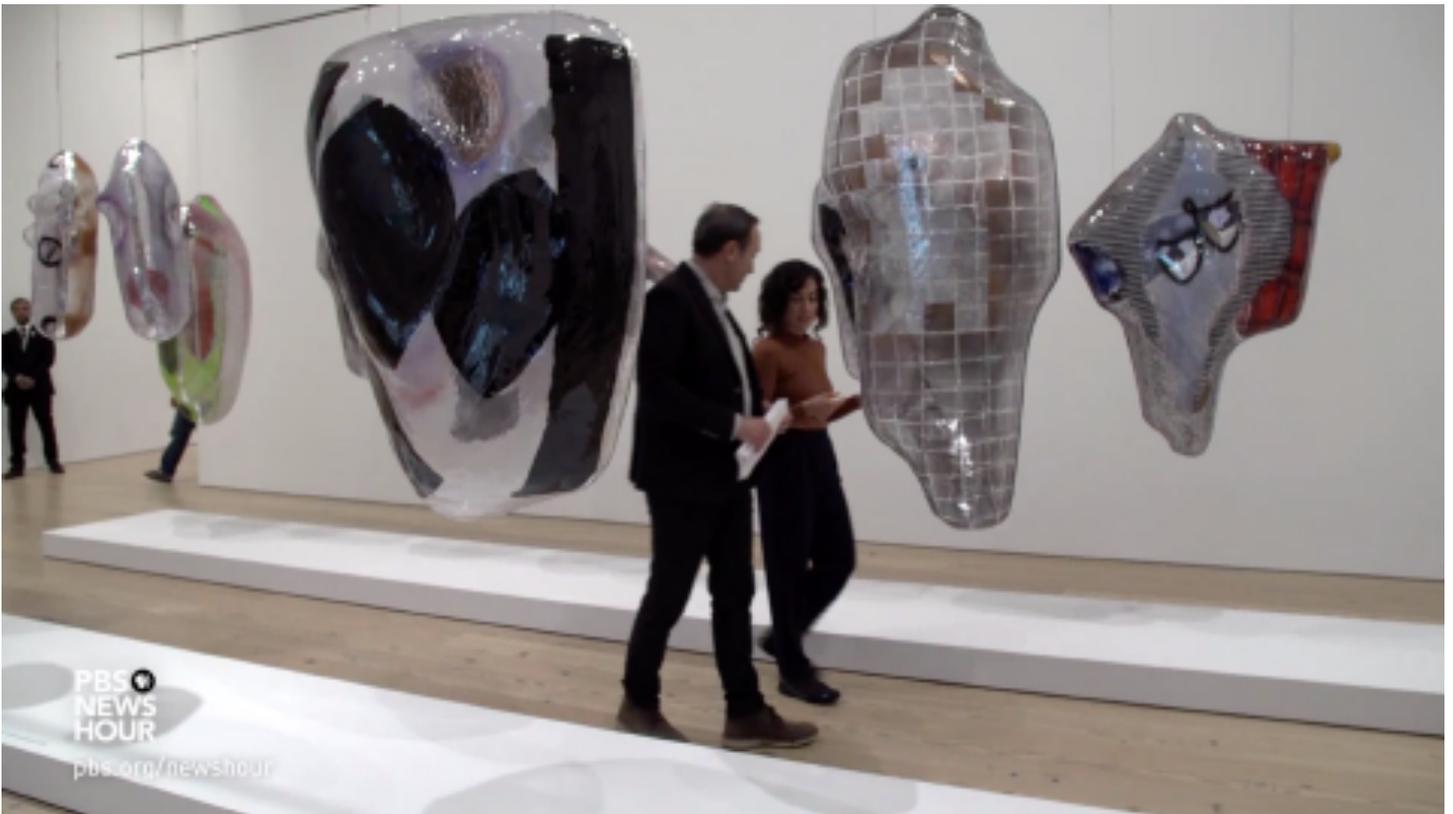
By —

[Jeffrey Brown](#)

By —

[Anne Azzi Davenport](#)

The biennial exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art represents a big moment for contemporary art, featuring some of its biggest names. While works tackle various major social and political issues of the moment, they tend to do so in a way that feels “hopeful and often productive” instead of cynical. But as Jeffrey Brown reports, this year’s show is accompanied by a controversy of its own.



## *Transcript*

- **Jeffrey Brown:**

One thing they found? Even in this high-tech age, artists still like to make things by hand; 31-year-old Pat Phillips, from a small town in Louisiana, painted a giant mural addressing issues of race and incarceration that comes with its own wood fence and bench.

There are finely crafted sculptures by Diane Simpson and Daniel Lind-Ramos, whose assemblage of tools, branches, natural and salvaged materials becomes a kind of shrine to the suffering from the 2017 hurricane in his native Puerto Rico.

- **Ragen Moss:**

There's a sculptural turn in them.

- **Jeffrey Brown:**

And there's also this strange translucent torso-shaped hanging forms handmade by Ragen Moss, who wants us to walk around and peer inside them sculptures.

- **Ragen Moss:**

Sculpture, to me, categorical imperatives is that it can teach us about space like nothing else.

- **Jeffrey Brown:**

Moss is also a lawyer, no doubt unusual for a Biennial artist, but she likes the way her two disciplines make her think differently.

- **Ragen Moss:**

When you're a lawyer, you're given a set of facts. They are not in your control. And a good lawyer's job is to analyze an issue spot, address them and solve them. Art could almost be an opposite funnel, where there are no facts. I make the facts, and then I solve problems that don't exist. I set my own questions.

Kristen Tauer, “Five Artists to Check Out During the Whitney Biennial”, *WWD*, May 17, 2019.  
<https://wwd.com/eye/lifestyle/five-artists-whitney-museum-biennial-1203132226/>

# **WWD** Five Artists to Check Out During the Whitney Biennial

**Presented by Tiffany & Co., the museum survey of contemporary art opened May 17.**

By **Kristen Tauer** on May 17, 2019

After a bit of pre-opening drama — and continued protests and calls to remove Whitney Museum board member and vice chair Warren Kanders, after it was revealed that his company Safariland produces tear gas which has been used against migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border — the museum officially opened the doors to its Biennial showcase today in New York. Presented by Tiffany & Co., the exhibition highlights work from 75 working contemporary artists. Through painting, sculpture, video, photography, performance and installation, the artists featured explore topics touching upon identity, race, religion, gender, the environment and politics.

There's plenty of time to take it all in — the show runs through Sept. 22. Here are a few emerging artists to look out for when you're there.

## **Ragen Moss**

The L.A.-based artist's nested sculptures hang from the museum's ceiling but appear almost as if they are suspended, and there is a certain balloon-quality about the work. Torso-sized, the painted sculptures integrate illustration and text, and various levels of surface opacity. Moss explores ideas of physical space in her work — a point which may be particularly underscored if you visit the museum on a busy weekend and have to jostle your way for a better peek inside each piece.



Installation view of Ragen Moss' work at the Whitney Biennial. Kristen Tauer

Andrew Russeth, "Soft Power: The Whitney Biennial Is an Elegant But Safe Portrait of Right Now", *ARTnews*, May 13, 2019. <http://www.artnews.com/2019/05/13/whitney-biennial-review/>

# ARTNEWS

## REVIEWS

# Soft Power: The Whitney Biennial Is an Elegant But Safe Portrait of Right Now

BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 05/13/19 6:14 PM



Works by Ragen Moss at the 2019 Whitney Biennial.  
PHOTOS: ANDREW RUSSETH/ARTNEWS, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Lilting strings perform “The Star-Spangled Banner,” accompanying a tender animation of watercolors by Kota Ezawa that shows black football players, including Colin Kaepernick, kneeling to protest police brutality.

Clippings of racist media coverage of the Central Park Five, the black and Latino teenagers wrongfully convicted of raping and assaulting a white woman in 1989, hang along a wall—the work of Alexandra Bell, who has also included an ad signed by a private citizen, Donald J. Trump: “BRING BACK THE DEATH PENALTY. BRING BACK OUR POLICE!”

Voices emerge from an old tape player, sharing their fears for the Trump presidency, as recorded by Marcus Fischer just before Inauguration Day in 2017. “Fascism,” “white supremacy,” “the denial of science,” and “insanity taking over” are among the utterances.

The first Whitney Biennial assembled entirely during the Trump Administration has arrived. But despite such (mostly perfunctory) nods to the ongoing political morass, this is not a show of incendiary, radical responses. Artists are looking at how cities are being gentrified, how communities can be formed, and how power functions, in a register that is, for the most part, avowedly earnest—more melancholy than outraged.

“Who’s trying to fuck me over right now?” Martine Syms calls out in a funny, impressionistic video-photographic self-portrait of an installation, and Paul Mpagi Sepuya shoots himself in exhilarating, oblique self-portraits of his own. Strung up by wires, Ragen Moss’s nine awkward, luscious translucent polyethylene pieces vaguely recall bodies or cocoons, painted with playful references to Robert Motherwell, Charline von Heyl, and Simpson; they look tough but also a bit precarious. And I found myself strangely moved while seeing young female gymnasts tumbling through the air in Jeanette Mundt’s exquisite Giacomo Balla–like paintings, aiming to be perfect, if only for a moment.

Jillian Steinhauer, “The Whitney Biennial 75 Artists Are In, and One Dissenter Steps Out”, *New York Times*, February 25, 2019.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/25/arts/design/2019-whitney-biennial.html>

# The New York Times

The Whitney Biennial:  
75 Artists Are In,  
and One Dissenter Steps Out  
By Jillian Steinhauer  
Feb. 25, 2019

For most artists, inclusion in the 2019 Whitney Biennial is not only a tangible milestone but also an affirmation of their work and an encouragement to keep going. “It’s a huge deal, because it allows me to move forward in a greater way,” said [Brendan Fernandes](#), whose installations and performances combine visual art and dance. For the biennial, Mr. Fernandes, a former ballet dancer who is based in Chicago, will present a new version of a piece titled “The Master and Form,” which consists of archaic-looking wooden scaffolding and devices that allow performers to hold the five basic ballet positions for long periods of time. “For me it is a social-political space, a piece that questions the agency of the body, the agency of the dancer and our labor,” said Mr. Fernandes.

The Los Angeles-based artist [Ragen Moss](#) is also concerned with the body and how it functions within society — what she describes as the “beautiful tension that we each experience as this round, awkward, spatial, embodied being that is also inscribed by language.” Ms. Moss makes hanging, transparent sculptures that she embeds with layers and paints and that are evocative of human forms. For the Whitney Biennial, she made nine sculptures representing types, including a lawmaker, a laborer and a rule breaker, that were her answer to the question, “What are the characters or ways of being that our particularized moment are forcing us to reckon with?”



Ragen Moss is a Los Angeles-based artist chosen for the Whitney Biennial



Ragen Moss's sculpture, "Consumptive Reader, 2nd degree (with Apple)," from 2017. The artist is making new work for the Whitney exhibition. Credit Ragen Moss; Dario Lasagni

Scott Indrisek, "7 Artists Not To Miss At the 2019 Whitney Biennial", *Garage (VICE)*, March 6, 2019.

**GARAGE**

VICE



ART

## 7 Artists Not To Miss At the 2019 Whitney Biennial

From the subtly spectacular to the oddly elegant at the 79th exhibition.

By [SCOTT INDRISEK](#) | Mar 6 2019, 11:24am

Korakrit Arunanondchai, *Together with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4*, 2017. High-definition video, color, sound; 23:28 min. Image courtesy the artist; boychild; Clearing, New York and Brussels; and Carlos/Ishikawa, London. Photograph by Alexander Addington-White

The next 79th Whitney Biennial opens on May 17, bringing together 75 artists for an exhibition that has—especially in recent years—inspired controversy. Of course, any major show meant to be a snapshot of contemporary art in America is going to ruffle feathers. But previous iterations of the biennial have dissolved into anger and polemics, as was the case in 2015, when Dana Schutz's *Open Casket*—an abstracted rendering of the body of the murdered African American teenager Emmett Till—exploded into a vicious firestorm that went well beyond the art world.

The co-curators of this year's show, Jane Panetta and Rujeko Hockley, must be hoping that their exhibition can sidestep such a fate. (That said, there are already some rumblings of discontent, with at least one artist—Michael Rakowitz—preemptively pulling out of the show due to the business dealings of Whitney vice chairman Warren B. Kanders) The upcoming Whitney Biennial is a relatively youthful affair, with Panetta and Hockley stressing that roughly 75% of the artists are under the age of 40.

While the roster includes familiar names (Nicole Eisenman, Josh Kline) and new cult favorites (the unconventional collective Forensic Architecture, nominated for the 2018 Turner Prize), it also leaves room for plenty of unexpected discoveries. Here are seven of the artists we're most excited about:

## Ragen Moss



Ragen Moss, *Consumptive Reader, 2nd degree (with Apple)*, 2017. Polyethylene and acrylic paint, 31 x 16 x 9 in. (78.7 x 40.6 x 22.9 cm). Image courtesy the artist. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.

Multi-hyphenates are nothing new in the art world, but Ragen Moss is likely the only artist-lawyer participating in this year's Whitney Biennial. Her unique background leads to all sorts of heady cross-pollination: in 2018, she gave a lecture in Los Angeles entitled "The Spatial Question: What Constitutional Law Can Learn From Sculpture." Thankfully, it's possible to appreciate her work without an advanced degree. Moss landed on the curators' radar following a 2017 exhibition at Ramiken Crucible in New York, organized by Lucas Blalock (who will also appear in this year's biennial). In that show, rows of polyethylene forms hung from metal rods—an array of hollow, enigmatic husks painted with acrylic. Moss's practice might be driven by ideas and a passion for activism, but her curious objects have their own formal allure.

Andrew Russeth, “The Year in, and Beyond, New York Galleries—Plus a Top 10 from Around the World”, *ARTnews*, December, 27, 2017. <http://www.artnews.com/2017/12/27/year-beyond-new-york-galleries-plus-top-10-around-world/>

# ARTNEWS

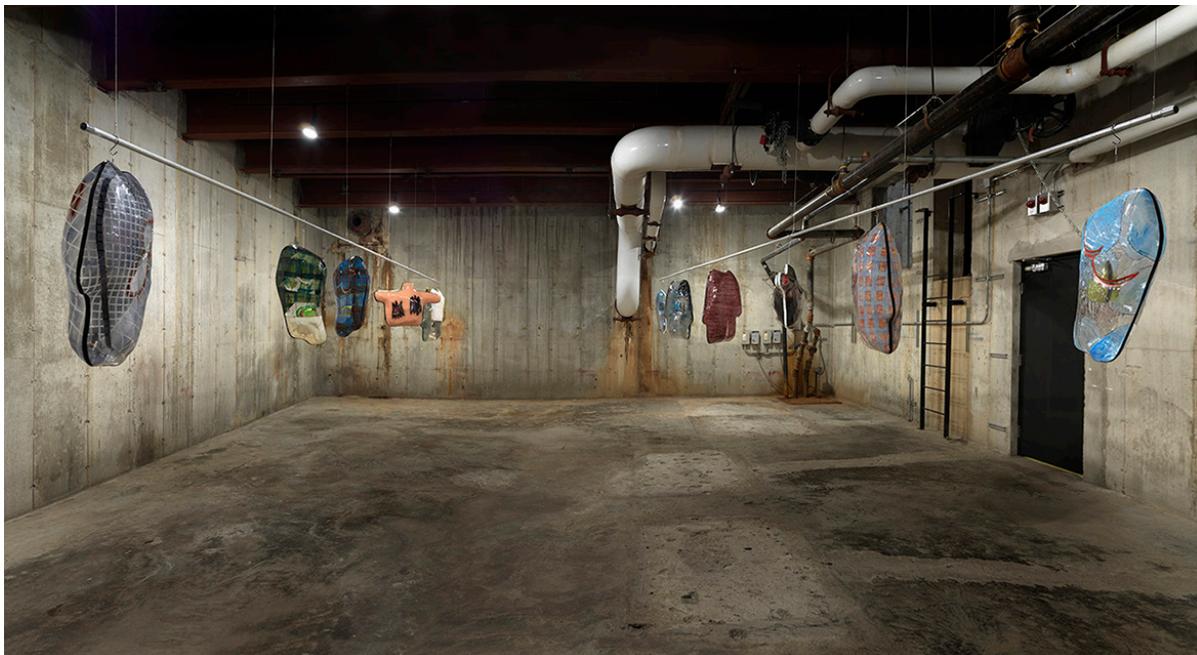
2017: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## **The Year in, and Beyond, New York Galleries—Plus a Top 10 from Around the World**

BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 12/27/17 11:47 AM

Because there are so many places to see art in New York, and so many people committed to making and showing art here, I have often thought to myself that there is really no such thing as a bad year for art in the city, only good years and great years. And 2017 was, in my humble opinion, a great one. There were superb, long-overdue museum shows, venturesome gallery exhibitions, and flashes of brilliance all over town. I am tempted to classify it as exceptional—a uniquely great year—but things are too unsettled and disturbed for that.

My top ten favorites out of everything I saw around the world follows below, but there were so many strong shows in New York City alone that I have to start with a long list from home.



Installation view of Ragen Moss's solo show at Ramiken Crucible. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND RAMIKEN CRUCIBLE

**5. Ragen Moss at Ramiken Crucible, New York** Housed in Ramiken's basement dungeon space, which has sadly gone quiet of late, this show—organized by the great photographer Lucas Blalock—had eleven bulbous translucent polyethylene forms hanging on two metal rods in the gallery, like hunks of meat in an abattoir or clothing in a department store. Some resembled torsos, others faces, but they always seemed to change form as you gaze at them. They were hilarious and creepy and utterly indefinable, and in very roundabout ways (they're not really paintings, nor sculptures) threw out to viewers tricky, intertwined questions about vision and bodies and how we comprehend either of those things. To put it more simply: this show marked the birth of something new.

Joanna Fiduccia, "Tops & Flops 2017", *Spike Art Magazine*, December 29, 2017.

**SPIKE**

## TOPS & FLOPS 2017



*This art year had so much to offer that losing orientation wasn't very difficult. So why not, we thought, organize it into what was best, and what was worst.*

Das Kunstjahr 2017 hatte so viel zu bieten, dass man leicht die Orientierung verlieren konnte. Hier die Tops und Flops einiger unserer Autoren.

**JOANNA FIDUCCIA, ART HISTORIAN**

## Ragen Moss

Ramiken Crucible, New York, 26.2.–26.3.2017



Ragen Moss's transparent polyethylene encasements in the form of torsos and overstretched sweaters, partly painted with plaids and patterns, were the most original [works](#) I saw this year. Organized by the tremendous photographer and human Lucas Blalock, the works were suspended from metal rods in Ramiken's secondary basement space, the boiler room of an old office building. But the mood was less abattoir than psychic boutique for witty and uncanny statements of how bodies contain and disclose form. Moss's works offer at once a centuries-overdue reinvigoration of polychrome sculpture and the charge of something that awaits an entirely new language.

TOP

“Ragen Moss”, *The New Yorker*, March 27, 2017.

## ARTGALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Through March 26.

 Ramiken Crucible  
389 Grand St.  
Downtown

917-434-4245

[Website](#)

## Ragen Moss

Enter on the East Broadway side of the Apple Bank on Grand Street, on a weekend afternoon, and an attendant will lead you down to the basement, where eleven heartrending sculptures hang from two long poles. They are made from molded pieces of transparent plastic, which Moss partially paints and then joins to create sealed cocoons.

“Consumptive Reader, 1st Degree (with Lemon)” sports blue plaid and contains a yellow balloon; “Vigilante (with Apple, with Pear)” features an orangish cross and two jagged squares marked out in black. The objects’ shapes call to mind internal organs and suggest evidence of some mysterious trauma.

— *The New Yorker*