

Peter Brock, "Ragen Moss: '8 animals'", *The Brooklyn Rail*, December, 2019. <https://brooklynrail.org/2019/12/artseen/Ragen-Moss-8-animals>



## ArtSeen

### Ragen Moss: *8 animals*

By [Peter Brock](#)

ON VIEW

Bridget Donahue Gallery

November 10, 2019 – January 26, 2020

New York

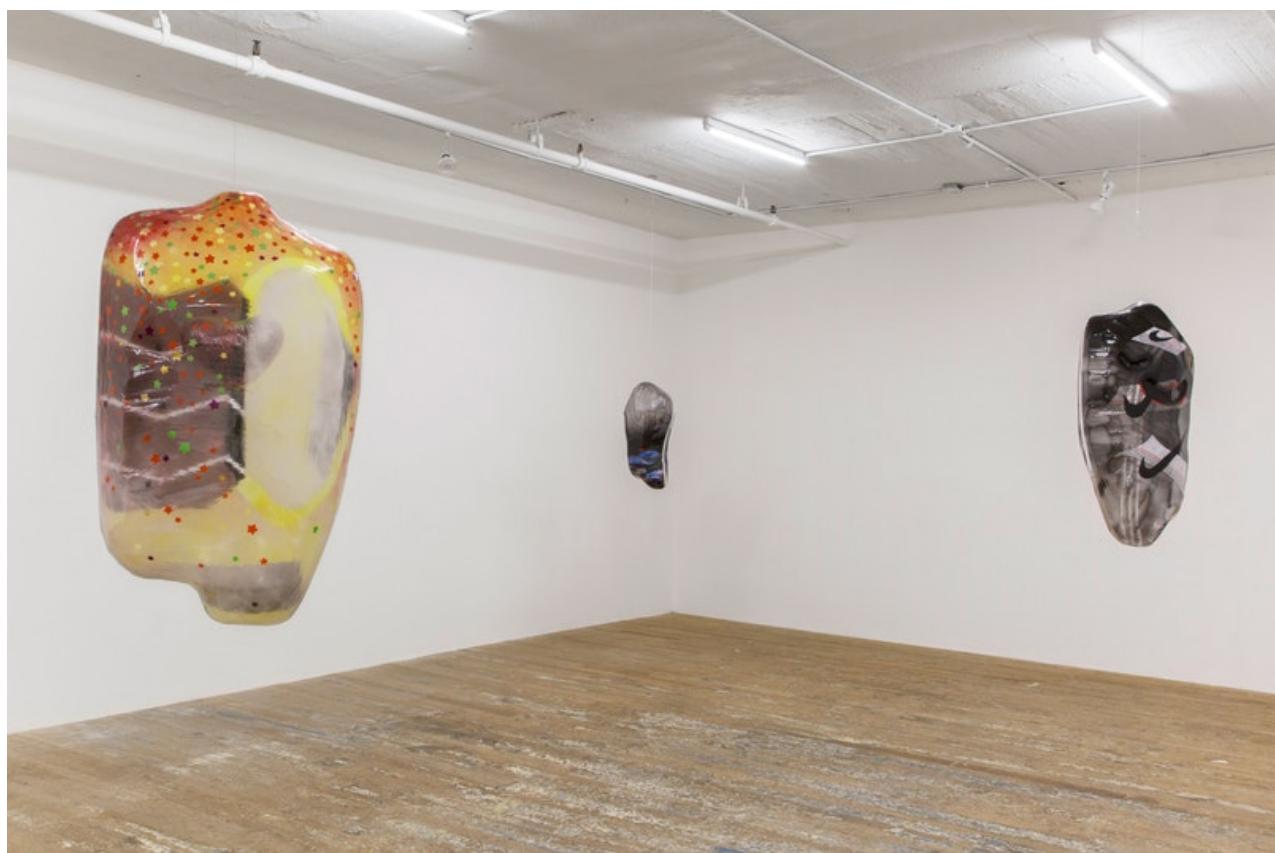


Installation view: *Ragen Moss: 8 Animals*, Bridget Donahue Gallery, New York. Courtesy Bridget Donahue, New York.

The works in Ragen Moss's exhibition, *8 Animals*, invite us to explore the vexed relationship between written language and the material poetics of sculpture. The pieces contain elements of hand-written text that, despite being embedded within the work, never settle into a definitive relationship with their sculptural containers. These hollow forms, made from molded polyethylene plastic embellished with acrylic paint, hang

from the gallery ceiling on braided steel cables. Evocative couplets punctuate these torso-like works, appearing in black script on red heart-shaped vessels suspended on delicate wire within the larger shell: “DAMP SHADOW,” “COMFORT REGIMENS,” “SILENCING DISTANCE,” “MEZZANINE LENDER,” “OLD HANDSHAKE,” to name a few examples. Two pieces have longer passages scrawled across their sides with opaque references to salt content and the firmness of a body. Are these bits of speech, codenames, or glimpses of interior states?

Just to the right of the gallery entrance, five sculptures made from the same mold hang in a neat row that anchors the installation. Each of these works have the word “Again...” scrawled unceremoniously on what seems like the neck. And on the opposite side we find “And, Again...” written in the same script. The urge to unpack the significance of the writing interrupts the act of gazing into the alluring contours and glossy haze of such luminescent shells. Something changes when we find ourselves looking at language. The text alters our relationship to the sculpture, but it does so in a register that does not directly intersect with their form. By forcing us to oscillate between looking and reading, Moss’s work draws out the contrast between these modes of interaction.



Installation view: *Ragen Moss: 8 Animals*, Bridget Donahue Gallery, New York. Courtesy Bridget Donahue, New York.

Language does not depend on its materiality for impact, whereas for sculpture the two are inseparable. A word can be typewritten or scribbled on a napkin, yet once we decipher it, all of its specificity and resonance come flooding in. Sculpture, on the other hand, derives its potency from its physical presence. Its ability to provoke associations depends entirely on its material qualities. The decision to hand-write the bits of text and the question of where to place them are certainly aesthetic concerns, but Moss does not appear to prioritize these formal qualities. Her script is casual, and her placement is direct and frontal. The words deliver their punch despite their appearance, not because of it. Through her antagonistic overlay of language and sculptural vocabulary, Moss heightens the categorical differences in the nature of their expressive force.

Much of the colorful patterning and layering of paint in Moss's works has the same casual quickness as the artist's handwriting. These surface interventions are mostly thin and translucent—a necessary measure in order to view the text within. That the qualities of color and pattern have been relegated to pure surface further pressurizes the fragments of language: we look to the words to fill out the insides of these hollow volumes, and it is tempting to expect the text to establish concrete identities or provide firm boundaries for our visual relationship to the work. The words in this show are differently structured glimpses that do not possess the authoritative quality that we might want written language to provide. The text provokes a category of expectation to which the sculptures cannot directly respond. This condition asks us to consider the conflation of spatial and psychological notions of interiority, and what role language might play in granting access to this realm or perhaps distorting it.

*Leader, reclining* (2019) is notable among the group because Moss has painted the lower third of the sculpture with rich, brushy chunks of acrylic paint. On the opposite side lies a patch of luscious blue squares with zippy yellow and red lines that form a plaid-like pattern. These are the most saturated hues in the entire exhibition, and the only passage where the surface of the sculpture is completely opaque. This inscrutability leaves us to wonder what is contained within. The density of paint gives way to a black haze and then clear plastic near the top of the piece. Five arrows drawn onto the surface point downward, and the words "FLATTENING FORCE" appear alongside one of them. It is as if the presence of words has forced all the delightful bits down into the bottom of the vessel. This moment is the most explicit demonstration that language can both enliven and constrict the sensuousness of form.

Johanna Fateman, "Ragen Moss", *The New Yorker*, December 16, 2019.

# THE NEW YORKER

Ragen Moss  
Donahue

**DOWNTOWN** The Los Angeles sculptor follows up her appearance in the recent Whitney Biennial with an intriguing new series in acrylic, polyethylene, aluminum, and steel. Suspended from the ceiling, the works initially suggest alien pods on the verge of hatching, but, when viewed up close, their torsolike forms are more mammalian than extraterrestrial. (The association is underscored by the show's title, "8 Animals.") They're mostly transparent - with occluded areas of bright colors, patterning, and opaque shapes, including a riff on the Nike swoosh — but these qualities don't outweigh the corporeal references. Moss exploits the viscous, membranous potential of her plastic metrics to emphasize interior space; the pieces contain other sculptural elements, like bodies housing organs. The addition of hand-scrawled texts — "alarm alarm," "making contact" — can strike angst or saccharine notes when viewed straight-on, but, from other angles, they gain a murky dimension or sardonic edge. Moss's curious objects invite, even demand, three-hundred-and-sixty-degree consideration. —J.F. (through Jan. 26)

Blake Oetting, "Ragen Moss", *Artforum*, December 6, 2019, <https://www.artforum.com/picks/ragen-moss-81532>.

# ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS



**Ragen Moss, Senior Borrower (with Mezzanine Borrower), 2019**, acrylic, polyethylene, aluminum, and steel hardware, 53 x 30 x 22".

NEW YORK

## Ragen Moss

BRIDGET DONAHUE  
99 Bowery 2nd Floor  
November 10, 2019–January 26, 2020

There is something peculiar about the beginning of a party, the conspicuous amounts of empty space fostering an ambient anticipation of what will come, who will arrive, and how I, you, or we will respond. It's this sort of social anxiety that one encounters here, where Ragen Moss's bulbous, anthropomorphic sculptures are currently on view.

Constructed with polyethylene, aluminum, steel hardware—and adorned with acrylic paint—Moss's forms, which hang from the gallery's ceiling, are both bionic and voluptuous. Indeed, the works' bodily contours are exaggerated precisely through the rigidity of the materials employed (however, a number of their indentations suggest a certain malleability as well). À la Umberto Boccioni, her characters seem transitory, both full of air and not, inhaling and exhaling. Although they encourage a certain fascination with surface tension, Moss's sculptures are spatially dynamic. *Senior Borrower (with Mezzanine Borrower)*, all works 2019, for example, features a range of felicitous decoration—including stars, a Lamborghini logo, and written text—that partially obscures a world behind its translucent plastic skin. "Interiority" becomes hypostasized, no longer a metaphysical inwardness but rather the spatial sediment of Moss's sculpting.

Not all the sculptures should be considered individually, however. Some, like *Puritan (with hellcat Heart)* and *Hellcat (with puritan Heart)*, are physically linked, their swapped hearts suggesting an amorous entanglement as well. *Unteachables I (with double Hearts)* and *Unteachables II (with double Hearts)* serve as the show's more established couples, each pair gently swaying next to each other. The gallery becomes the arena in which these relationships play out, Moss's sculptures carving out space both social and physical, beyond and within their evocative forms, charting this party's beguiling cartography.

— Blake Oetting

Kristin Tauer, "An Inside Look With Artist Ragen Moss", *WWWD*, November 12, 2019, 17.

NOVEMBER 12, 2019

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**WWD**

# An Inside Look With Artist Ragen Moss

The L.A.-based artist's new series, "8 Animals," is at Bridget Donahue Gallery in downtown New York. BY KRISTEN TAUER PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEXIE MORELAND

**Ragen Moss** wants you to take a really good look at her sculptures; like most art, there are many layers to consider.

But she particularly wants you to consider the literal inner layers. "One of the arguments that I would like to be presenting about sculpture's capacity is that it can make specific arguments, it doesn't have to always be about gestalt," she says. The petite artist, who is based in Los Angeles, was in New York to install her newest work since several of her pieces were exhibited in the Whitney Biennial earlier this year. "Sculpture's gift is to teach us about the space we are not, and to learn about what it means to be a human being through all of that."

That argument is on display at Bridget Donahue Gallery in Manhattan's Lower East Side, where her exhibition of new hanging works, "8 Animals," is hard to sum up without the use of physical presence. Installed so that viewers can circumvent the sculptures and observe them at different angles, the works morph depending on where you are observing them, and what level of opacity is in view.

At one angle, you may be able to be inside a sculpture where text or imagery or another sculpture altogether may await. Taken in at another angle, you may be able to see through the other side of a piece, or your view might be restricted to just the texture and color and decoration of an exterior shell, more in line with traditional sculpture.

"It's completely contour-driven, and yet it becomes completely not about the contour," says Moss of her work. "By overloading the contour, there's almost a collapse of it. It's so overloaded it crumbles or disintegrates."

The sculptures are all modeled loosely on the idea of a human torso, the core – and a core implies an interior. Her addition of an interior sculpture, often in the shape of a heart, also cues the viewer into the human quality of the work.

The sculptures resemble partially deflated helium balloons, and her labor-intensive process of creating them is proprietary. But Moss maintains that she's



Unteachables I (with double Hearts), two sculptures each 24 x 15 x 8 in and  
Unteachables II (with double Hearts), two sculptures each 24 x 15 x 8 in.

Ragen Moss at Bridget  
Donahue Gallery.

not a process artist, and the work isn't about her use of material; there are no symbolic meanings to untangle from her choice of acrylic, polyethylene, aluminum and steel. "It's about space and it's about creating these characters," she says.

Her characters are unexpected – a girl sprinting, a leader reclining, a senior borrower and senior lender, puritan and hellcat – and often paired to highlight polarity. Moss collects words and phrases which make their way into her work, including legal text which she encounters in her career as a lawyer (like her sculptures, there's a polarity to her own life.)

While the idea of space is explored within each sculpture and their physical relation with the viewer, Moss also sees a dialogue created between the sculptures, and installed the works with a focus on the interplay between their proximity in the room. To be sure, a different configuration would have highlighted different ideas proposed by each of the works; Moss sees her current layout as an outline of the present cultural landscape, inclusive of economics, religious and moral based judgment issues, and politics.

Space has influenced Moss' artistic



Installation view  
of "8 Animals."

career, too, with the scale of her work increasing as her personal environment has expanded. "When I lived in New York, I lived in a 350-square-foot place and I made these tiny weird things," she says. "And then I moved to Los Angeles and I had more physical freedom."

Her work speaks to big ideas, which

viewers may or may not take away from peering inside the sculptures.

"I'm more interested in really thinking a lot about an idea or a set of ideas and then putting them there, and then my job is kind of done and what people do with it, they do with it," she says. "On some level, a viewer gets to see what they want to see."

Lindsay Preston Zappas, "Working Artist", *Carla Issue 17*, Fall 2019, 32-35.

# carla

## Working Artist

Featuring Ragen Moss,  
Justen LeRoy, and Bari Ziperstein

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Lindsay Preston Zappas  
Photos by Jeff McLane

When I tell people that I am a writer and artist in addition to the publisher and editor of this magazine, I often get confused looks or concerned questions. “Doesn’t the magazine pull you away from the studio?” people ask in horror. Of course it does, I tell them.

An artist’s life can take on many forms, and artists often blend modes of working, making, and thinking into hybrid careers that span communities and genres. The myth that an artist must commit wholly to the solitary practice of producing their own artwork day in and day out in order to be successful still persists, but is slowly shattering. Refreshingly, the genres that creative producers work within are becoming less stringent and more playful.

Across the next two issues of *Carla*, we will feature portraits and words by L.A.-based artists who are also highly invested in endeavors outside of the traditional art world. These artists build things, practice law, gather communities, create platforms, and push up against value, context, and utility. Their insights reveal that switching between modes of working brings rigor and variation to their creative output. As Ragen Moss puts it, “The motion of switching across disciplines is actually a fine way to get oneself to appreciate everything.”

**I'm an artist, and also I'm a practicing lawyer.** Being an artist and a lawyer has just made sense to me, and I experience them linked rather than compartmentalized. I'm also into both of them, at the level of genuine interest. It's rarely occurred to me internally that being both is odd although externally I'm aware that having an MFA and a JD is not the most obvious and it does make for a complex weekly rhythm—I have taken conference calls while mixing cement, which is not ideal.

**Moving back-and-forth across analytic legal work and building sculptures is good mind exercise.** I swim and run, and alternating across a few different areas of brain-work is not that different from physical cross-training. It's productive for me to organize the formlessness of the studio with specific, concrete thinking; and it's productive for me to upend a legal problem with the thoughtfulness inherent in making a work of art. I also really understand legal processes like a doer—like someone who hammers and saws and drills and ratchets within law—and not just someone who reads or talks or thinks about law. This makes the use of law within the artworks that I make slightly different than many artworks that have engaged with law. All to say: I less make work “about” law and more make work “with” law. That's been good for me and for the work and possibly for viewers too.

**Having to answer to a client or respond to business emails is sobering and grounding.** It's a clear reminder that I am not apart from or above a social-political-economic system, whether I like it or not. It also keeps me from getting too tidy or too loose in any single work pattern. I feel most alive and fresh when I am both thinking and doing, so I've been working on building a life that permits this as much as possible. Most importantly: the motion of switching across disciplines is actually a fine way to get oneself to appreciate everything. Life is (potentially) long.

# Ragen Moss



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



**"HER BIOMORPHIC  
FABRICATIONS ARE  
BEAUTIFUL FORMS"**

# 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.

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", *WWWD*, 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?”

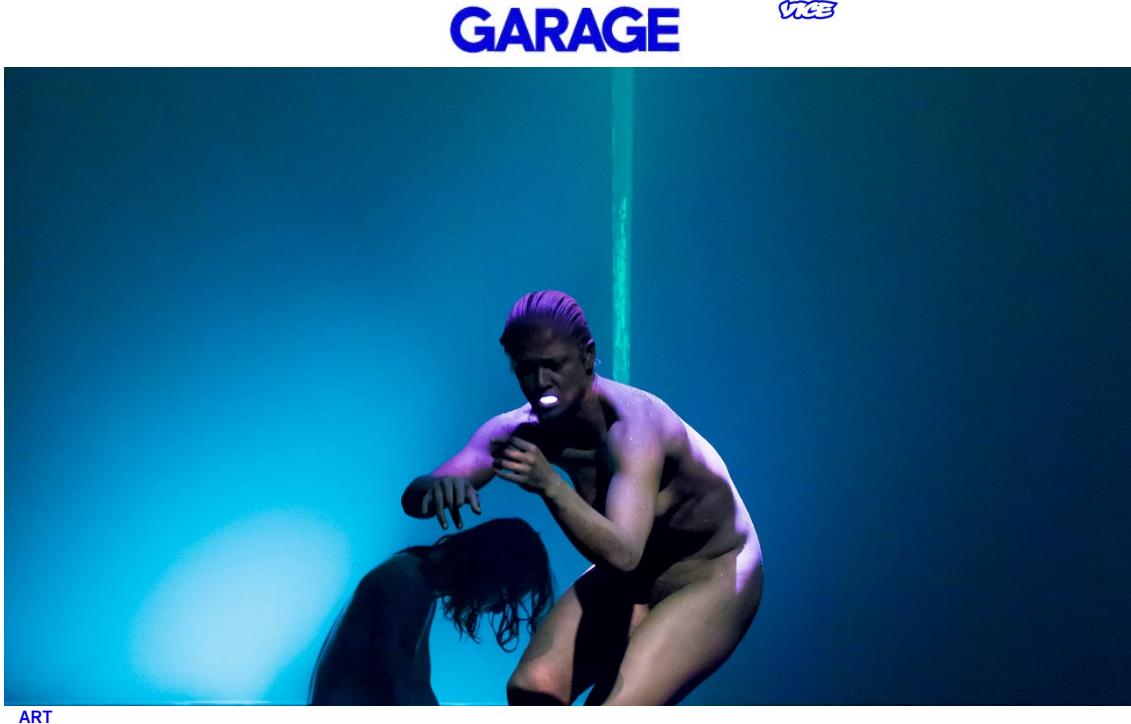


Ragen Moss is a Los Angeles-based artist chosen for the Whitney Biennial



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.



## 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

The image shows a large, three-dimensional neon sign with the year '2017' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are outlined in bright green neon light, which is visible against a solid black background. The sign has a slight shadow at the bottom, giving it a sense of depth.

*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 polyethelyne 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*