

# How I Got Into The Whitney Museum Biennial

by Brainard Carey

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## Introduction

For many artists, The Whitney Museum of American Art biennial exhibition is the ultimate show to be in.

It is one step to feeling more like an artist who has “made it” in New York City. There are so many accolades for an artist, but as Chuck Close has said, nothing in his career exceeded his excitement of being in the biennial.

My wife and I are artists that collaborate on projects and after we had a child I grew intensely

determined to remain an artist and focused on getting into the Whitney Biennial.

The story I am going to tell you is every detail of how I got in and how you can increase your odds of not only getting into the biennial but into any museum because my wife and I are not schmoozers and we didn't start out full of connections of any kind. We are simply professionals and if you listen closely to this story you will find there is specific tools you might be able to use to your own advantage.

This book is short, but the possibilities are great. You can read this in a sitting.

## **The News I Read**

It begins with the fact that I subscribe to the New York Times which is a great way of keeping up on the news in the New York art world. I know you can read it online, but for me, there is nothing like a physical paper, especially for all the images!

What I wanted was to be a success in the art world, and in my mind the beginning of ultimate success was getting into the Whitney Museum biennial. So as I focused on that, I read the paper every day, my favorite section being the art section, which comes out in the times daily.

First I turn to the most valuable piece of information the times has for fine artists of all kinds, and that is Arts Brief on page two of the art section. In that section you will find short headlines and brief descriptions of several important bits of art news. OK, sometimes we read about Lady Gagas latest album, but it will also have news about who is the current curator at The Whitney Museum or other museums, and when the biennial is being planned, there will be an announcement of who the curators are. There are often short reports on directors of museums and also collectors.

This news will keep you up to date about who the big players are in the art world.

## **The Curators Are Chosen**

It was in a February paper in when I saw that the curators for the next years biennial had been chosen. I saved that article, put it next to my computer and began preparing to send a letter to Debra Singer who was one of the curators at that time, but no longer is now.

Instead of images, I decided to send a video tape because I reasoned that there are millions of images, but there can't be that many videos. Besides, videos have to be watched for a specific length of time whereas images can be hurried through.

At the time, my wife and I were both painting a lot, as well as doing a kind of performance,

which was to give hugs in our studio. If you haven't seen the CBS news clip of what we did in the biennial, it's here;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leUMVL0qIDM>

## **Making a Video**

So I started making a video knowing nothing about it at all. The video I made was fairly crude, but it got the point across. I learned to edit and make titles, which would now be very easy with imovie or something similar for a pc (I have a Mac).

In that four-minute video we used titles to explain what we were doing and we made it all very clear and easy to understand so that if you picked up this video and had no context whatsoever, you would understand what these two artists were doing. That exact video is here;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUlgPn6iCPU>

## **Writing A Letter**

Then we created a letter to go along with the video. Before we wrote the letter I did all the research I could on that biennial exhibition. I found out who the head curator was and I researched what he was interested in lately. It's always wise to know whom you are writing to. It also flatters the person who you are writing to if you show that you know something about them and are not just sending a generic letter.

So I found out (through Google) that Larry Rinder who was the chief curator at that time was interested in "the body and new modes" whatever that meant, and was curating shows that dealt with everything from spirituality to how the body is perceived in different political climates. The decision I made with my wife was to send a letter that briefly mentioned something about the body or new modes, and had a short description of the work, and that a video tape was included. We made the decision not to include a resume or CV because we didn't want to give them too much information. You see, we both had different careers in the arts, I had owned a gallery and published a magazine and my wife had danced, acted, painted, and created her own line of clothes. We didn't want to include any of our past because it seemed cumbersome and did not pertain to the moment we were in. Before I go on I will show you the letter we sent. When this curator finally picked us she told us

"..This is the story every artist wants to hear, because you (my wife and myself) are the only

ones who got in by an unsolicited letter.”

Here it is.

Debra Singer Whitney Museum 945 Madison Ave. NY,NY, 10021  
February 12th, 2001

Dear Ms. Singer,

We send you this package for your review.

We are two artists. A short video is enclosed which describes our work. Essentially we live in our commercial storefront in the East Village and have been doing an endurance performance for the public, every week for one year now. On Saturdays from 12 to 5pm, we invite the public into our studio/home and offer them the following services; A Hug or a Foot Washing or a Band-Aid for visible or invisible wounds (applied with a kiss) and also free money (one dollar per person). Our paintings are on the wall of our studio.

This project was also performed at PS1/MOMA in September 2000. Our focus is technical, and our projects (this being only one) tend to reflect our research into new modes or systems of operation.

We thank you for taking the time to review this and send you our love.

Sincerely,

Brainard Carey & Delia Bajo (PRAXIS)

## **No Reply**

There was only that letter and the video. I read a few weeks later that there was a biennial curator that handled all submissions, so I sent off another similar package to that person. And just to make sure, I sent a letter to the chief curator as well, so that is three packages in all to the museum. We heard nothing for four months.

## **An Email from the Museum**

Then we waited and in the fall we received an email and were asked to come in for an interview.

We were thrilled and nervous.

When we came in they said they wanted to know more about us. We decided to tell them only what we were doing now which was painting and some performance. We told the curator we didn't like to talk about our past. Finally after a nice conversation she asked if there was anything we could send about our past because she didn't know if we went to college or anything else!

So when we got home we decided not to send resumes but a prose piece that might be more meaningful, this is what we sent, making up the bit about recovered data from damaged hard drives! It is dense, long, and to my mind then and now, intentionally *too much* information!

## Semi-Fictional Biographies

In response to a resume request, we sent this;

### **The Erased Biographies of Praxis (partially recovered from damaged hard drive)**

Delia Carey was born in Madrid, Spain in 1979. Her mother was (is) a dancer and a psychic and her father an airline engineer. The last daughter of six children, she came of age in the post-Franco Spain.

She began studying Ballet at the age of 3 and continued to practice through her adolescence. Attending Catholic schools, she was known as a rebel challenging authority and asking too many questions. At 10 years old, she asked why the Pope was wearing so many rings and surrounded with such luxury if he was trying to emulate the life of Jesus.

She was an undergraduate at Escuela Superior De Artes y Espectaculos She studied acting in Spain under various mentors and began working in experimental theater. Some of the theater groups she worked with include, Grupos Oscuro, Compañia de Teatro Tierra, and Gran Teatro de Ayer.

At 12 she began meditating on a regular basis and reading philosophy to move herself in to a world that she found more peaceful. Developing a love for all animals she also became a Vegan and adopted numerous cats.

In 1995 she moved to New York City to live and work. Her first job as a waitress in a restaurant didn't last long because her English wasn't fluent and she asked all her customers to write down their order which she would hand to the chef.

She studied theater at the Raul Julia training unit and continued her focus on it, while making a living as a lounge singer and dancer.

Performing her compositions unscheduled on the street became some of her first "actions" which would lead to more street performances that she did alone. Composing "Symphonic Flamenco" music became a passion for her as she began collaborating with other artists.

Moving into a larger studio so she could work more on paintings, her work began to incorporate various media creating "theatrical" installations.

Viewing all her work as "in-progress" she did not pursue gallery representation. Rather, she

viewed her processes as hermetic and wanted to safeguard them as well as let new ideas germinate freely.

Her sister had also moved to New York and together they began designing avant-guard clothes under the label of Elena Bajo. Delia helped organize and create elaborate multi-media runway shows and always performed in them. The clothing line became successful and the shows received much press attention. Throughout this period she would often draw portraits of subway passengers and sketch intensely in public. She began to write about all the behavior she was witnessing and combined it with her drawings. This was the beginning of what she would later call her "Sangré period."

In the Spring of 1999 she met Brainard Carey and almost immediately began performing with him in the streets as well as at other venues.

As their work and lives began evolving together she devoted herself entirely to developing a new language for communications. This meant reading about gestures and languages from cultures all over the world to improvisational experiments that helped her create a new way of understanding body language through intuitive and analytical processes.

In the last three years she has continued her collaboration with Brainard Carey creating Praxis and performing extensively on the street as well as in their studio.

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Brainard Carey was born in Manhattan in 1975. His father a composer and teacher and his mother a musician and teacher. He was the third and last child. As a young child some of his favorite pastimes were talking to himself, and his secret friend as well as following around his older brother hoping for a ride on his go-cart, and taunting his older sister in various ways. His older brother died at 15 years of age while Brainard was 7 years old at the time. This death had a profound impact on him that would manifest itself in artwork later in life.

Attending an alternative high school, which taught a process of learning without classrooms, he began to explore bookmaking and photography.

Upon graduation he attended SUNY Purchase for undergraduate work. There he created a multidisciplinary degree. He wrote a thesis on the homeless in NYC, which included a participant study of the homeless whom he lived among for two weeks. The sociology department was Marxist and this formed the basis of his critical thinking. He also wrote a second thesis on Performance Art, which included a video of several performances he did as a student as well as paintings that were used during the performances. He worked with Antonio Frasconi and created many artists books at that time.

Performed and acted as God Killing Himself (star) in the cult film Begotten by Elias Merhige, also director of "Shadow of the Vampire." He moved to Block Island, R.I. There he founded a small gallery and began publishing a magazine and also created a lecture series focusing on freedom of expression. He did a collaborative text installation with the poet and priest Daniel Berrigan.

The magazine became a cultural examiner. That is, by exploring through texts and photographs he continually pursued the documenting of the community he was living within. The gallery was an anachronism in a community that had never seen installations or performance nor cared

much for them.

He photographed several performances he would execute in private. Most notably, in Burial, he self documented himself burying objects all over the island.

On Block Island he completed two major projects. The first was a series of cement tablets, which he poured every week for five years.

He would invite anyone from the community to come down to his studio and after a short period of unguided silence all present could write whatever they wished in the fresh tablets using a nail.

When the tablets dried, he arranged them in a rough wall shape that began winding over hills and through fields. In all, approximately one thousand tablets were poured.

The other major project was the hand copying of the Book of Job. Making a unique edition of one, he used a seagull feather he hand cut and ink to transcribe 28 lines a day. This project took 18 months to complete. It was exhibited at Granary Books in NYC, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and is now being showcased in a collectors home. These projects received much press attention including the NY Times as well as magazine features.

Both projects and Burial were emblematic of his dualistic approach; social and interactive as well as hermetic and meditative.

At this time he also developed a language and an invented alphabet. With a look similar to Arabic cursive writing he would create large canvases which resembled book pages which he never translated to the public. Scrolls of this new text were also made. In several performances at alternative spaces in and around the New York area, he would read from these scrolls to audiences creating sounds that made a new context for the language, but still did not translate the texts literally.

In NYC in 1997 he created Radical Anxiety Termination in his 10<sup>th</sup> St. studio with DJ Olive. RAT was a monthly event that allowed passers-by to play with turntables with a limited amount of records in a temporary installation. These events were all recorded creating social sound scapes. The sounds of these "amateur DJs" made a compilation that among other things questioned the "skills" of DJ culture and illustrated the freshness of "beginners mind."

## **We Were In**

So there it is, with a sense of humor and some originality we were accepted. We received a call from the curator we talked to who said we were invited to be part of the Biennial exhibition! To be honest, I don't think she even read our bios that are included above, I think after the initial interview we were in.

You may be saying to yourself, "But I am not a performer! I make sculpture (or paint, photograph or write). Well, all the same methods apply and I too paint, photograph and make sculpture. It is still about a creative approach that sets you apart and is also effective. Be bold!

## **Strategy & Myths**

No matter what your medium, there are several lessons to be learned here. One is to always research the person who you are trying to contact at a museum or gallery. Find out who they are and what they really like and you will have a far greater chance of catching their interest when they recognize that you know who they are. It's human nature after all, we want to be recognized for who we are, not what someone wants from us. So be sure to be sincere in your relations and your requests. And be sure that the person you wish to interest in your work knows that you know who they are. Compliments, when sincere, go VERY far. Another lesson to be learned here is that you do not need to follow convention.

## **Resumé and Art Statement**

Sending a resume and an artist statement is usually very boring. It always helps to try something a bit different to make yourself stand out. The only exception to this is when you are applying for a grant.

Also, I didn't mention so far that we were also being consciously very positive while we were trying to get into the Whitney museum. Books like "Think and Grow Rich" may sound dated and silly, but can really be a help. We didn't have that book then so we were meditating daily and imagining ourselves at the Whitney Museum.

That's a big part of any success in life. Believe in yourself and imagine you are already there. It does not matter if you believe in this concept or not, it will work if you find a way to be more positive about what you want. There are many books on the subject, so if you need help in that regard, look for books on Intention and Visualizing what you want.

Tons of information can be found for free by typing those words into Google.

## **Myths**

It's also important to realize that most artists are operating under very debilitating myths and I want to take a moment to speak about those myths or lies we tell ourselves that is often encouraged by mainstream media.

## **Skilled Lottery**

One of those paralyzing myths is that you work alone with little or no knowledge of the financial world and somehow a gallery chooses you, or a curator, and --BAM, you are lifted up to great heights and like a generous parent, the dealer sells your work and does what is best for you and is fair.



I call this myth the Skilled Lottery myth, that is, the thinking that with my GREAT skills and talent I will be picked and I will win!

The other myth is that art and money do not mix and that the best artists do not think about money or strategy, they think only of their art --and money in fact is a dirty word next to the arts. I call this myth the Importance of Starving myth.

## **Cool Fool**

Another myth that I call the Cool Fool myth is the notion that to be exuberant, an extrovert, a self-promoter, and sincere and direct in your writing and communication works against you in the art-world, so you must write and act like a history book that keeps its covers closed most of the time!

Needless to say, these are notions that are false and to believe in them is to put major blocks in your path to success. If you don't agree with me you have to look at who I am and what I have achieved to see that this has worked for me and it will work for you as well.

## **Make A Strategy**

To begin creating a strategy to get into the art world you can start by identifying exactly what you want. Is it to be in a gallery? Is it to create public work? Is it to sell your work?

At first the answer might seem obvious to you, something like, "I want to show my work!". But what does that mean exactly? Where do you want to show it, and then what?

Perhaps you are thinking, "I want to show it in a gallery."

OK, let's take that on for a moment. If you want to show your painting in one of the best galleries in New York City for example, that might be Gagosian Gallery. Lets just say for discussion that Larry Gagosian has decided your work is amazing and is interested in you. The first step is that he will include one or maybe two pieces of your work in a group show. If they sell well and there is interest from his collectors he will give you a solo show (your dream come true!) in a year or so. If that solo show sells well, you will get another show in about three years. You see, he represents many artists and even the most successful ones do not have shows every year. Does that still sound like the greatest dream? What about the years in between shows? What are you doing then? Well, if you are a serious artist - and you are if you got this far, then you are hustling all over the world to get more shows in different places or to make more deals for books, catalogs and more. Because like any business person (yes, you are) you must constantly create a market for your work and develop new relationships and connections.

## Relationships

So now let's step back a minute and think this through. Is that what you imagined would happen when one of the best galleries in the world took you on? The lesson here is that it takes more work and strategy than just getting into a gallery. Success in the art world comes from building relationships and having a clear goal in your mind beyond what it means to show your work. How will you hustle your work around the globe? Is that what you want?

## Answer These Questions

So maybe you are starting to rethink things a bit. Is the gallery model for you? It may be but then you have to see yourself as someone who is in a business that is just beginning. You have to think like any other business person. That is, how much do you want to make in one year? How many paintings or other objects or whatever you sell will it take to make that? What will it cost to produce that? These questions may not sound like fun to work out, but if you do contemplate them and begin to write it down, your chance for success increases rapidly.

## The Christo Model

In this current art market there are many options for artists, and in truth, there always have been. The business of the art world is as creative as the artwork itself. Look at someone like Christo who is famous for wrapping buildings and bridges and other conceptual ideas. He will never work with a gallery unless they buy all his work outright and sell it on the secondary market. He pays for all of his projects himself and refuses to accept sponsorships or grants from anyone. Why? For one, he was born, raised and educated in a country (Bulgaria) where his freedom was in check and ever since he has decided to not let anyone control his artistic process for any reason. The only thing that Christo sells is his drawings and sculptures, and he only sells those from his studio. He was not from a wealthy family and his late wife does not have money either, but now he is a millionaire from selling drawings and they pay for their own multi-million dollar public works. Christo is very serious and hard working and so is his late wife and partner, Jeanne-Claude. They have built up relationships over the years and he continues to sell work from his studio only - he will not work with a gallery unless they buy the work from him and sell it on the secondary market.

The lesson here is that there are many ways to make money and remain firmly in the art world and not compromise one bit. More than ever there are artists inventing all kinds of ways to earn money and support their work. It doesn't matter what your medium is. You can be a painter,

sculptor, photographer or conceptual artist, it doesn't matter, the means to support yourself are the same, and it is very creative. The most important thing is to build relationships with people who you think can help you after you have determined exactly what you want. And maybe what you want is a gallery show, or a museum show, or you want to lecture or write a book or receive more press, whatever it is, there are specific people that can help you.

## **Museums vs. Galleries**

There are many misunderstandings in the world of galleries and museums. For one, they are very different institutions and work very differently. The perception of most artists is that that a museum is very hard to get into and a gallery slightly less hard. The truth is that for me, I had a show in a small gallery and then went straight to the Whitney biennial. That makes one thing clear; you do not need gallery representation to get into a museum. In fact, in some cases it may even complicate things. You see, museums know that galleries want their artists in the museum because it will increase the value of the work. So from a museum perspective, the gallery owners motivation is entirely commercial and is handled carefully because of that. Museums are non-profit institutions that do not sell work and are often criticized if they appear to be doing commercial shows. So, sometimes an artist approaching a museum directly is to his/her advantage. Another advantage of approaching a museum directly is that they will respond as professionals in most cases. You see, a museum staff is hired to do a specific job and communication is certainly one of them. So when you write and try to make contact in a specific way with a specific person, they must reply.

Galleries on the other hand are privately run and have no standard rules of operation whatsoever! You cannot expect a professional reply because all decisions are made at the owners whim. They are entirely commercial (in most cases) and are interested in proposals that have a commercial component. In other words, it's about the money, not a purist notion of art - which might be closer to the way a museum thinks. So to approach a gallery is almost the same as a museum, but you have to think about what they want. And in general, what a gallery wants is an artist who is going to make them money. The easiest way for them to know that is not the quality of your work or your personal style, but the fact that you have had many sales in the past. That is different than having many shows.

Keeping these notions in mind will help you craft your approach to either a museum or gallery.

## **Negativity**

I am not only a teacher and writer as you know, but an artist that knows what it means to struggle much like yourself. The world of an artist who is trying his or her best to express

themselves and at the same time market their souls to a dealer or the general public is a particular kind of difficulty. Here is John Lennon of the Beatles saying how he feels about being an artist, and it isn't pretty, but you might relate to some of it.

The audio file is here, click on it or paste into your browser;

<http://www.twobodies.com/lennoncritic.mp3>

What did you think? Ever watch American Idol? That show isn't about the talent that walks by, it is often about the entertainment of watching someone be publicly humiliated!

Thoughts like Lennon expresses are on the minds of many artists, yet we persevere somehow. Sometimes it is a lover that gives you strength or perhaps a flame inside you that is harder to explain, but we are all in the same boat. As much as I can help you understand the mechanisms of success in the artworld, you also have to maintain a balance between choosing the life of an artist and the difficulty it entails. Having said that, let's move on! There are bright horizons out there if you are reading this, because you want something more, something better, and it is available to you.

## **The Value Question**

You have probably had the experience where you walk by a gallery and say, "Hey, my work is better than that, and that is selling for ten thousand dollars!"

You are probably right, which leads to the question of why that art you see in a gallery that may be mediocre is selling for so much? Since you are an artist you know that it is clearly not quality that makes prices rise. So what is it? It is how you enter the marketplace of art and how you craft your way into a system that may speak a different financial language than you do.

That is part of what I am here to do for you, to help craft your own unique way into the artworld so that your work can be as successful as the others you see.

## **The Kabakovs**

In this section I will talk a bit about the non-profit world of art. In this world there is money to be made contrary to what it may sound like. For example, Museums and other non-profit exhibition spaces have to install projects and they must pay you a fee for your efforts. In some cases that fee can be significant. For example I once interviewed two well-known Russian artists called The Kabakovs. That is Ilya and Emila Kabakov, and that interview is [published here](#).

What Ilya Kabakov became known for is installations where he creates rooms that have some

kind of meaning.

For example, one of his more famous works was called *The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Bedroom*. The installation was a room with a hole in the ceiling and it looked like someone shot themselves through the ceiling with spring-loaded mattresses.

You may wonder how he made a living from this or how does he continue to make a living? For the past several years he has worked closely with his wife, Emilia, and when I asked them about how they manage their career they spoke with me frankly (though I did not include this in the published interview)

Emilia told me they have about 10-12 shows per year and they make an average of 10,000 on each show. That's not bad for an artist who never sells anything. You see, Ilya Kabakov does many preparatory drawings he could sell, but has decided not to sell anything at all, he only wants to make installations. So they live entirely off the fees from museums all over the world. That makes them experts on this particular system.

## How They Do It

I asked Emilia how she got into all these institutions and she said, first, I knock on the door politely and ask for a show, but if they say no, and I really want to get in, I knock down the door! What do you think that means?

She said a wonderful line next. She told me that they often ask business people for money to support shows. When she meets them she tells them she wants to show them a dream, are they interested? Of course they are.

Then she shows them a few drawings and though they do not understand it in most cases, she says this; "It is your job to make money, and it is our job to make art, have you ever thought of investing in a dream?" Then she stopped dramatically for a moment and she told me, if you use that line I am sure it will work for you, try it!

So there you have the beginning of their method, which should tell you something. Perhaps you have never even heard of the Kabakovs? Even better, because you can be sure that there are plenty of curators too who have not heard of them, so they must start at the beginning most times, just like you would. That begins by sending an email to a curator at a museum or similar space.

In New York and around the world there are tons of non-profit spaces from The Sculpture Center to The Armory. Some spaces, like the armory are not even an art venue. Now that means that they will probably not have the money to give you for a fee or anything else, so then, like the Kabakovs, you must go to various businesses and ask them for money, just the way she did. The rejection rate when you ask for money this way is so much, much less than any competition you may join. Business people love to hear about artists dreams, because it is

creative and ambitious, two things they can relate to.

Now all this doesn't mean you have to have a large project of some kind to exhibit, but it helps. Even if you imagine 50 of your painting hanging somewhere, somehow you must sound wildly ambitious because that is what will begin to attract success to you.

## Focusing On the Next Biennial

The Following section was written in early 2016 about getting into the 2017 Whitney Biennial. This window for this may be over, but the methods for understanding the process of getting in remain exactly the same.

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Lets talk about the Whitney Biennial 2019 or 2021, do you want to have a chance to be in it? Then you must play....

In October, 2016, the New York Times wrote, or rather the Whitney museum sent a press release to the NYT, that the curators have been chosen for the 2017 Whitney Biennial exhibition. This is Very important information and I will help you analyze it and use it to get into this prestigious exhibition. First, read the press release, here it is;

### **The Whitney Announces Curators For 2017 Biennial NEW YORK**, November 4, 2015

The Whitney Museum of American Art announced today that the 2017 Whitney Biennial will be co-curated by **Christopher Y. Lew and Mia Locks**. This will be the 78th in the Museum's series of Annual and Biennial exhibitions inaugurated in 1932 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. The Museum's signature survey of contemporary art in the United States, the Biennial goes on view in Spring 2017. It will be the first Biennial presented in the Whitney's new building in Manhattan's Meatpacking District.

The 2017 Whitney Biennial is presented by Tiffany & Co, lead sponsor of the Biennial through 2021.

Scott Rothkopf, the Whitney's Deputy Director for Programs and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, said, "With the opening of the new building, we're rededicating ourselves to the Whitney's longstanding commitment to emerging artists.

Chris's keen eye has been critical to this renewed focus in our program, which just launched with his presentations of Jared Madere, Rachel Rose, and the New Theater.

Mia's interest in both historical figures and new tendencies, as well her years on the West Coast will add important perspective to the Biennial.

The two of them have great intellectual chemistry, and it's exciting to see the first Biennial in our new home in the hands of such talented young curators." The Whitney's Alice Pratt Brown

Director Adam D. Weinberg noted: "Every Whitney Biennial is a galvanizing process for the Museum, a tradition that goes back to the institution's roots while retaining its freshness and immediacy. Endeavoring to gauge the state of art in America today, the Biennial demands curators who are attuned to the art of the current moment and there is no question that Chris Lew and Mia Locks have their fingers on the pulse.

The expanded spaces and possibilities offered by our new downtown building will make this Biennial particularly lively and groundbreaking." Scott Rothkopf will lead a team of advisors who will work closely with the curators to help shape the exhibition.

They include: Negar Azimi, writer and senior editor at Bidoun, an award-winning publishing, curatorial, and educational initiative with a focus on the Middle East and its diasporas; Gean Moreno, artistic director of Cannonball, a Miami-based nonprofit dedicated to the advancement of critical discourse and contemporary art through residencies, grants, commissions, and public programs; Aily Nash, co-curator of Projections, the New York Film Festival's artists' film and video section, and Film and Media Curator at Basilica Hudson; and Wendy Yao, a publisher and founder of both the exhibition space 356 South Mission Road and Ooga Booga, a shop with two Los Angeles locations that specializes in independent books, music, art, and clothing.

## **About the Curators**

**Christopher Y. Lew** is Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where he has organized the first U.S. solo exhibitions for Rachel Rose and Jared Madere. He has also organized, with Curator and Curator of Performance Jay Sanders, the first U.S. theatrical presentation by New Theater. His upcoming exhibitions at the Whitney include a solo show by Sophia Al-Maria (summer 2016).

Prior to joining the Whitney in 2014, he held positions at MoMA PS1 since 2006 and organized numerous exhibitions including the group shows *New Pictures of Common Objects* (2012) and *Taster's Choice* (2014). His notable solo shows include *Clifford Owens: Anthology* (2011), *GCC: Achievements in Retrospective* (2014), *James Ferraro: 100%* (2014), and *Jack Smith: Normal Love* (2013), which received an award from the International Association of Art Critics. Lew has contributed to several publications including *Art AsiaPacific*, *Art Journal*, *Bomb*, *Huffington Post*, and *Mousse*.

From 2013 until recently, **Mia Locks** was Assistant Curator at MoMA PS1, where she organized

exhibitions including Math Bass: Off the Clock (2015); IM Heung-soon: Reincarnation (2015); Samara Golden: The Flat Side of the Knife (2014); and The Little Things Could Be Dearer (2014). Prior to MoMA PS1, Locks organized Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945–1980 (2012), with David Frantz, at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives as part of the Getty’s Pacific Standard Time initiative. From 2010–2013, she worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), where she helped to organize Blues for Smoke (2012), which traveled to the Whitney, and Bob Mizer and Tom of Finland (2013), both with Bennett Simpson. Locks was part of the curatorial team for the Greater New York exhibition now on view at MoMA PS1. She is currently publishing a book on the work of Samara Golden, forthcoming in December 2015.

About the Biennial With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking debate, the Whitney Biennial—the Museum’s signature exhibition—is the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States.

The Biennial, an invitational show of work produced in the preceding two years, was introduced by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1932, and it is the longest continuous series of exhibitions in the country to survey recent developments in American art.

The 2017 Whitney Biennial is presented by Tiffany & Co. About the Whitney The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney’s mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

---end of article

## Using the Information

OK, so the article that was written from this press release said there will be studio visits beginning this month, so how will you get one?

Remember, they will be doing studio visits for another six months at least. When I sent in material to the Whitney in February, I was contacted in August! I did send many follow-ups but



that was the time frame for my entry into the biennial.

First we have to look at both the curators and research them to understand who they are. One is **Christopher Y. Lew**, and the other is **Mia Locks**. The article says a bit about what each one is interested in, though the details are few. It's your job to find out more about each one of these people. I use google to search and I also use google news alerts. Sometimes I search in news, the web, or images only. The first thing is to know what they look like. Easily found on the web, you will find their portraits. Just like a good detective, you need to know everything you can about these two, because when you reach them it's helpful to know what their interests are and what they have done lately.

So to begin with, get to work! Do all the research you can and get to know these two. What have they done, what books have they written, what is their email address, etc. Just like a detective again, there is no one way to do this, but by searching around and clicking here and there you will find answers.

The next step, or something to think about while searching, is to find someone who you know well (a friend) that is also friends with one of these curators. This may seem impossible but sometimes as you look at pictures of them in the news or wherever and you may see a friend in common.

So let's assume you have done all these things for a week or so and now. Its time to try to contact them. You have seen from this book the way I contacted them in detail, and in 2002, that was through mail, not email.

I sent a video tape and a short letter with no resume. It's important to be professional, but you also have the opportunity to use artistic license. In my opinion it is best not to send images or a resume, but just a short letter.

What you want is a response for more information not a yes or no. So, just like dating, don't give away too much!

## In Summary

To summarize, what you need to do is get to know these people and then send a letter or something similar and ask if you can send them more work or have a meeting with them. Personally, I sent a short letter and a tape, but I know another artist in the biennial who sent a short letter just mentioning that a friend of the curators suggested she contact him. She asked if he would like to see work, if she should send it. The curator said yes. That is the reply you want, a definite yes, I want more, because then they are soliciting information from you, and that's also a great position to be in. It doesn't mean you will be in but when they say "yes, please send it along" it is now "solicited" and easier to follow-up.

Feel free to contact me. On the next page is some information if you want me to help you directly with creating a strategy for your career.

My email address is: [brainardcarey@gmail.com](mailto:brainardcarey@gmail.com)

## **Working with me**

The best way to learn from me about getting into galleries, museums, writing letters, statements, bios, web presence and social media strategies, consider taking the course on getting into galleries with is just \$40 a month and you can stop at any time, but you will also get 8 other courses with that. You will get personal feedback from me.

Click [here to enroll](#) in the courses which includes a facebook classroom where you can get personal feedback from me.

<http://praxiscenterforaestheticstudies.com/p/getting-your-art-into-galleries>

I wish you great success!

-Brainard Carey, New York, 2018