



# art:21

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



SCREENING GUIDES TO THE SIXTH SEASON

# season six

## GETTING STARTED

### ABOUT THIS SCREENING GUIDE

This screening guide is designed to help you plan an event using Season Six of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. This guide includes an episode synopsis, artist biographies, discussion questions, group activities, and links to additional resources online.

### ABOUT ART21 SCREENING EVENTS

Public screenings of the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* series illuminate the creative process of today's visual artists by stimulating critical reflection as well as conversation in order to deepen audience's appreciation and understanding of contemporary art and ideas. Organizations and individuals are welcome to host their own Art21 events year-round. Art21 invites museums, high schools, colleges, universities, community-based organizations, libraries, art spaces and individuals to get involved and create unique screening events. These public events can include viewing parties, panel discussions, brown bag lunches, guest speakers, or hands-on art-making activities.

### ABOUT THE ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SERIES ON PBS

The first and only nationally broadcast public television series to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists in the United States and around the world, *Art in the Twenty-First Century* introduces audiences to a diverse range of established and emerging artists working today, and to the art they are producing now. A biennial event for television, Art21 produces four one-hour episodes each season. The *Art in the Twenty-First Century* series premieres nationwide on PBS in the United States and is distributed internationally.

Through in-depth profiles and interviews, the four-part series reveals the inspiration, vision, and techniques behind the creative works of some of today's most accomplished contemporary artists. Art21 travels across the country and abroad to film contemporary artists, from painters and photographers to installation and video artists, in their own spaces and in their own words. The result is a

unique opportunity to experience first-hand the complex artistic process—from inception to finished product—behind some of today's most thought-provoking art. These artists represent the breadth of artistic practices across the country and the world and reveal the depth of intergenerational and multicultural talent.

### ABOUT ART21, INC.

Art21 is a non-profit contemporary art organization serving students, teachers, and the general public. Art21's mission is to increase knowledge of contemporary art, ignite discussion, and empower viewers to articulate their own ideas and interpretations about contemporary art. Art21 seeks to achieve this goal by using diverse media to present an independent, behind-the-scenes perspective on contemporary art and artists at work and in their own words. Beyond the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* series, Art21 produces *New York Close Up*, an online documentary series that explores the lives of young artists living in New York City; *Exclusive*, a video series presenting singular aspects of an artist's process, significant individual works and exhibitions, provocative ideas, and biographical anecdotes; and film specials such as the Peabody Award-winning film *William Kentridge: Anything Is Possible*. Art21 videos can also be seen on Vimeo, iTunes, ArtBabble, Blip.tv, YouTube, and Hulu platforms.

### CREDIT LINE

Please use the following credit line in publications and publicity association with your event:

**This event is produced in collaboration with Art21, Inc., a non-profit contemporary art organization serving artists, students, teachers, and the general public worldwide.**

### CONTACT

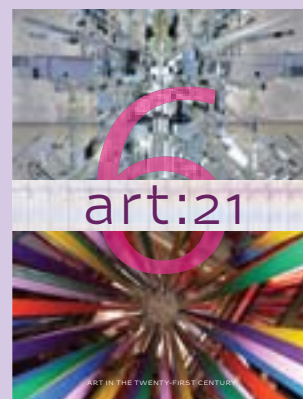
Please send inquiries to Art21 at:  
[outreach@art21.org](mailto:outreach@art21.org)



### Educators' Guide

The 32-page color manual includes information on the artists, before-viewing and after-viewing questions, and curriculum connections.

FREE | [www.art21.org/teach](http://www.art21.org/teach)



### Companion Book

The 208-page book with over 400 illustrations; features excerpts of artists' conversations with Executive Producer Susan Sollins \$45.00 | [www.art21.org/shop](http://www.art21.org/shop)



### Home Video (DVD)

This DVD includes Season Six (2012)—thirteen segments in four one-hour long episodes: *Balance, Boundaries, Change, & History*.

\$24.99 | [www.shoppbs.org](http://www.shoppbs.org)

Cover, clockwise from top left: **Sarah Sze**, *Still Life with Landscape (Model for a Habitat)*, 2011. Stainless steel and wood, 9 x 22 x 21 feet overall. Commissioned by the High Line. © Sarah Sze, courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; **Catherine Opie**, *Oliver in a Tutu*, from *In and Around Home*, detail, 2004. C-print, 24 x 20 inches. Edition of 5, 2 AP. Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles, © Catherine Opie; **Marina Abramović**, *The Hero*, detail, 2001. Video, 14 min 19 sec. Courtesy Marina Abramović Archives and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, © Marina Abramović; **assume vivid astro focus**, *anatato vivuvi atoteki fukusayo*, 2007–08. *Space for Your Future: Recombining the DNA of Art and Design*, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOT), Tokyo. Courtesy MOT Museum, Tokyo, and Hiromi Yoshii Gallery, Tokyo, © assume vivid astro focus. Photo: Keizo Kioku

# balance

## EPISODE SYNOPSIS



**Rackstraw Downes** born 1939, Kent, England

**Robert Mangold** born 1937, North Tonawanda, New York

**Sarah Sze** born 1969, Boston, Massachusetts

In what ways can art convey equilibrium or disequilibrium? What is reality? How do artists perceive and express it? This episode features artists whose works explore the distinctions between balance and imbalance, and demonstrate that the smallest change in a line, a formal element, or a structure can be a radical proposition.

Often described as a realist, **Rackstraw Downes** prefers not to use that term. He views the act of seeing and the art of representation as culturally taught, with different cultures accepting different delineations of the world as realistic. As a painter of his surroundings (he does not think of himself as a landscape painter), he attends to the perils and pleasures of perception, the dialogue between abstraction and figuration, and the dissonance between an ideal of nature and what we do to it. With minimal means and classical restraint, **Robert Mangold** translates the most basic of formal elements—shape, line, and color—into paintings, prints, and drawings whose simplicity of form expresses complex ideas. While his focus on formal considerations may seem paramount, he delights in thwarting those considerations—setting up problems for the viewer. **Sarah Sze** builds her installations and intricate sculptures from the minutiae of everyday life, imbuing mundane materials, marks, and processes with surprising significance. On the edge between life and art, her work is alive with a mutable quality—as if anything could happen, or not.



**Rackstraw Downes**

Rackstraw Downes was born in Kent, England in 1939. Often described as a realist painter, Downes prefers not to use that term. He views the act of seeing and the art of representation as culturally taught, with different cultures accepting different delineations of the world as realistic. He does not think of himself as a landscape painter, but as a painter of his surroundings—his environment. Often painted in a panoramic format, Downes's images evince careful attention to details as well as to broad expanses of their surroundings. Created *plein air* in locations as diverse as metropolitan New York, rural Maine, and coastal and inland Texas, and without resorting to the use of photography, his compositions feature horizons that bend according to the way the eye naturally perceives. Downes often works in series, examining single scenes from multiple angles, over time, and in the process reveals changing qualities of light and shadow as well as changes in his own point of view. Rackstraw Downes earned a BA from Cambridge University (1961) and a BFA and MFA from Yale University (1964). He has received numerous awards, including a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2009); John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1988); and National Endowment for the Arts Grant (1980). He was inducted into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1999). His works are in the public collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Art Institute of Chicago, among many others. Rackstraw Downes lives in New York City and Presidio, Texas.

**Robert Mangold**

Robert Mangold was born in North Tonawanda, New York in 1937. With classical restraint, Mangold translates the most basic of formal elements—shape, line, and color—into paintings, prints, and drawings whose simplicity of form expresses complex ideas. He renders the surface of each canvas with subtle color modulations and sinewy, hand-drawn graphite lines. While his focus on formal considerations may seem paramount, he also delights in thwarting those considerations—setting up problems for the viewer. Over the course of years and in multiple series of shaped canvases that explore variations on rings, columns, trapezoids, arches, and crosses, he has also provoked viewers to consider the idea of paintings without centers. In addition to works on paper, and

canvases whose physicality relates to the scale of the human body, Mangold has also worked in stained glass for architectural projects. Robert Mangold received a BFA and MFA from Yale University (1963). He has been inducted into the National Academy (2005) and American Academy of Arts and Letters (2001), and has received many awards including the Jawlensky-Preis der Stadt Wiesbaden Award (1998); the Skowhegan Medal for Painting (1993); and a National Endowment for the Arts Grant (1967). His work has appeared in major exhibitions at Documenta (1972, 1977, 1982); the Whitney Biennial (1979, 1983, 1985, 2004); and the Venice Biennale (1993). His works are in the public collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; J. Paul Getty Trust; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and Whitney Museum of American Art, among many others. Robert Mangold lives and works in Washingtonville, New York.

**Sarah Sze**

Sarah Sze was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1969. Sze builds her installations and intricate sculptures from the minutiae of everyday life, imbuing mundane materials, marks, and processes with surprising significance. Combining domestic detritus and office supplies into fantastical miniatures, she builds her works, fractal-like, on an architectural scale. Often incorporating electric lights and fans, water systems, and houseplants, Sze's installations balance whimsy with ecological themes of interconnectivity and sustainability. Whether adapting to a venue or altering the urban fabric, Sze's patchwork compositions seem to mirror the improvisational quality of cities, labor, and everyday life. On the edge between life and art, her work is alive with a mutable quality—as if anything could happen, or not. Sarah Sze received a BA from Yale University (1991) and an MFA from the School of Visual Arts (1997). She has received many awards, including a Radcliffe Institute Fellowship (2005) and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2003). Major exhibitions of her work have appeared at the Asia Society Museum, New York (2011); 10th Biennale de Lyon (2010); BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (2009); Malmö Konsthall (2006); Whitney Museum of American Art (2003); Walker Art Center (2002); São Paulo Bienal (2002); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1999), and Foundation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (1999), the Carnegie International (1999), and the 48th Venice Biennale (1999). Sarah Sze lives and works in New York City.



### EVENT IDEAS

After screening the Balance hour, initiate a group discussion comparing how artists and professionals in other disciplines achieve balance. Invite local residents from a variety of backgrounds to share how they work with the idea of balance in their own profession.

Use a screening of the Balance hour to inspire a discussion about the overlooked (and underappreciated) beauty in your own community. After the discussion announce a call for local artists to submit photographs of these places and then organize an exhibition of the photos in a shared public space.

Show the Balance hour to a group of co-workers and use the screening to compare the difference between how artists achieve equilibrium and how workplaces do so. Have participants share ideas for creating a more balanced workplace.

### SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

Rackstraw Downes states, "You don't see an image all at once. You see it part by part—it unfolds." Have individual participants share works of art or pieces of music that do this especially well. Afterwards, ask participants to describe how they experienced some of the works. How exactly did these works unfold? How would they describe each of the parts?

In her segment, Sarah Sze says, "I very much like the experience of viewing to be one of discovery, that you don't walk in and something is presented, is framed, and it says, 'This is important—I'm art.'" Have participants in a small group activity share a piece of art or literature that similarly allows for a gradual discovery of the work itself. Discuss the qualities of each work that guide viewers through this experience.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Balance hour features three artists—Rackstraw Downes, Robert Mangold and Sarah Sze—who create radically different works of art. How are they different? How are they similar? And why do you think all three are included in an episode about balance?

Rackstraw Downes states, "There is drama in structure." What do you think he means by "drama?" What kinds of structures do you find "dramatic" and why?

In his segment, Robert Mangold says he "likes setting up problems for the viewer." Describe the kinds of problems he sets up.

How does each artist in the Balance hour engage with space in different ways? What kinds of things might each of the artists be inviting the viewer to do as they experience the work?

Robert Mangold discusses juggling similar elements in complicated ways to make his work. How does complicating elements sometimes help us to see things anew? Describe examples of simple elements that are "complicated" to form nuanced and complex works of art, architecture, music or literature.

Sarah Sze states, "Some of my work is about using spaces that go unnoticed or unoccupied." What kinds of spaces do you feel go unnoticed? How might Sarah Sze's work, or works by any of the Balance hour artists, engage one of the spaces you describe? How would it change the space?

What do you think Rackstraw Downes means when he says, "There's a rapport between my images and that real thing out there. They answer to one another."

How does photography play a role in Sarah Sze's work? What might photography contribute to her process and progress as an artist?

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

*Balance*

[www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/balance.html](http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/balance.html)

Rackstraw Downes

[www.pbs.org/art21/artists/rackstraw-downes](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/rackstraw-downes)

[www.bettycunninghamgallery.com](http://www.bettycunninghamgallery.com)

Robert Mangold

[www.pbs.org/art21/artists/robert-mangold](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/robert-mangold)

[www.lissongallery.com](http://www.lissongallery.com)

Sarah Sze

[www.pbs.org/art21/artists/sarah-sze](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/sarah-sze)

[www.sarahsze.com](http://www.sarahsze.com)



# boundaries

## EPISODE SYNOPSIS



**David Altmejd** born 1974, Montreal, Canada  
**assume vivid astro focus** formed 2001, New York, New York  
**Lynda Benglis** born 1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana  
**Tabaimo** born 1975, Hyogo, Japan

Who and what limits our freedom of expression? In what ways do cultural differences affect our understanding of art and other forms of communication? How do an artist's process and choice of medium affect our perception of his or her work? This episode features artists who synthesize disparate aesthetic traditions, present taboo subject matter, discover innovative uses of media, and explore the shape-shifting potential of the human figure.

**David Altmejd's** sculptures, suffused with ornament, blur distinctions between interior and exterior, surface and structure, representation and abstraction. The collective **assume vivid astro focus** fuses sculpture, video, drawing, and performance into carnivalesque installations in which gender, politics, and cultural codes float freely. Sculptor **Lynda Benglis's** radical and pioneering invention of new forms with unorthodox techniques contains within it a reverence for cultural references that trace back to antiquity. **Tabaimo's** drawings and video installations probe unsettling themes of isolation, contagion, and instability that seem to lurk beneath daily existence in contemporary Japan.



### David Altmejd

David Altmejd was born in Montreal, Canada in 1974. With an almost childlike fascination for objects that grow, transform, and reshape themselves, Altmejd creates sculptures, suffused with ornament, that blur distinctions between interior and exterior, surface and structure, representation and abstraction. Meaning, for Altmejd, does not exist in advance of the work in process. His interest lies in the *making*—the building of an object that will generate meaning. Using armatures in the forms of giants and angels that convey both human and supernatural energies, he abandons standard narrative conventions in favor of an exploration of materials, processes, and structures. In diorama-like tableaux, Altmejd pairs objects laden with symbolism—crystals, gold chain, bondage gear, and taxidermy birds and animals—with virtuosic applications of materials such as plaster, glitter, thread, minerals, mirrors, and Plexiglas. In dazzling displays of active sculpting—holes and passages pushed through forms to drive matter “somewhere else”—Altmejd’s work expresses the intense flow of energy traveling through space and teeters between investigations of sexuality, decay, spirituality, death, and—always—life. David Altmejd received a BFA from the Université du Québec à Montréal (1998) and an MFA from Columbia University (2001). His work has appeared in major exhibitions at the Brant Foundation Art Study Center (2011); Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels (2010); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2010); New Museum (2010); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2010); P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center (2009); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2009); Liverpool Biennial (2008); Fundació La Caixa Museum, Barcelona (2007); Venice Biennale (2007); and the Whitney Biennial (2004), among others. David Altmejd lives and works in New York City.

### assume vivid astro focus (avaf)

The collective assume vivid astro focus (avaf) was formed in New York City in 2001. Its principal members are Eli Sudbrack (born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1968) and Christophe Hamaide-Pierson (born in Paris, France in 1973). Avaf fuses drawing, sculpture, video, and performance into carnivalesque installations in which gender, politics, and cultural codes float freely. A study in visual adaptation and modification, avaf’s work recycles and transforms imagery from one project to the next—often in the form of densely patterned wallpapers and graphic

signage. Personal expression and a lust for life feature prominently in projects simultaneously rooted in the politics of free speech, civil rights, and the dissolution of rigid classifications of class, gender, and national identity. In frequent collaborations with musicians, designers, dancers, and other artists, avaf challenges conventional assumptions about authorship and the role of the artist’s persona in contemporary society and the art world. Avaf has received awards from the Public Art Fund (2007) and the Rema Hort Mann Foundation (2002). Its work has appeared in major exhibitions at Centro De Arte Contemporaneo, Murcia (2010); the New Museum (2010); National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo (2009); Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2009); São Paulo Bienal (2008); ENEL Contemporanea, Rome (2008); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008); Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2007); Museum of Contemporary Art (MOT), Tokyo (2007); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2007); Kunsthalle Wien Project Space, Vienna (2006); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2005); Indianapolis Museum of Art (2005); Tate Liverpool (2005); the Public Art Fund (2004); and the Whitney Biennial (2004). Eli Sudbrack lives and works in New York City and São Paulo; Christophe Hamaide-Pierson lives and works in Paris.

### Lynda Benglis

Lynda Benglis was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana in 1941. A pioneer of a form of abstraction in which each work is the result of materials in action—poured latex and foam, cinched metal, dripped wax—Benglis has created sculptures that eschew minimalist reserve in favor of bold colors, sensual lines, and lyrical references to the human body. But her invention of new forms with unorthodox techniques also displays a reverence for cultural references that trace back to antiquity. Often working in series of knots, fans, lumps, and fountains, Benglis chooses unexpected materials, such as glitter, gold leaf, lead, and polyurethane. In more recent works, she explores diverse cultural heritages (Indian architecture, Greek statuary, Chinese ceramics), translating ancient techniques and symbols for use in contemporary contexts. In her early adoption of video, Benglis introduced feminist, biographical, and burlesque content to structuralist narratives. Lynda Benglis received a BFA from Newcomb College (1964) and an honorary doctorate from the Kansas City Art Institute (2000). She has received many awards, including a



Guggenheim Fellow-ship (1975) and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1979, 1990). Her works are in the public collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery; Dallas Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Philadelphia Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Tate Modern; Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among many others. Lynda Benglis lives, works, and travels between New York City; Santa Fe; Kastelorizo, Greece; and Ahmedabad, India.

### Tabaimo

Tabaimo was born in Hyogo, Japan in 1975. Tabaimo's drawings and video installations probe the unsettling themes of isolation, contagion, and instability that seem to lurk beneath daily existence in contemporary Japan. She draws aesthetic inspiration for her animated videos from a combination of Japanese art forms—ukiyo-e woodcuts, manga, and anime—while she often sets her layered, surrealistic narratives in domestic interiors and communal spaces such as public restrooms, commuter trains, and bathhouses. Tabaimo populates her work with uncanny characters that, either through mutation or as victims of inexplicable violence, become fragmented in their relationships to the environment and their own identity. Installed in theatrical, stage-like settings, her work is attuned to the architecture and the viewers within it. Tabaimo graduated from Kyoto University of Art and Design (1999). Her work has appeared in major exhibitions at the Venice Biennale (2011, 2007); Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London (2010, 2007); Yokohama Museum of Art, Tokyo (2010); National Museum of Art, Osaka (2010); Philadelphia Museum of Art (2010); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2009); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007); Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris (2006); Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2006, 2003); Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2005); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2004); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2003); and the São Paulo Bienal (2002). Tabaimo lives and works in Nagano, Japan.





# boundaries

## EVENT IDEAS

### EVENT IDEAS

Invite professionals from four different disciplines to a panel discussion about how boundaries affect innovation in their respective fields. After screening the Boundaries hour, ask each of the panelists to discuss how they themselves are navigating and confronting boundaries in their own work. Ask audience members to make comparisons between the work of the panelists and the artists featured.

Host a screening of the Boundaries hour and prior to showing the episode ask participants to post or share ideas about the different kinds of boundaries we experience and engage with each day—ones that perhaps constrain as well as define or compel us. After screening the episode ask participants to then reflect on how artists in the Boundaries hour address some of ideas previously shared.

### SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

Use the Boundaries hour to inspire a group discussion about transforming a public or shared space. List the suggestions and create one or more proposals for altering and improving a specific place.

Artists featured in the Boundaries hour often blur distinctions between interior and exterior, genders, representation and abstraction, politics, surface and structure, and cultural codes. Organize a group activity where participants use the episode to inspire a list of ways in which different groups or organizations can work together on specific projects or co-sponsored events.

David Altmejd says that he “isn’t interested in learning a language” but rather in “inventing languages.” Tabaimo asserts that she enjoys making music and inventing words. Discuss the kinds of languages we invent—colloquialisms, body language, forms of written language, etc.—and how they affect the ways we communicate. Compose a song or sound piece that uses invented language as inspiration.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do artists in the Boundaries hour share their process through the work they create? How does each process shape the work differently?

Tabaimo states that, “When I am making my work, I take fifty percent of the responsibility. Fifty percent of the responsibility is for the viewer to take.” What kinds of responsibility do you think she is referring to?

Discussing how his work is composed of many different materials, David Altmejd states, “I want to start with figurative, recognizable, small, detailed elements and combine them to make something that becomes abstract.” How does this resulting abstraction affect your experience of the work? Where can we find similar examples of works of art or architecture that are composed of small, recognizable elements which come together and are read as abstraction?

Artists featured in the Boundaries hour, especially assume vivid astro focus, encourage viewers to proactively and sometimes physically engage with the work. How does physically engaging with art perhaps change the way we come to conclusions about the work itself?

Tabaimo describes her first video installation, *Japanese Kitchen*, by saying that, “My inspiration is the situation of the housewife doing cooking and listening to the TV, a kind of talk show type of news reporting. You might hear something painful or horrible, one after another, but ten seconds after you hear that horrible, painful story, you’ve already forgotten it.” What kinds of issues do you think she addresses in this installation? How does it connect to the way people in many parts of the world experience the news?

While most people might regard Lynda Benglis as a sculptor, Benglis responds by saying, “I think of myself as a painter, probably because I don’t use glue.” Describe the kinds of labels that are often forced on people, which don’t quite fit. Why are these labels insufficient?

Both assume vivid astro focus and David Altmejd describe creating a sense of energy through their work. How would you describe the way each artist creates this sense of energy? What similarities and differences do they have?

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>Boundaries</i>	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/boundaries.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/boundaries.html</a>	
David Altmejd	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/david-altmejd">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/david-altmejd</a>	<a href="http://www.andrearosengallery.com">www.andrearosengallery.com</a>
assume vivid astro focus	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/assume-vivid-astro-focus">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/assume-vivid-astro-focus</a>	<a href="http://www.assumevididastrofocus.com">www.assumevididastrofocus.com</a>
Lynda Benglis	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/lynda-benglis">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/lynda-benglis</a>	<a href="http://www.heimread.com">www.heimread.com</a>
Tabaimo	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/tabaimo">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/tabaimo</a>	<a href="http://www.jamescohan.com">www.jamescohan.com</a>



# change

## EPISODE SYNOPSIS



**Ai Weiwei** born 1957, Beijing, China

**El Anatsui** born 1944, Anyanko, Ghana

**Catherine Opie** born 1961, Sandusky, Ohio

How do artists respond to a world in flux? In what ways do artists act as agents of change, and what kinds of aesthetic choices do they make to express it? This episode features artists who bear witness, through their work, to transformation—cultural, material, and aesthetic—and actively engage communities as collaborators and subjects.

**Ai Weiwei** infuses his sculptures, photographs, and public artworks with personal poetry and political conviction, often making use of recognizable and historic Chinese art forms in critical examinations of a host of contemporary Chinese social and political issues. In sculptures of clay, wood, and metal, **El Anatsui** uses and explores materials and formal elements that relate to his aesthetic and cultural environment, exemplifying change and revealing the eternal cycle of all things—destruction, transformation, and regeneration.

**Catherine Opie** investigates the ways in which photographs both document and give voice to social phenomena in America today. Working between conceptual and documentary approaches to image making, she examines the familiar genres of portraiture, landscape, and studio photography in surprising uses of serial images, unexpected compositions, and the pursuit of radically different subject matters.



**Ai Weiwei**

Ai Weiwei was born in Beijing, China in 1957. An outspoken human rights activist, Ai was arrested by Chinese authorities in April 2011 and held incommunicado for three months. Upon his release, he was prohibited from traveling abroad, engaging in public speech, and was subjected to continued government surveillance. Ai's position as a provocateur and dissident artist informs the tenor and reception of much of his recent work. He infuses his sculptures, photographs, and public artworks with political conviction and personal poetry, often making use of recognizable and historic Chinese art forms in critical examinations of a host of contemporary Chinese political and social issues. In his sculptural works he often uses reclaimed materials—ancient pottery and wood from destroyed temples—in a conceptual gesture that connects tradition with contemporary social concerns. He also employs sarcasm, juxtaposition, and repetition to reinvigorate the potency and symbolism of traditional images and to reframe the familiar with minimal means. A writer and curator, Ai extends his practice across multiple disciplines and through social media to communicate with a global public and to engage fellow artists with projects on a massive scale. Ai Weiwei attended the Beijing Film Academy and the Parsons School of Design in New York. He has received an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Politics and Social Science, University of Ghent, Belgium (2010), as well as many awards, including the Skowhegan Medal (2011) and the Chinese Contemporary Art Award (2008). His work has appeared in major exhibitions at Kunsthaus Bregenz (2011); the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2011); Asia Society Museum, New York (2011); and Tate Modern, London (2010). Ai Weiwei lives and works in Beijing, China.

**El Anatsui**

El Anatsui was born in Anyanko, Ghana in 1944. Many of Anatsui's sculptures are mutable in form, conceived to be so free and flexible that they can be shaped in any way and altered in appearance for each installation. Working with wood, clay, metal, and—most recently—the discarded metal caps of liquor bottles, Anatsui breaks with sculpture's traditional adherence to forms of fixed shape while visually referencing the history of abstraction in African and European art. The colorful and densely patterned fields of the works assembled from discarded liquor-bottle caps also trace a broader story of colonial and postcolonial economic and cultural exchange in Africa, told in the history of

cast-off materials. The sculptures in wood and ceramics introduce ideas about the function of objects (their destruction, transformation, and regeneration) in everyday life, and the role of language in deciphering visual symbols. El Anatsui received a BA from the College of Art, University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana (1969) and since 1975 has taught at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His works are in the public collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; British Museum, London; and Centre Pompidou, Paris, among many others. Major exhibitions of his work have appeared at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown (2011); Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2010); Venice Biennale (2007); and the Biennale of African Art, Senegal (2006). El Anatsui lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria.

**Catherine Opie**

Catherine Opie was born in Sandusky, Ohio in 1961. Opie investigates the ways in which photographs both document and give voice to social phenomena in America today, registering people's attitudes and relationships to themselves and others, and the ways in which they occupy the landscape. At the core of her investigations are perplexing questions about relationships to community, which she explores on multiple levels across all her bodies of work. Working between conceptual and documentary approaches to image making, Opie examines familiar genres—portraiture, landscape, and studio photography—in surprising uses of serial images, unexpected compositions, and the pursuit of radically different subject matters in parallel. Many of her works capture the expression of individual identity through groups (couples, teams, crowds) and reveal an undercurrent of her own biography vis-à-vis her subjects. Whether documenting political movements, queer subcultures, or urban transformation, Opie's images of contemporary life comprise a portrait of our time in America, which she often considers in relation to a discourse of opposition. Catherine Opie received a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute (1985), an MFA from CalArts (1988), and since 2001 has taught at the University of California, Los Angeles. She has received many awards, including the President's Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Women's Caucus for Art (2009); United States Artists Fellowship (2006); and the Larry Aldrich Award (2004). Her work has appeared in major exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2011); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2010); and the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2008). Catherine Opie lives and works in Los Angeles, California.



# change

## EVENT IDEAS

### EVENT IDEAS

Initiate a discussion about how public spaces in your community have transformed over time. Use this discussion to inspire a blog or message board that shares ideas for improving an under- or over-developed part of the community.

While discussing her evolution as an artist, Catherine Opie says, "I understood from a really young age that work had this potential to convey time." After screening the Change hour, host a panel discussion that includes local historians in order to investigate and discuss how certain works of art and architecture within the community convey a sense of history.

Invite a range of artists, activists and business professionals to view the Change hour with a larger audience. Afterward, ask each of the invited guests to share the kinds of transformation and change they look forward to—both in their own communities and in the world at large.

### SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

El Anatsui's work often traces a story of economic and cultural exchange, especially through his installations that include metal caps from liquor bottles. Ai Weiwei exposes the kinds of change we have experienced in our own lives, particularly through a work like *Surveillance Camera*. Catherine Opie documents change in personally significant places through her different photographic series. Working in small groups over a specific period of time—a few days or a few weeks—document or illustrate the kinds of change that have led to improvements or new challenges for different groups of people in your own community.

Both El Anatsui and Ai Weiwei often use reclaimed materials in their sculptures and installations. Working with a group, use the Change hour to inspire ideas for working with reclaimed materials in new ways. Choose one of the suggestions and document the progress of achieving this idea through photographs, film and/or interviews.

Ai Weiwei's sculpture, *Surveillance Camera*, gives form to the attack on privacy in contemporary society. List other ways that privacy has somehow been compromised and assemble a collection of articles and photographs that focus on the erosion of privacy.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What kinds of change are each of the artists in this hour interested in? How do they go about conveying a sense of change, or encouraging change, through their work?

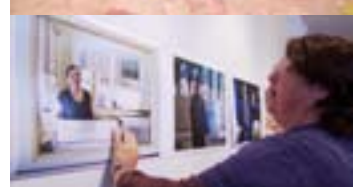
Ai Weiwei expresses an interest in creating "useless objects"—objects that have perfect craftsmanship and beautiful materials but essentially are useless and recognizable as art. Why do you think he is interested in creating these objects? What purposes do they serve?

When discussing her photo series for the Cleveland Clinic, Catherine Opie says that each season in the piece has four photos except winter, which has five. Winter, she says, has five photos because "you always think that the frozen landscape will never disappear." Describe recurring moments in your own life when time slows down and change comes very gradually.

El Anatsui describes growing up and often thinking, "What precisely do you DO as an artist?" How would you fully describe what you do in your own work or profession? How does it compare to what you imagined this work to be like before you began?

Catherine Opie's photography often captures how individual identity is expressed within and through groups. Describe the kinds of groups you particularly identify with. What other kinds of groups help identify individuals in particular ways? How does this help or hinder the way we learn about the people who are part of these groups?

El Anatsui does not provide instructions for installing his works and prefers that they remain flexible and change from location to location. When do we most benefit from not having detailed instructions? What types of situations are most conducive to being free from specific instructions?



### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>Change</i>	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/change.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/change.html</a>	
Ai Weiwei	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ai-weiwei">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ai-weiwei</a>	<a href="http://www.aiweiwei.com">www.aiweiwei.com</a>
El Anatsui	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/el-anatsui">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/el-anatsui</a>	<a href="http://www.jackshainman.com">www.jackshainman.com</a>
Catherine Opie	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/catherine-opie">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/catherine-opie</a>	<a href="http://www.regenprojects.com">www.regenprojects.com</a>

# history

## EPISODE SYNOPSIS



**Marina Abramović** born 1946, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

**Glenn Ligon** born 1960, Bronx, New York

**Mary Reid Kelley** born 1979, Greenville, South Carolina

How do artists mine the past to explore the present? Why do some historical events shape the way we think today, and why have some been forgotten? In what ways do artists use their own histories to examine the human condition? In this episode, artists play with historical events, explore and expose commonly held assumptions about historic “truth”, and create narratives based on personal experiences.

A pioneer of performance as a visual art form, **Marina Abramović** has used her body as both subject and medium of her performances, testing her physical, mental, and emotional limits (and often pushing beyond them) in a quest for heightened consciousness, transcendence, and self-transformation. While the sources of some works lie in her personal history (the circumstances of her childhood and family life under Communist rule in the former Yugoslavia), others lie in more recent and contemporary events such as the wars in her homeland and other parts of the world. Painter and sculptor **Glenn Ligon** examines American identity through found sources—literature, Afrocentric coloring books, photographs—to reveal the ways in which the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, and sexual politics inform our understanding of contemporary society. In striking black-and-white videos and drawings filled with punning wordplay, **Mary Reid Kelley** presents her take on the clash between utopian ideologies and the realities of women’s lives in the struggle for liberation and through political strife, wars, and other historical events.



### Marina Abramović

Marina Abramović was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1946. A pioneer of performance as a visual art form, Abramović has used her body as both subject and medium of her performances to test her physical, mental, and emotional limits—often pushing beyond them and even risking her life—in a quest for heightened consciousness, transcendence, and self-transformation. Characterized by endurance and pain—and by repetitive behavior, actions of long duration, and intense public interactions and energy dialogues—her work has engaged, fascinated, and sometimes repelled live audiences. The universal themes of life and death are recurring motifs, often enhanced by the use of symbolic visual elements or props such as crystals, bones, knives, tables, and pentagrams. While the sources of some works lie in her personal history (the circumstances of her childhood and family life under Communist rule in the former Yugoslavia), others lie in more recent and contemporary events, such as the wars in her homeland and other parts of the world. Marina Abramović attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade (1965–70) and the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Yugoslavia (1970–72). She received an honorary doctorate from the Art Institute of Chicago (2004). She has also received many other honors, including a Golden Lion at the 47th Venice Biennale (1997); a Bessie (2003); and awards from the International Association of Art Critics (2003, 2007). Abramović has had major exhibitions and performances at the Garage Art Center, Moscow (2011); Manchester International Festival (2011); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2005); Whitney Biennial (2004); Documenta (1977, 1982, 1992); and the Venice Biennale (1976, 1997, 2009). Marina Abramović lives and works in New York City.

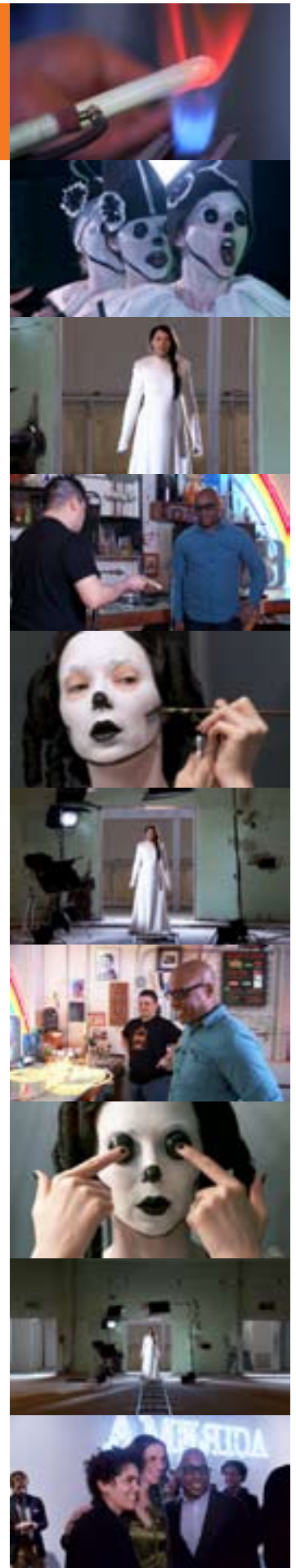
### Glenn Ligon

Glenn Ligon was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1960. Ligon's paintings and sculptures examine cultural and social identity through found sources—literature, Afrocentric coloring books, photographs—to reveal the ways in which the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, and sexual politics inform our understanding of American society. Ligon appropriates texts from a variety of literary writers including Walt Whitman, Zora Neal Hurston, Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison, as well from more popular sources such as the comedian Richard Pryor. In Ligon's paintings, the

instability of his medium—oil crayon used with letter stencils—transforms the texts he quotes, making them abstract, difficult to read, and layered in meaning, much like the subject matter that he appropriates. In other works that feature silkscreen, neon, and photography, Ligon threads his own image and autobiography into symbols that speak to collective experiences. "It's not about me," he says. "It's about *we*." Glenn Ligon received a BA from Wesleyan University (1982) and attended the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program (1985). He has received numerous awards, including the United States Artists Fellowship (2010); Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize from the Studio Museum in Harlem (2009); Skowhegan Medal for Painting (2006); John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2003); and Visual Artist Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1989, 1991). His works are in the public collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Tate Modern; Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. Glenn Ligon lives and works in New York City.

### Mary Reid Kelley

Mary Reid Kelley was born in Greenville, South Carolina in 1979. In videos and drawings filled with punning wordplay, Reid Kelley presents her take on the clash between utopian ideologies and the realities of women's lives in the struggle for liberation and through political strife, wars, and other historical events. Performing scripted narratives in rhyming verse, the artist—with her husband Patrick Kelley and various family members—explores historical periods through fictitious characters such as nurses, soldiers, prostitutes, and *saltimbanques*. Adopting a stark black-and-white palette while synthesizing art-historical styles such as Cubism and German Expressionism, Reid Kelley playfully jumbles historical periods such as World War I and France's Second Empire to trace the ways in which present concerns are rooted in the past. Mary Reid Kelley earned a BA from St. Olaf College (2001) and an MFA from Yale University (2009). She has received awards from the American Academy in Rome (2011); the Rema Hort Mann Foundation (2009); and the College Art Association (2008). Major exhibitions include Salt Lake Art Center (2011); SITE Santa Fe (2010); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2010); and the Rochester Art Center (2007). Her work is in the public collections of the Goetz Collection, Munich; Yale University Art Gallery; and the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor. Mary Reid Kelley lives and works in Saratoga Springs, New York.



### EVENT IDEAS

Initiate a day-long TASK event (<http://oliverherringtask.wordpress.com>) after screening the History hour. Ask participants over the course of the day to consider their own past and/or the history of the community when creating and performing TASKS. Film and photograph the event, and then share the documentation through an online blog post or journal.

Host a panel discussion that asks participants to consider the historical references in the History hour and share perspectives about the issues that most affect the community or audience. Ask panelists to highlight how one or more of the artists in the History hour are portraying history and their reactions to this perspective(s).

Glenn Ligon talks about incorporating things he is reading to sometimes inspire works of art. Bring two or more local book clubs together to discuss some of the best works read over the past year or more. Ask participants to share how these books have somehow influenced their work, or their daily life, in some way.

### SCREENING-BASED ACTIVITIES

Each artist in the History hour makes use of words, and even wordplay, in different ways. Generate a list of words and phrases that surface most often in the History hour. How do these words connect to things like political struggle, American identity, sexual liberation and transformation?

When Mary Reid Kelley describes growing up in South Carolina she says, "In the South, at least in terms of the Civil War, there's this historical burden. You're aware pretty early on that there isn't just one version that's accepted, that people are kind of tugging at this historical record, you know, wanting to manipulate the history, one way or another." List and discuss other specific events or issues that have provoked the manipulation of history. How has history in these instances been manipulated?

In his segment Glenn Ligon discusses strategies he uses to slow down the process of experiencing his work. In small groups, discuss ways that we might slow down the process of experiencing other things, including art, in our own lives. How might we experience what we read, see, taste and even feel more fully?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In her segment, Mary Reid Kelley's sister remarks that Mary "has always had an interesting part to play in the entire family's perspective on life." Who are the people in your own life that help shape your perspective? How do they go about doing this with you?

Both Mary Reid Kelley and Marina Abramović utilize performance in order to make their work. How does each artist approach performance in unique ways? What similarities and differences exist between them?

Glenn Ligon discusses using James Baldwin's quotes about "being a stranger" in order to inspire some of his text-based paintings. What is it about these quotes that interest Ligon? How does he, literally, layer meaning through the use of coal dust?

Marina Abramović says that an artist must find "the right tool." After drawing and painting as a child and young artist, Abramović found her tool to be performance. How would you define or describe the tool(s) you use to best communicate with others? How do you most effectively communicate things that are important to you?

Glenn Ligon states, "Ideas take a long time to be born." What do you think he means by this, especially when many people believe artists are often inspired in a sudden flash of creativity?

Marina Abramović describes her childhood growing up with parents who were not at all religious and grandparents who were very religious as an "unbeatable combination to grow as an artist." Why would this be an excellent combination for an artist growing up? How would exposure to opposing or contradictory views while growing up influence your own thinking?

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

<i>History</i>	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/history.html">www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonsix/history.html</a>
Marina Abramović	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/marina-abramovic">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/marina-abramovic</a>
Glenn Ligon	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/glenn-ligon">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/glenn-ligon</a>
Mary Reid Kelley	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/mary-reid-kelley">www.pbs.org/art21/artists/mary-reid-kelley</a>

[www.skny.com](http://www.skny.com)

[www.regenprojects.com](http://www.regenprojects.com)

[www.maryreidkelley.com](http://www.maryreidkelley.com)

