

Landmark 10th Season of “Art in the Twenty-First Century” Premieres this September on PBS and Art21.org

Three new episodes offer a creative respite, charting artmaking across London, Beijing, and the United States-Mexico border



(NEW YORK — September 1, 2020) — **Art21** announced today a new season of its Peabody Award-winning and Emmy-nominated television series, ***Art in the Twenty-First Century***. Twelve artists and one collective are presented across three episodes, charting artmaking in **London, Beijing,** and regions around the **United States-Mexico border**. The landmark tenth season of the longest-running television series on contemporary art premieres **Friday, September 18**, at 10pm on **PBS** in the United States, and online at **Art21.org**.

Now entering its third decade on television, the globally-revered *Art in the Twenty-First Century* series provides unprecedented access to the leading creative minds of our time.

For the first time in the show's history, the filmmakers chronicle artists' responses to an entire bi-national region, the U.S.-Mexico border, where artists create platforms for an assembly of voices to speak. In London and Beijing, artists contemplate disruptions caused by the rapidly changing political and architectural landscapes of their cities.

"London"

September 18, 10pm

John Akomfrah
Phyllida Barlow
Anish Kapoor
Christian Marclay

"Beijing"

September 25, 10pm

Guan Xiao
Liu Xiaodong
Song Dong & Yin
Xiuzhen
Xu Bing

"Borderlands"

October 2, 10pm

Tanya Aguiñiga
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
Richard Misrach
Postcommodity

"When we listen to artists, we gain insight into the state of our world," says Art21 executive director and chief curator, **Tina Kukielski**. "Artists are documentarians, activists, problem solvers, innovators, and foremost respondents to the issues of our times." Adds Kukielski, "The events of 2020 have only amplified the observations of artists in creative hotspots around the world."

"PBS is proud of our longstanding partnership with Art21," says Paula Kerger, president and chief executive officer of PBS. "Ten seasons is a remarkable achievement, and this milestone affirms that public television is an important and powerful platform for the arts."

Throughout the new season, artists pointedly examine the structures of our political, societal, and cultural systems, while challenging themselves and audiences to embrace a more empathetic worldview.

At once intimately personal and universally relatable, the artists featured in the new season share the thoughts, inspirations, and processes behind some of the most extraordinary artistic practices of the twenty-first century.

Alongside the national broadcast, full segments from each of the three new episodes will enter the Art21 film library on Art21.org. At over 60 hours and growing, the Art21 film library is the most comprehensive documentary film collection on today's greatest artists—always on and always free.

Major underwriting for Season 10 of *Art in the Twenty-First Century* is provided by PBS, National Endowment for the Arts, Lambent Foundation, The Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Toby Devan Lewis, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Henri Lambert, Nion McEvoy & Leslie Berriman, and Sakana Foundation.

Episodes



John Akomfrah in "London"

"London"

Premieres Friday, September 18

Buoyed by London's history of artistic excellence, the artists featured in this hour draw inspiration from decades of British art while contending with the repercussions of colonialism and xenophobia, brought to light at a time of massive political upheaval in the country. A signature artist of his

generation, the sculptor **Anish Kapoor** poetically transforms stainless steel, stone, wax, PVC, and colorful pigment into transcendent and mystifying forms that provoke fundamental questions about perception, consciousness, and spirituality. As he works in his South London studio with a team of assistants, Kapoor shares the motivations behind his ongoing explorations of concavity, scale, and the immersive potential of colors like black and red. From her early memories of London's war-ravaged East End to the unrelenting expansion and construction of the city in the twenty-first century, the British-born artist **Phyllida Barlow** is inspired by the industrial urban landscape and its processes of damage and repair. Shown drawing at her home studio and creating new, large-scale sculptures with her studio assistants, the artist is dedicated to pushing the formal and expressive power of her materials to create anti-authoritarian and anti-monumental objects. The epic works of groundbreaking filmmaker **John Akomfrah** ambitiously connect the global legacies of slavery and colonialism to environmental degradation and his personal biography. Shown shooting a new film on location in the state of Louisiana and editing footage in his studio in East London, Akomfrah explains, "I'm more choreographer than creator." Artist and composer **Christian Marclay** recounts his artistic beginnings as an experimental DJ and musician without formal training, when he was influenced by conceptualism, musique concrète, punk rock, and the work of John Cage. The segment surveys the extraordinary scope of an artist for whom "a lack of rigid rules is really important," including an interactive installation composed of Snapchat videos, graphic depictions of onomatopoeias that are performed vocally, and a musical performance created by replicating pianists' hand postures seen in photos.



Guan Xiao in "Beijing"

"Beijing"

Premieres Friday, September 25

Amid Beijing's dizzying economic, urban, and cultural transformation, artists have responded to its relentless evolution with urgency and ambition, all the while contending with many centuries of Chinese cultural traditions. This hour witnesses the maturing of a unique contemporary-art hub and follows a multigenerational group of artists who grapple with memory, modernization, and their roles in the global art world. A pioneering Chinese contemporary artist, **Xu Bing** creates mixed-media installations that subvert viewers' ways of thinking about language, cultural tradition, and the lessons of our past while pointing to the possibilities of our future. Shown at work in his Beijing studio, Xu shares how the cultural and personal disruptions that are so common to Chinese people of his generation have inspired his work. **Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen**, two Beijing natives, reflect on three decades of deeply personal artmaking and the shared experience of living in Beijing through its unprecedented transformation. This segment follows the pair as they install the latest iteration of their collaborative project, *The Way of the Chopsticks*. A leading figurative painter, **Liu Xiaodong** creates large-scale works that dramatize the lives of everyday people: migrants, laborers, and others on the economic and geographic margins. Best known for his live, *en plein air* process, Liu travels to Eagle Pass, Texas, a city on the U.S.-Mexico

border, to paint a county sheriff, his friends, and colleagues. The sculptor and video artist **Guan Xiao** employs juxtapositions—past and present, tradition and innovation, the natural and the industrial—to create works that are discordant, astute, and frequently humorous reflections on the matrices and radical contrasts of twenty-first-century life. At work in her Beijing studio, Guan candidly describes the unique difficulties faced by many Asian artists, who must contend with imported contemporary-art styles.



Richard Misrach in "Borderlands"

"Borderlands"

Premieres Friday, October 2

A vast geography encompassing open deserts and densely populated metropolises, the region between the United States and Mexico has long been a site of not only political conflict and social struggle but also intense creative ferment. Employing a fresh curatorial and filmmaking approach, the filmmakers connect and juxtapose a group of acclaimed artists—**Tanya Aguiñiga, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Postcommodity, and Richard Misrach**—as they work along the U.S.-Mexico border, interweaving their stories to chronicle the creative responses to one of the most divisive moments in the history of this area. From an epic interactive searchlight installation along the El Paso–Juárez divide to a deeply personal

performance at the Tijuana border wall, these artists consider the border as an open wound, a theatrical stage, a political podium, a studio, and a contradictory landscape that features both ugliness and beauty. This hour explores how contemporary art can reveal the new and unexpected, asking viewers to question their preconceived notions of a place seemingly made familiar by mass media. Ultimately, the artists featured in this hour challenge themselves and audiences to embrace a more empathetic view of one of the most contested areas in North America.

Series Credits

Executive Producer

Tina Kukielski

Series Producer

Nick Ravich

Directors & Producers

Ian Forster (“London”)

Bryan Chang and Vicky Du (“Beijing”)

Rafael Salazar Moreno & Ava Wiland (“Borderlands”)

Editors

Morgan Riles (“London”)

Bryan Chang (“Beijing”)

Rafael Salazar Moreno & Russell Yaffe (“Borderlands”)

Design & Animation

Momentist, Inc.

Composer

Joel Pickard

Free Digital Programs Offered Worldwide

In conjunction with the premiere of the new season, Art21 will partner with organizations around the world to present **free community screenings** as part of its long-running Screening Society program.

Screening Society is an international free screening initiative created to **increase knowledge of contemporary art, spark dialogue, and inspire creative thinking** for a global audience. Art21 invites a wide variety of partners—schools, universities, libraries, museums, nonprofit organizations, galleries, arts and cultural spaces, community centers, and more—to host screenings from the latest season of *Art in the Twenty-First Century* that are free and open to the public. **Screenings will take place from October 3, 2020 to January 31, 2021.**

In response to on-going safety measures, Art21 reimagined the 2020 edition of Screening Society as a **digital-first experience**. Art21 provides all Screening Society partners with a toolkit containing helpful information for hosting a screening, including a guide designed to help facilitate a public event through discussion questions and group activities.

In recent seasons, over **300 Screening Society partners** hosted screenings across the United States and in **over 30 countries** around the world.

Interested partners can sign up to be notified when registration opens at **art21.org/screeningsociety**.

As an extension of the narratives explored in the new season, Art21 will host a series of digital screenings and talks **joined by artists from each of the three new episodes**. All programs are free and open to the public with registration.

The first event takes place on **Monday, September 21, at 1:00 p.m. EST**, presenting “London”-featured artist **Phyllida Barlow** in conversation with curator Daniel Baumann. Additional events throughout the fall will include artists from the “Beijing” and “Borderlands” episodes.

Details and registration are available at art21.org/events.

Milestone Season for the Longest-Running Series on Contemporary Art

The **longest-running television series to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists**, *Art in the Twenty-First Century* allows viewers to observe artists at work, watch as they transform

inspiration into art, and hear how they struggle with both the physical and visual challenges of achieving their visions.

Since the broadcast of its inaugural season on PBS in 2001, the Peabody Award-winning series has featured **over 150 of today's foremost artists**.

Every episode is available to watch in full—**free of charge**—at Art21.org.

Art in the Twenty-First Century provides a window into contemporary art that is ordinarily hidden from public view. The featured artists are some of the most compelling creative thinkers of our time, and they grant Art21 filmmakers intimate access to their lives. Art21 presents artists in their private homes and studios, going behind-the-scenes to reveal how artworks and exhibitions are created. Reflecting that intimacy is the program's signature visual style, which dynamically captures static, immersive, and time-based artworks alike. Artists narrate their own stories and invest the documentaries with humor, pathos, and surprising insights.

Initial seasons of the program were loosely structured around themes that unify the individual artists and help audiences analyze, compare, contrast, and juxtapose their work and processes. In 2016, the eighth season introduced a shift for the series, grouping artists by their unique and revealing relationships to the cities where they live and work. Showcasing the geography, architecture, society, culture, and heritage of each location, subsequent seasons to date revealed how artists today simultaneously draw inspiration from and influence their immediate surroundings, while engaging communities from all over the world.

About Art21

Since 1997, Art21 has been recognized as a celebrated global leader in presenting thought-provoking and sophisticated content about contemporary art. It is the go-to place to learn firsthand about some of the most interesting working artists today—from the artists themselves—and is responsible for introducing millions of people to contemporary art and artists. Founded on the belief that artists are role models for creative and critical thinking, Art21's mission aims to inspire a more creative and tolerant world through the works and words of contemporary artists.

Art21.org provides an unparalleled year-round, always-on look at working artists, a continuous digital presence for an organization that is widely recognized for a biennial television series. The Art21 film library houses over 60 hours of original video content—over 500 videos, always free and always on view—on demand at Art21.org and around the clock at Art21.live. Reaching audiences of over 5 million a month, Art21’s digital initiatives continue the organization’s long-standing tradition of using the power of digital media to inspire audiences worldwide by exposing them to contemporary artists.

Through its education program, Art21 engages audiences in dialogue about the contemporary art and artists featured in Art21 films. Art21’s educational initiatives include the Art21 Educators learning community, professional development workshops and lectures through its Art21 Ambassadors program, the production of interpretive resources, and participatory programs and screening events.

To date, Art21’s digital films have been accepted in over 50 film festivals across the world, with screenings at DOC NYC, BlackStar, Brooklyn Film Festival, DC Shorts, and Flickers’ Rhode Island International Film Festival. Other achievements for Art21’s digital films include multiple Vimeo Staff Picks, two Webby Award nominations, and a Cine Golden Eagle award.

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For a full list of Art21 supporters, please visit Art21.org.

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