

## SCREENING SOCIETY

Art21's Screening Society is a free global screening program in support of the award-winning television series, *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. With each new season, Art21 invites a wide variety of partners—schools, universities, libraries, museums, nonprofit organizations, galleries, arts and cultural spaces, community centers, and more—to screen one of the season's episodes.

This guide offers hosts and participants information about the episodes and the featured artists, as well as suggestions for further engagement through discussion questions and activities.

For more information, resources, and educational opportunities, please visit [Art21.org](http://Art21.org).

## ABOUT ART21

Art21 is a celebrated global leader in presenting thought-provoking and sophisticated content about contemporary art—a preeminent resource for learning first-hand from the artists of our time. Art21's mission is to inspire a more creative world through the works and words of contemporary artists.

A nonprofit organization, Art21 provides unparalleled access to artists' voices, using the power of digital media to introduce diverse audiences around the world to contemporary art and artists. For more than two decades, Art21 has changed the paradigm for teaching and learning about the creative process.

## ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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 group of established and emerging artists, and their current bodies of work.

Through in-depth profiles and interviews, the 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 artists, video artists, and sound artists—in their own spaces and in their own words. The result is a unique opportunity to experience first-hand the complexity of the artistic processes—from inception to finished product—behind today's most thought-provoking art.

Eleven seasons have been produced for PBS (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2023).

## CREDIT LINE

When hosting an Art21 screening, please use the following credit line in publications associated with your event:

*This event is presented in collaboration with Art21, a nonprofit global leader in art education, producing preeminent films about today's leading visual artists and education programs that inspire creativity worldwide.*

Cover: Alex Da Corte, *Rubber Pencil Devil*, 2018, image courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery.



## EPISODE SYNOPSIS: EVERYDAY ICONS

As our culture works to correct centuries-long exclusions and misrepresentations, the artists in “Everyday Icons” show us alternative paths toward a more complete picture of our world. Featuring Amy Sherald, Daniel Lind-Ramos, Rose B. Simpson, and Alex Da Corte, this hour explores artists who reflect on the aesthetics, traditions, and histories we encounter daily, and whose work expands our visual vocabulary to reflect a changing society. In their practices, the often rigid boundaries of expectation are put aside in favor of new ideas, unorthodox approaches, and playful propositions. Their freedom and innovation give audiences permission to build new and unexpected worlds of their own and inspire more profound empathy, connection, and critical thought. Remixing and reimagining art histories, archetypes, monuments, pop cultures, and genres, these artists discover how we might see something new in the everyday.



### ALEX DA CORTE

Born: 1980; Camden, NJ

In his work, the artist never appears as himself, but rather, embodies the larger-than-life characters who influence or intrigue him: Jim Henson, the Wicked Witch of the West, Gene Kelly, and the Pink Panther are but a handful. Studying these characters who exist in worlds of fantasy and cartoon and integrating them into his own expansive artistic vision, Da Corte hopes to gain a deeper understanding of them and learn new ways of thinking.



### AMY SHERALD

Born: 1973; Columbus, GA

Following the tradition of American realists like Andrew Wyeth and Edward Hopper, the artist uses her paintings to tell stories about America. In 2018, Sherald was selected by Barack and Michelle Obama to paint the former First Lady's Presidential Portrait, becoming the first Black woman to do so. Depicting Obama in a moment of quiet contemplation, Sherald shows her sitting with the weight of her civic role and encompassing the fullness of her character and life outside of that role—modeling for viewers a way to do the same. At once casually unassuming and politically potent, Sherald's portraits contribute new narratives to a shared experience as Americans.



### DANIEL LIND-RAMOS

Born: 1953; Loíza, PR

Inspired by his hometown of Loíza, Puerto Rico's diverse and inventive culture, the artist's work reflects the history and energy of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Many of his materials come from the island itself; Lind-Ramos combs the beaches and streets of Loíza for palm fronds and other plant life, items that wash up on the shore, and discarded everyday materials that speak to the story of the Caribbean. These objects take on new and multiple meanings within the artist's work, folded into narratives about immigration, natural disaster, and colonization that often transform them.



### ROSE B. SIMPSON

Born: 1983; Santa Clara Pueblo, NM

Rose B. Simpson's work stems from moments of observation and connections to the past, emphasizing the processes of making and becoming in which we discover new ways of healing and being. Working quickly and intuitively in her studio, the artist shapes her clay sculptures by hand using a technique she developed called “slap-slab.” Each of her clay sculptures is embedded with fingerprints and other evidence of the artist's hand, leaving traces of the act of making that produced the work. The history, culture, and land of Santa Clara Pueblo are highly influential in the artist's practice. Simpson's ancestors have lived in Santa Clara Pueblo for millennia.

## FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

After viewing the episode, use the following suggestions to elicit conversation and connection. Whether virtually or in person, participants can engage with the film in a variety of ways using a broad range of platforms. Please choose the questions and suggestions that best connect with your community.

### DISCUSS THE EPISODE

- ☐ How do these artists engage with or define the term ‘icon’?
- ☐ What iconic figures did the artists use? Where did their inspiration for these figures come from?
- ☐ Why might these artists want to use icons that come from everyday life? What might they want the viewer to gain from these references?

### DISCUSS THE ARTISTS

- ☐ Amy Sherald discusses being an ‘American realist.’ How does her work engage art history? How does her work contribute to American realism? Why is it important for more artists to be included in that group?
- ☐ Daniel Lind-Ramos uses found objects to create his sculptures. What objects did you notice in the pieces? What might these materials—coconut shells, palm branches, FEMA tarps, building supplies—represent? How do you think his work, compared to the work of a journalist or academic, helps viewers to see and consider recent events?
- ☐ What does Rose B. Simpson say about her process? How is her process connected to her mother's, grandmother's, and family's artistic heritage?
- ☐ Consider how Alex Da Corte utilizes pop culture characters like the Wicked Witch of the West, Mr. Rogers, and Big Bird, alongside art historical references such as Brancusi, Calder, and Duchamp. What experience does this mixture provide the viewer?

### GO FURTHER

- ☐ Ask participants to identify iconic moments in their own lifetime. How might one or more of the four artists picture these moments? Discuss one or more of your ideas with another participant.
- ☐ Provide art supplies of your choice, like water colors, crayons, pencil, paper, or clay. Allow participants to create an artwork in response to the episode. Perhaps detailing one of the featured everyday icons, individuals, or themes.

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“I consider myself an American realist. For me it just means recognizing my American-ness first and just wanting the work to join a greater ongoing conversation.” **Amy Sherald**

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Keep in touch: [www.art21.org](http://www.art21.org)

Social Media: [@art21](https://twitter.com/art21)