

SCREENING SOCIETY

Art21's Screening Society welcomes local communities to gather and watch films about art together. By providing free access to documentary films about contemporary artists, Screening Society promotes conversation, inspires creative thinking, and broadens engagement with the art of our time.

This guide offers hosts and participants information about the films 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.

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. A nonprofit organization, Art21's mission is to educate and expand access to contemporary art through the production of documentary films, resources, and public programs.

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. For more information, visit art21.org.

Artists & the Unknown

Art21's second compendium of artist interviews explores how we use the randomness, complexity, and unknowability of life to push the boundaries of art and culture.



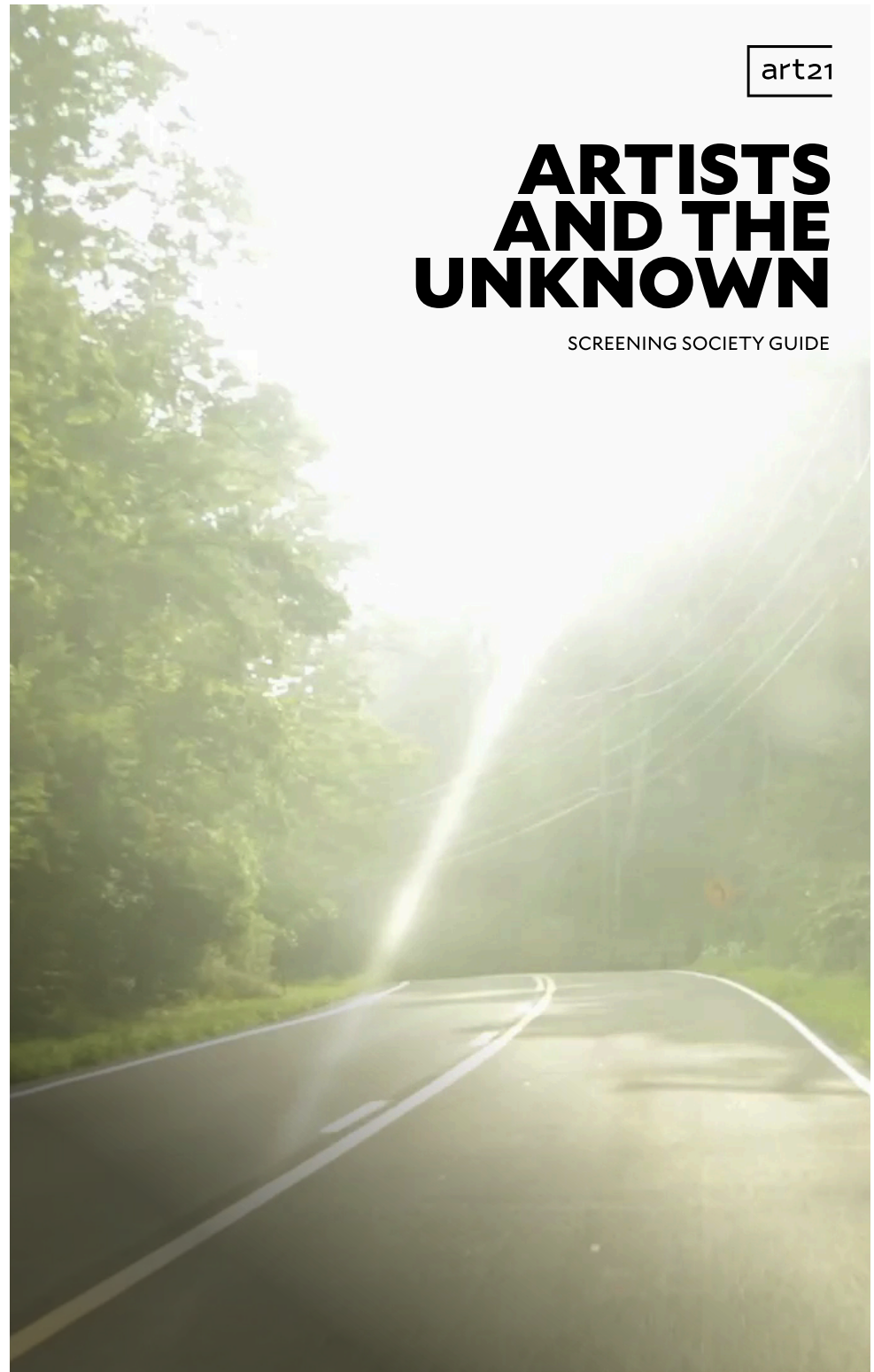
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ARTISTS AND THE UNKNOWN

SCREENING SOCIETY GUIDE



PROGRAM SYNOPSIS: “ARTISTS AND THE UNKNOWN”

In celebration of Art21’s newest book *Artists & the Unknown: Art21 Interviews with Artists*, Screening Society provides a selection of films featuring artists who explore how we use randomness, mystery, and unknowability to try to answer some of life’s biggest questions.

What does the “unknown” mean? It is something we encounter in ways big and small every day of our lives. It appears when we wake up and wonder what the day holds, as we watch the world around us change, develop, and decay, and in our risks, dreams, and curiosities. The unknown can appear unexpectedly, at any time, and with myriad forms and faces. What do we do with that information? At Art21, we look to artists.

Drawn from over two decades of interviews with the leading artists of the 21st century, the book *Artists & the Unknown: Art21 Interviews with Artists* captures engaging, inspiring, and stimulating conversations that explore encounters with the unknown, from an election cycle to health crisis. Featuring the works and words of 18 groundbreaking contemporary artists, this collection serves as a guide and a companion in your own encounters with unknowability.

This season of Screening Society honors the new book by showcasing a selection of Art21 films.



LINDA GOODE BRYANT
Born 1949; Columbus, OH

In the many different titles and hats that the artist has worn throughout her decades-long career, including educator, gallerist, activist, filmmaker, and farmer, Goode Bryant has sought to realize ideas that were previously thought impossible through a choreography of passion, commitment, skill, and community. From creating the first Black commercial gallery in New York City to founding an urban farming nonprofit on concrete yards and city rooftops, Goode Bryant’s works empower communities and create tangible change, allowing others to realize their impossible ideas alongside her.



JOSEPHINE HALVORSON
Born 1981; Brewster, MA

Combining acute attention to detail and an insistence on painting from life, Halvorson gives herself only one day to complete each canvas. Interested in her relationship to the subjects of her paintings, Halvorson resists the term painter; she prefers to think of painting as recording time spent with an object in its environment.



ROSE B. SIMPSON
Born 1983; Santa Clara Pueblo, NM

Working across media, Simpson finds new ways to connect past and present, express experience and identity, and contemplate freedom and strength. Her work often references the personal and intimate in connection with something greater, obliquely engaging the histories and knowledge of her Indigenous community and reflecting the enduring oppression and resilience of Indigenous peoples across the United States.



SARAH SZE
Born 1969; Boston, MA

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.



MICHAEL RAKOWITZ
Born 1973; Great Neck, NY

Rakowitz critiques the ongoing forces of colonization, bringing attention not only to the value of cultural artifacts that have been lost, looted, or destroyed but also to the people who have suffered from continuing violence. His work asks viewers to reconsider the relationships between hospitality and hostility, and provenance and expropriation, and to confront the complicity of cultural institutions and audiences in geopolitical matters.

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 films 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

- ☐ What does the “unknown” mean to you? How do the artists in this program engage the “unknown”? In what ways are their practices the same? How are they different?
- ☐ Consider how these artists respond to change or unexpected circumstances. How did they adapt?
- ☐ What are some strategies that artists use when responding to change, the unexpected, and the unknown? How are these strategies different, and how do they influence the kind of works that different artists create?
- ☐ Consider how these artists take risks in their practices. What is at stake when different artists take risks? How do these risks manifest themselves in new works?
- ☐ Sarah Sze and Michael Rakowitz both responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions in their films. Did that experience change your perspective about facing periods of uncertainty? How did you navigate waves of new information and adjust your life to that information?

GO FURTHER

- ☐ Time is a theme in several of the films. Provide art supplies of your choice and paper. Ask participants to create a work of art within a time constraint (ex. 2 minutes, 10 minutes, 25 minutes, an hour, etc.). Afterward give time for everyone to do a gallery walk of the completed work.
- ☐ Thinking about Rose B. Simpson and Josephine Halvorson, engage participants in an exercise that involves listening to or attending to objects. For example: Identify an object in the room that calls to you (it could be anything from a chair, to a wall, to a backpack). How can you answer that call using creativity? Does it long to be painted? Does it want to be repurposed? Does it need to be fixed?
- ☐ How do you adapt to change? Recall a moment of change or transition in your life. This could be moving to a new place, a job change, a physical change, or something else. Make an artwork that depicts your sensory experiences during that moment of transition: What did you see, hear, feel, taste and touch?