

HYPERALLERGIC

An Omnivorous Tour of the 2017 Whitney Biennial

See highlights from the 2017 Whitney Biennial, which opens to the public later this week.

Benjamin Sutton – March 13, 2017



Detail of Ajay Kurian's installation in the Whitney Museum stairwell, "Childermass" (2017)

The 2017 Whitney Biennial, the institution's first since its move to the Meatpacking District, opens to the public later this week, but already the buzz is positive. Gathering works by a modest 63 artists on the museum's vast fifth and sixth floors (along with installations in

conference rooms, terraces, the lobby, stairwell, and off-site at the Lower Manhattan Arts Academy), the exhibition feels much, much less daunting than recent Biennials held in the Breuer building, which often seemed overstuffed and cramped. Credit is largely due to curators Christopher Y. Lew and Mia Locks, who give the work (and visitors) room to breathe and, for the most part, have given participating artists their own alcoves, galleries, or space for large-scale installations. This Whitney Biennial feels airy, which is a first in recent memory.

But it's also saturated with recurring themes and formal motifs. At Monday's preview, some of the most immediately apparent trends included an exceptionally strong showing by the Biennial's painters (including Carrie Moyer and Aliza Nisenbaum) and a relative plethora of works dealing with social justice and institutional critique (including Cameron Rowland and the Occupy Museums collective). There are eye-popping installations (by Samara Golden, Raúl de Nieves, and Ajay Kurian), transporting video works (by Anicka Yi and the Postcommodity collective, among others), and works that channel the current socio-political climate of frustration and outrage (including by Henry Taylor, Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, and An-My Lê). Though we'll have a proper review in time for the public opening, here's a taste of what's in store at the 2017 Whitney Biennial.



Detail of Ajay Kurian's installation in the Whitney Museum stairwell, "Childermass" (2017)



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