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## Challenging Our Ideas of Art

Art institutions are reaching out to new artists and attracting new audiences.

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As the editors for Special Sections plan our large and popular Museums and Fine Arts & Exhibits sections in the spring and fall each year, we think about themes that will help us assign the most meaningful articles.

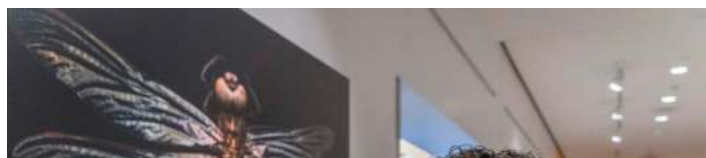
Art institutions are reacting creatively to the challenges they face in attracting new audiences and remaining relevant to existing ones. Among the subjects we covered in this 48-page print and extensive digital section were several strong examples of how race and ethnicity play a role in new exhibitions now on view or coming soon.

The Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth and the Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are conveying new approaches in response to the controversies across the United States over statues related to the Civil War era. The exhibitions coincide with the 160th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. At the Carter, the exhibition "Emancipation: The Unfinished Project of Liberation" has its genesis in an intriguing premise: What if a famous artwork — in this case, the sculptor John Quincy Adams Ward's "The Freedman" from 1863 — is so historically fraught that it requires an entirely new cultural and aesthetic interpretation for the current era?



The New York-based artist Sanford Biggers saw the Chazen Museum's discomfort over showing Thomas Ball's "The Emancipation Group" as an opportunity "to open things up." Mary Inhea Kang for The New York Times

At the Chazen, Sanford Biggers, an acclaimed New York-based contemporary artist, and Amy Gilman, the director of the Chazen, have created an exhibition that reinterprets a statue in the museum's collection by Thomas Ball that depicted Abraham Lincoln standing tall, his outstretched arm hovering above a freed enslaved person who crouches seminude at his feet. The result is their current exhibition "re:mancipation."





Jessica Ware is an entomologist and associate curator for the American Museum of Natural History. Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times

Another article recounts how museums, large and small, are doing more to focus on local communities, which are often diverse but haven't seen different cultures reflected in the art that is displayed. "There is a widespread effort by museums of all types, particularly smaller museums, to increase their audiences, both in the number of people and the racial and ethnic diversity," Laura Lott, chief executive of the American Alliance of Museums, said in an interview for the article. "They recognize that there are people in many cases who haven't felt included."

We also spoke to Jessica Ware, the first Black person to hold a tenured curatorial position at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, to get her perspective on what diversity can mean to a museum. She is an expert on insects, which will be the basis for a major exhibition at the museum's Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education and Innovation on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Dr. Ware wants to attract more people of color to entomology, and has helped create a collective in support of that goal.



The artist Pacita Abad. An exhibition of her work runs through Sept. 3 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Pacita Abad Art Estate

The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis has the world's first retrospective of the work of the artist Pacita Abad. It brings together work from throughout Ms. Abad's 32-year career, reflecting the vibrancy and textures of diasporic life. Ms. Abad was born and raised in the Philippines to a large, politically active family. In her lifetime, she created more than 5,000 works of art. At the heart of her life's work are trapuntos: maximalist hanging textiles embroidered with mirrors from India, cowrie shells from Papua New Guinea, beaded fabric from Indonesia, buttons from the Philippines and other travel-gathered bricolage.

The varied backgrounds of these artists and their resulting works of art highlight the nuanced ways they see the world and bring those powerful perspectives to viewers.

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