

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



ART21 ANNOUNCES NEW SEASON OF
“ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY” THIS SEPTEMBER ON PBS



[Click here to watch the trailer for Season 8 of “Art in the Twenty-First Century.”](#)

SEASON 8 TO FEATURE SIXTEEN ARTISTS IN FOUR CITIES

PREMIERES FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 16 & 23, 2016
HOSTED BY CLAIRE DANES

(May 26, 2016 — New York, NY) — The new season of ART21’s flagship program will debut with four one-hour episodes on two consecutive **Fridays, September 16th and September 23rd**, from **9PM to 11PM ET on PBS** (check local listings). For its eighth season, ART21 engaged three exceptional documentary directors: three-time Academy Award nominee **Deborah Dickson**; MacArthur Foundation Fellow and Peabody Award-winner **Stanley Nelson**; and Emmy Award-winner **Pamela Mason Wagner**.

Portraits of 16 Innovative Artists Who Live & Work in Four Dynamic Cities

Chicago
Mexico City
Los Angeles
Vancouver

Nick Cave, Theaster Gates, Barbara Kasten, Chris Ware
Natalia Almada, Minerva Cuevas, Damián Ortega, Pedro Reyes
Edgar Arceneaux, Liz Larner, Tala Madani, Diana Thater
Stan Douglas, Brian Jungen, Liz Magor, Jeff Wall

The series provides unparalleled access to the most innovative artists of our time, revealing how artists engage the culture around them and how art allows viewers to see the world in new ways. Golden Globe and Emmy Award-winning actress **Claire Danes** will join the Peabody Award-winning documentary television series “**Art in the Twenty-First Century**” as its broadcast host for the series’ eighth season.

“Growing up in a family where art was a part of everyday life, my parents taught me to question the world around me,” said **Danes**. “Artists today influence how we see the world, how we express ourselves, and how art can transform society.”

For the first time in the show’s history, the episodes are not organized around an artistic theme. Instead the 16-featured artists are grouped by their unique and revealing relationships to the places where they live: Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and Vancouver. The artists share universal experiences through their life stories and creative works: resistance, pleasure, mortality, and the hope for a better tomorrow.

“Art is increasingly being defined and described in relationship to a sense of place. In our time of hyper-interconnectivity, where you choose to live and work matters like never before,” said **ART21 Executive Director Tina Kukielski**.

The new season showcases the geography, architecture, society, culture, and heritage of each location. Each episode highlights aspects of contemporary life that viewers everywhere experience. “Using the sounds, colors, and energy of the city as a landscape that artists respond to and interact with, the films expand beyond the studio to explore each artist’s engagement with their communities and the world around them,” said **ART21 Executive Producer Eve Moros Ortega**.

Season 8 reveals how artists today simultaneously draw inspiration from and influence their immediate surroundings, while engaging far-flung communities from all over the world—Amsterdam, Aspen, Basel, Bloomfield Hills, Bregenz, Brussels, Chiapas, Cuernavaca, Denver, Detroit, Istanbul, La Porte, Lisbon, London, Milan, New York City, Okanagan, Paris, Pasadena, Philadelphia, Puebla, San Francisco, Sinaloa, and Toronto. Through their work, artists participate in global conversations about the pressing issues of our time: from terrorism to environmental crises to the struggle for civil rights.

“ART21 brought on three visionary directors—Deborah Dickson, Stanley Nelson and Pamela Mason Wagner—enlivening the series with a fresh approach to photography and storytelling,” said **Beth Hoppe, PBS Chief Programming Executive and General Manager, General Audience Programming**. “PBS is delighted to continue featuring ART21’s series as a treasured and unique highlight of our ongoing commitment to arts programming.”

The featured visual artists are some of the most compelling creative thinkers of our time and they granted ART21 filmmakers intimate access to their lives. The documentary series provides a window into contemporary art that is ordinarily hidden from public view. ART21 presents artists in their private homes and studios and goes behind-the-scenes to reveal how artworks and exhibitions are created. Viewers meet artists’ family members, friends, collaborators, and admirers who share their own insight into the featured art and its creation. Season 8 visits major exhibitions of the past two years, showing artworks in vivid color and detail, as well as presenting rare archival footage and documents. Artists narrate their own stories and invest the documentaries with humor, pathos, and surprising insights.

In the past seven seasons, “**Art in the Twenty-First Century**” has profiled over 100 artists. ART21’s ongoing series is a celebration of the diversity of art-making today, featuring artists from different backgrounds—age, gender, ethnicity, orientation, education, nationality—who make work in countless media and styles. In Season 8, photography is explored through abstract still lifes and pictorial narratives; sculpture through hand-crafted and found objects; painting through murals, figuration, and cartoons; performance through staged plays, improvisational dance, and group actions; video through immersive installations, literary adaptations, and films that blend fact with fiction. “These artists pose questions through their work in new and exhilarating ways, provoking social change as much as instigating aesthetic revolutions,” said **ART21 Curator Wesley Miller**.

Episode 1: “Chicago”

Friday, September 16 at 9 p.m. ET

Chicago is a city rooted in industry and towering architecture, and artists in Chicago are disrupting urban experience through experimentation. **Nick Cave** (b.1959, Fulton, MO, USA) creates “Soundsuits”—surreally majestic objects blending fashion and sculpture—that originated as metaphorical suits of armor in response to the Rodney King beatings and have evolved into vehicles for empowerment. **Theaster Gates** (b.1973, Chicago, IL, USA) first encountered creativity in the music of Black churches on his journey to becoming an urban planner, potter, and artist. Gates creates sculptures out of clay, tar, and renovated buildings, transforming the raw material of the South Side into radically reimagined vessels of opportunity for the community. **Barbara Kasten** (b.1936, Chicago, IL, USA) makes photographs and video projections in her studio that evoke an experience of movement through modernist architecture. **Chris Ware** (b.1967, Omaha, NE, USA), known for his *New Yorker* magazine covers, is hailed as a master of the comic art form. Ware’s complex graphic novels, which tell stories about people in suburban midwestern neighborhoods, poignantly reflect on the role of memory in constructing identity.

Episode 2: “Mexico City”

Friday, September 16 at 10 p.m. ET

Mexico City artists exit their homes and studios to use the growing megalopolis as their canvas. The artists present everyday materials as artworks, mine recognizable images for their poetic potential, and take their art to the streets. **Damián Ortega** (b.1967, Mexico City, Mexico) uses objects from his everyday life—Volkswagen Beetle cars, Day of the Dead posters, locally sourced corn tortillas—to make spectacular sculptures, which suggest stories of both mythic import and cosmological scale. **Pedro Reyes** (b.1972, Mexico City, Mexico) designs ongoing projects that propose playful solutions to urgent social problems. From turning guns into musical instruments, to hosting a People’s United Nations to address pressing concerns, to offering ecologically friendly grasshopper burgers from a food cart, Reyes transforms existing problems into ideas for a better world. **Minerva Cuevas** (b.1975, Mexico City, Mexico) is a conceptual and socially-engaged artist who creates sculptural installations and paintings in response to politically charged events such as the tension between world starvation and capitalistic excess. Cuevas documents community protests in a cartography of resistance while also creating mini-sabotages—altering grocery store bar codes and manufacturing student identity cards—as part of her Better Life Corporation. **Natalia Almada** (b.1974, Mexico City, Mexico), the great-granddaughter of Mexico’s controversial 40th president, Plutarco Elías Calles, makes intimate

films that delve into the tragedies of her Mexican-American family's personal history as well as the Sinaloa region's violent present.

Episode 3: "Los Angeles"

Friday, September 23 at 9 p.m. ET

While sprawling Los Angeles has world-class museums and art schools, artists working in the shadow of the entertainment industry are more "under the radar," affording them the space and time to imagine. **Diana Thater** (b.1962, San Francisco, CA, USA) makes video installations that poetically grapple with threats to the natural world. She is filmed preparing for her monumental exhibition, *The Sympathetic Imagination*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Liz Lerner** (b.1960, Sacramento, CA, USA) experiments with abstract sculptural forms in a dizzying array of materials, including polychromatic ceramics that evoke the tectonic geologic shifts of the western landscape. **Tala Madani** (b.1981, Tehran, Iran) skewers stereotypes in her sharply satirical paintings that evoke clashes of culture: men and women, the rational and the absurd, Western and non-Western. And **Edgar Arceneaux** (b.1972, Los Angeles, CA) investigates historical patterns through drawings, installations, and multimedia events, such as the reenactment of Ben Vereen's tragically misunderstood blackface performance at Ronald Reagan's 1981 Inaugural Gala.

Episode 4: "Vancouver"

Friday, September 23 at 10 p.m. ET

In small and tightly-knit Vancouver, artists reframe the world through a series of sophisticated illusions. By recreating historical moments, staging photos of vernacular scenes, and crafting intricate sculptures that trick the eye, artists reveal how everyday images and moments from the past are not always what they seem. **Liz Magor** (b.1948, Winnipeg, MB, Canada) makes uncannily realistic casts of humble objects—gloves, cardboard boxes, cigarettes—that speak to mortality and local histories. Through complex video installations, photos, theatrical productions, and virtual reality simulations, **Stan Douglas** (b.1960, Vancouver, BC, Canada) reenacts historical moments of tension that connect the history of Vancouver to broader social movements of struggle and utopian aspiration. **Brian Jungen** (b.1970, Fort St. John, BC, Canada) draws from his family's ranching and hunting background, as well as his Dane-zaa heritage, when disassembling and recombining consumer goods into whimsical sculptures. Attentive to the accidental encounters that can inspire an image, photographer **Jeff Wall** (b.1946, Vancouver, BC, Canada) recreates flashes of inspiration by building sets and repeatedly photographing gestures until they coalesce into a picture that's printed on a grand scale.

Making of the Show

After organizing seven successful seasons of "**Art in the Twenty-First Century**" around a theme-based model, ART21 oriented Season 8 around the singular concept of cities to promote geographic diversity of the artists profiled and enliven the storytelling by emphasizing the here and now through place-based narratives. Curatorial research for Season 8, which began in the fall of 2014, involved a survey of two dozen cities and thousands of artists. After deciding on a North American framework, accomplished independent directors were paired with ART21 producers to develop each city-based episode. Filming for the series took a full year, from April

2015 to April 2016, required 40 trips and 140 days filming, which resulted in over 100 interview sessions and 400 hours of original footage. Each portrait is a collaboration with the featured artist, requiring novel creative solutions: from slow-motion to timelapse, cinema verité to staged setups. Each one-hour episode, edited in New York with graphic design and scoring in Portland, took 17 weeks to complete.

Credits

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	Eve Moros Ortega
CURATOR & PRODUCER	Wesley Miller
DIRECTORS	Deborah Dickson (Los Angeles, Mexico City) Stanley Nelson (Chicago) Pamela Mason Wagner (Vancouver)
EDITORS	Kate Taverna (Mexico City) Mary Ann Toman (Los Angeles, Vancouver) Aljernon Tunsil (Chicago)
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION & PRODUCER	Nick Ravich
PRODUCER	Ian Forster
STRUCTURE CONSULTANT & PRODUCER	Veronique Bernard
SERIES CONSULTANT	Tucker Gates
HOST	Claire Danes
TITLE / MOTION DESIGN	Matt Eller / Afternoon Inc.
COMPOSER	Joel Pickard

Support

Major support for Season 8 of “Art in the Twenty-First Century” is provided by: National Endowment for the Arts, PBS, Agnes Gund, Lambent Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and Toby Devan Lewis.

Home Video

Season 8 of “Art in the Twenty-First Century” will be available on DVD from ShopPBS.org or 800-PLAY-PBS, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Local Screenings & Education

The ART21 Screening Society encourages arts enthusiasts from around the world to organize local screenings of “Art in the Twenty-First Century” and access the content license-free for a limited time. Whether a museum, library, college, cultural center, community-based organization, arts center, theater, youth center, high school, or even a coffee shop, ART21 will provide the content needed to produce an exciting, educational event. Interested organizations can register at art21.org/screeningsociety.

Each season, ART21 creates free educational materials for teachers to integrate contemporary art in classrooms across multiple disciplines. The Season 8 Educators’ Guide will be available on art21.org in August 2016, and ART21 resources are available on PBS’ Learning Media. In addition, ART21 provides professional development to educators across the country.

Exhibition

For the first time, viewers of the ART21 series will be able to see work by all sixteen artists in a museum exhibition, *On Space and Place: Contemporary Art from Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City and Vancouver* at the [DePaul Art Museum](http://depaulartmuseum.org) (September 15 - December 18, 2016), organized by Julie Rodrigues Widholm, Director and Chief Curator of the DePaul Art Museum.

About ART21

ART21 is a nonprofit global leader specializing in digital media about contemporary visual art, producing films on today’s leading visual artists and education programs that inspire creativity worldwide. Acclaimed for its Peabody Award-winning PBS series, “[Art in the Twenty-First Century](http://art21.org),” ART21 engages millions of people of all ages with contemporary artists and their creative processes. In addition to “Art in the Twenty-First Century,” ART21 produces the online film series “[New York Close Up](http://art21.org),” “[Exclusive](http://art21.org),” and “[Artist to Artist](http://art21.org),” special artist projects including the Peabody Award-winning feature “[William Kentridge: Anything Is Possible](http://art21.org),” extensive [educational resources](http://art21.org); and a comprehensive website at art21.org.

About PBS

[PBS](http://pbs.org), with 350 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches nearly 100 million people through television and nearly 33 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’ broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS’ premier children’s TV programming and its website, pbskids.org, are parents’ and teachers’ most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](https://twitter.com/PBS), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/PBS) or through our [apps for mobile devices](http://pbs.org/apps). Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](https://twitter.com/PBSPressroom).

* * *

Press Contacts

Adam Abdalla
President, Cultural Counsel
adam@culturalcounsel.com

Marcella Zimmermann
Cultural Counsel
(212) 379-9425
marcella@culturalcounsel.com

Michaé Godwin
PBS
(703) 739-8483
mmgodwin@pbs.org

For further information and photos:

press@art21.org
pbs.org/pressroom
art21.org/press