

## The 51 Artists, Curators, Directors and Dealers Changing the Art World in 2018

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Pearl Lam, Helen Molesworth, Lubaina Himid, Nato Thompson and Amy Sherald. Kaitlyn Flannagan for Observer

Way back before it turned up 22,809 unique results when you search Etsy, “avant-garde” actually meant something. The work of the those who earned the distinction wasn’t just new—it was different. Those artists were truly the advance guard, the ones the rest would follow.

But however appropriated and abused, the term is far from dead. There are still those who live up to its original promise in the truest sense. The artists we love, or love to hate. The ones at the center of our most intense debates. The people who give us a reason to really talk about art.

And of course any great artist needs their champions: the curators, gallerists and institutional directors who put their boundary-demolishing work on view. So we decided to pinpoint who exactly these people are. Who will we be talking about most fervently over the course of 2018, and the years that follow? Who’s making it happen? This, from our perspective, is a gathering of the people who are truly influential in art right now.



Coco Fusco as Dr. Zira, 2013. Courtesy the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York © Coco Fusco/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

For over three decades, Cuban-American interdisciplinary artist Coco Fusco has used performance and video to interrogate race, identity and political power structures and state control.

Equally as esteemed for her writing and scholarship on these subjects, Fusco proved to be the heavyweight champ in a vitriolic fight over artist Dana Schutz's portrait of Emmett Till in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, after protests ensued over Hannah Black's call for the painting to not only be removed but destroyed.

The issue, according to Black, a black-identifying biracial British artist, was that Schutz, as a white artist, had no right to use the racially charged and gruesome 1955 lynching of Till, an African-American boy, as fodder for art. Fusco, however, argued in her *Hyperallergic* response that, "the argument that any attempt by a white cultural producer to engage with racism via the expression of black pain is inherently unacceptable forecloses the effort to achieve interracial cooperation, mutual understanding, or universal anti-racist consciousness. There are better ways to arrive at cultural equity than policing art production and resorting to moralistic pieties in order to intimidate individuals into silence."

Fusco's nuanced and considered writing on the topic, as well as her continued artistic practice, will undoubtedly prove a benchmark for moving the needle on discussions of post-colonial identity politics for years to come. Up next, she's teaming up with Cuban artist Sandra Ceballos to launch a series of Havana-based workshops exploring the subversive art flourishing in Cuba.