



VISUAL ART

JUL 6, 2016

Yes, Portland Has a Biennial

And the Portland2016 Biennial Is Oregon’s Biggest Art Show Ever

by [Megan Burbank](#)



Michelle Grabner

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GET AN ART HISTORY professor talking, and they’ll almost certainly start telling yarns

about their favorite massive international contemporary art exhibition: the biennial. From the oldest one in Venice to one that exists only online, the art world loves its biennials. And though they can often seem like more pretentious, less reasonable versions of Coachella to the casual art-appreciator, Portland has its own answer to these large-scale shows. If you care about local art, it belongs on your radar: The Portland2016 Biennial starts this week and lasts for two entire months.

Portland2016's curator, Michelle Grabner, comes to us with some substantial experience. She served as a co-curator of the 2014 Whitney Biennial, and is a longtime professor of painting and drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (disclosure: I have an MFA and it came from there). When Grabner was announced as Portland2016's curator a year ago, it was exciting to see someone singled out for the job whose work is strongly interdisciplinary, spanning sculpture, video, writing, drawing, and painting, with an occasional feminist bent—and a breadth of knowledge that's exactly what you want from a person putting together a massive survey of local work.

And it truly is massive. Over the next two months, Portland2016 Biennial will showcase work from 34 makers throughout the state, an absurd showing that bills itself as "the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of Oregon art, ever." I won't argue with that, or with the lineup, which includes Heidi Schwegler, an interdisciplinary artist whose macabre sculptures of uncanny children and ruined objects covered in gray fuzz gave me an incurable case of the jumpies after I saw them at Marylhurst University's Art Gym last year. I'm also excited to see work from Jessica Jackson Hutchins, whose sculpture toes the line between art and craft and incorporates objects like furniture; Lisa Radon, whose *Infinity Increaser* installation you may have seen at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's 2014 Time-Based Art Festival; and Ellen McFadden, who, in her late 80s, paints pleasingly minimalist geometric pieces in super-bright palettes.

If you don't know where to start, this weekend's opening receptions are a good bet, especially Disjecta's launch for a show that pulls from Grabner's studio visits with 107 artists throughout the state. That show has its reception from 6-10 pm this Saturday, July 9. Or you can do what I do, and sneak in later when the shows are open but less crowded: The beauty of a biennial like this one is that you have all summer to see it.

Related Events

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Disjecta, July 9– Sept 18



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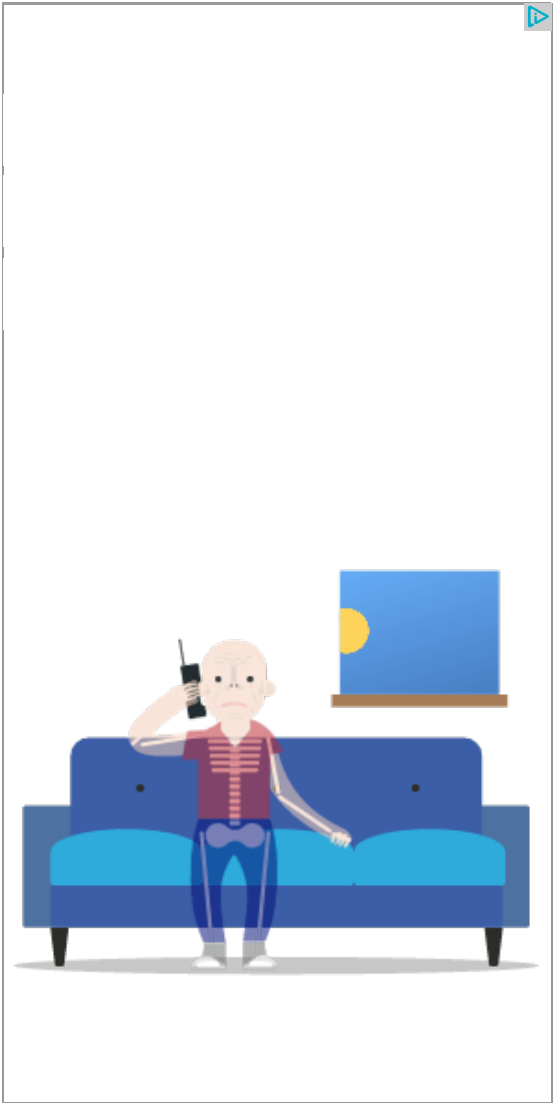
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