

# ARTnews

## The Defining Artworks of 2022

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By The Editors of ARTnews



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In 2022, art roared back. Blockbuster exhibitions returned, and the world's top art festivals, including the Venice Biennale and Documenta, did as well. Historical study of past works continued apace, and new artworks were added to the canon. Although artists had been making art with the same passion during the pandemic as they did before, this year the energy was especially palpable. Across the world this year, artists continued exploring the ways that racism, colonialism, and misogyny shape society, and they did so as vitally as ever. Their work offered powerful views into alternate universes devoid of these poisonous prejudices while also staring down realities that must be contended with.

Along the way, it became obvious that the study of art history must change too. Artists of color and women artists who had been dealing with these topics for decades were suddenly seen anew, and the works they produced seemed ever more notable. With the understanding that nothing is fixed, experts also upended past conceptions about famous works, even at one point discovering that a beloved abstraction had been hanging upside-down for years. To look back on the past 12 months in art-making, below is a survey of some of the most important artworks made or presented in a new light in 2022.

### 3. Coco Fusco, Your Eyes Will Be an Empty Word (2021)



Coco Fusco, Your Eyes Will Be an Empty Word, 2021. Photo : Courtesy the artist

It is still too soon to say what the defining artworks about the current pandemic will be, although it seems fair to suggest that Coco Fusco's video *Your Eyes Will Be an Empty Word* is highly likely to become one of them. Fusco's subject is Hart Island, a landmass near the Bronx that has been used as a burial ground for the unidentified for well over a century. In 2020, Hart Island took on a new valence, becoming the place where the unclaimed bodies of those who'd fallen ill with Covid and died were taken and buried by prisoners from Rikers Island. Using drone photography, Fusco's camera looms high above, capturing the island as if from the point of view of one of the nameless who passed. Periodically, however, her camera ventures downward, closer to the water, where Fusco can be seen in a boat, rowing solo and dropping flowers into the Long Island Sound. Shown at this year's Whitney Biennial, the video acts as a memorial for the unknown Covid victims buried nearby, whom Fusco has postulated may have been immigrants or houseless, and as a reminder these people died with others by their side, even if they did not know it. As artist Pamela Sneed says in the video's tender narration, "The bodies lie together alone." —Alex Greenberger