

# Aspen Art Museum

## Announcing the AIR 2025 Festival Program, "Life As No One Knows It"



Matthew Barney, *Redoubt*, 2018. Production still. © Matthew Barney, courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, and Sadie Coles HQ, London. Photo: Hugo Glendinning.

**ASPEN, Colorado (April 24, 2025)** — The Aspen Art Museum is delighted to announce the key themes and participants for AIR 2025, a landmark initiative comprising a public festival and private retreat marking its inaugural edition this year. Titled *Life As No One Knows It*, AIR 2025's public program will take place from **July 29 to August 1, 2025**. This new festival builds upon Aspen's legacy as a gathering place for artistic and intellectual innovation and sets the stage for a decade of programs that center artists as leaders.

Unfolding over the three-day public festival will be a series of presentations comprising site-specific commissions and performances, interdisciplinary dialogues, and keynote lectures, all centered on the arts as a sensory method of inquiry that can help us navigate a future that we do not yet know.

Taking inspiration from **Paul Chan's** multi-year odyssey in programming a synthetic self-portrait through artificial intelligence and **Sara Imari Walker's** challenge to conventional definitions of life in her book *Life As No One Knows It*—from which AIR 2025 takes its name—the event explores the intersections of art and technology, expanding our understanding of how this era of rapid technological transformation shapes the world around us. The renowned artist and filmmaker **Matthew Barney** will headline the ambitious program, which draws inspiration from the historic Aspen International Design Conference,

where pioneering figures such as John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, Susan Sontag, and Steve Jobs convened between 1949 and 2006.

The public festival will be preceded by a closed-door retreat for leading artists and thinkers, including scholars **Simone Browne** and **Tung-Hui Hu**, and artists **Okwui Okpokwasili**, **Samora Pinderhughes**, and **Martine Syms**. Unfolding over the three-day public festival will be a series of presentations comprising site-specific commissions and performances, interdisciplinary dialogues, and keynote lectures, all centered on the arts as a sensory method of inquiry that can help us navigate a future that we do not yet know. As a prelude to the festival, there will be a conversation between artist **Issy Wood** and writer, musician, and art critic **Johanna Fateman** in collaboration with Anderson Ranch Arts Center, as part of the organization's Summer Series public lecture program. AIR's roster of participants also includes celebrated artists **Paul Chan**, **Glenn Ligon**, **Maya Lin**, and **André 3000**, poet-economist **Zoë Hitzig**, architects **Francis Kéré** and **Frida Escobedo**, novelist **Álvaro Enrigue**, psychoanalyst **Jamieson Webster**, and scientists **Sara Imari Walker** and **Anil Seth**, among many others, who will be announced in the coming months.

### **Commissions and Performances**

Significant new commissions of site-specific artworks and performances form the core of the AIR festival program each day. These new projects highlight artists at various stages of their careers, each creating boundary-breaking works that respond to the unique landscape, history, and cultural context of Aspen.

**Matthew Barney's** expansive new performance collides characters and motifs from *SECONDARY* and *Redoubt*, two major bodies of work from the past decade that explore the complex and often spectacular role of violence in American culture, from football to western expansionism. **Jota Mombaça** will lead an outdoor performance at Aspen Center for Environmental Studies' (ACES) Hallam Lake Nature Preserve that forges new connections between the body, sound, and the landscape, while **Mimi Park** continues her sensory exploration of interconnectedness between objects and materials, networks and ecosystems, with an installation that engages directly with the library at the Aspen Center for Physics. Bridging the commission series with the public dialogues, **Paul Chan** will explore the false self and threat of death in a debut conversation with **Paul'**, the synthetic, AI version of himself.

Alongside the new commissions are a series of performances reimagined for Aspen's environs. A chorus of ceramic globular whistles by **Cannupa Hanska Luger** will resonate across the city in a haunting invocation that communicates between worlds. **Apichatpong Weerasethakul** and **Rafiq Bhatia's** film and electro-acoustic performance *On Blue*, with newly commissioned instrumentation for the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble from the Aspen Music Festival and School, explores the interplay between dreams, memory, and the subconscious. Presented with a live ensemble, this work will be followed by

psychoanalyst **Jamieson Webster**'s meditation on breathing and subjectivity. Rounding out the festival program, music icon **André 3000** performs his Grammy-nominated *New Blue Sun* project, co-presented with the City of Aspen's Wheeler Opera House.

### **Dialogues**

A series of interdisciplinary dialogues explore the permeable boundaries between the natural and artificial, the architectural and ecological, subjectivity and consciousness, and the living and the dead. Each session is led by a visionary artist in conversation with a prominent expert from across a range of fields and disciplines.

Poet and technology researcher **Zoë Hitzig** and neuroscientist **Anil Seth** will delve into the evolving concept of consciousness in relation to artificial general intelligence. Novelist **Álvaro Enrigue** and artist **Adrián Villar Rojas** will discuss how speculative fiction reshapes our understanding of history, time, and consciousness. Astrobiologist and theoretical physicist **Sara Imari Walker** and artist **Sophia Al Maria** will engage with life beyond our world in a dialogue under the stars. Artist **Glenn Ligon** and museum director **Thelma Golden** will discuss the profound role of friendship and collaboration in shaping artistic practice; architect **Frida Escobedo** and curator **José Esparza Chong Cuy** will imagine an affective approach to designing museum architecture; and artist and writer **Aria Dean** will reframe the art historical lens with foundation director and art historian **Courtney J. Martin**. Throughout each of these cross-disciplinary exchanges, artists will seek to reimagine their role in shaping the future.

### **Bluhm-Kaul Keynotes**

AIR 2025's **Bluhm-Kaul Keynotes** will feature a series of lectures by preeminent figures across art, architecture, and film that focus on the future from unique perspectives and experiences. They are presented in collaboration with Serpentine's artistic director **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, whose multi-decade project of recording conversations with the world's most significant artists, architects, philosophers, and novelists are a source of inspiration for this series. The keynote lecturers include architect **Francis Kéré**, who will explore concepts of togetherness, drawing on his work that celebrates the social and cultural value of public spaces, and artist and architect **Maya Lin**, who will reflect on the connection between landscape and memory through the lens of her large-scale environmental artworks.

### **About AIR**

AIR, the Aspen Art Museum's new flagship initiative, is designed to explore the role of art in addressing the profound challenges of our time through interdisciplinary collaborations, conversations, and site-specific artworks and performances. Established as a year-round program dedicated to commissioning and artistic research, AIR culminates each summer in a series of convenings and programming.

AIR 2025 is presented in partnership with Serpentine; the Aspen Institute Arts Program; the Doris Duke Foundation—as a part of their *Creative Labor, Creative Conditions* campaign; the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation; and the City of Aspen's Wheeler Opera House, with Anderson Ranch, Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES), Aspen Center for Physics, Aspen Music Festival and School (AMFS), Red Brick Center for the Arts, and Jazz Aspen Snowmass, Aspen Words, and Aspen Film.

The full schedule for AIR 2025 and registration details will be available in May 2025. Join us in shaping new futures with artists at the helm. Sign up at [airaspen.org](https://airaspen.org) for updates and exclusive event details.

The AIR 2025 festival program will begin with the inaugural AIR Retreat, a private artist-led gathering of thirty-five leading experts from the arts, humanities, sciences, industry, and policy. The retreat will focus on developing frameworks for artists and thinkers to inform the design of new technological tools. The first edition, held from July 26 to 28, 2025, is conceived by the AIR curatorial team in collaboration with artists Paul Chan and Aria Dean, poet and technology researcher Zoë Hitzig, and writer Evan Calder Williams. It is convened in partnership with the Aspen Institute and the Doris Duke Foundation. *e-flux Journal* will subsequently feature writings that emerge from the conversations. Participants include Sophia Al Maria, J. Bob Alotta, Peter Born, Simone Browne, Alice Bucknell, Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen, Paul Chan, Aria Dean, Jynne Dilling, Álvaro Enrigue, José Esparza Chong Cuy, Dana Farouki, Ashley Ferro-Murray, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Zoë Hitzig, Lily Hu, Tung-Hui Hu, Angie Kim, Glenn Ligon, Okwui Okpokwasili, Philip Ording, Samora Pinderhughes, Isabel Quinzaños Alonso, Anil Seth, P. Staff, Martine Syms, Adrián Villar Rojas, Sara Imari Walker, Jamieson Webster, Evan Calder Williams, and Brian Kuan Wood, among others.

*Life as No One Knows It* is curated by Nicola Lees, Nancy and Bob Magoon Artistic Director and CEO, and Vic Brooks, AIR Curator at Large, with Daniel Merritt, Chief Curator, and Curators at Large Claude Adjil, Stella Bottai, Anisa Jackson, Eliza Ryan, and Simone Krug, Curator. The Bluhm-Kaul Keynotes are curated in collaboration with Hans Ulrich Obrist. AIR 2025 has been developed in dialogue with the AIR Artist Council—Paul Chan, Aria Dean, and Zoë Hitzig—and with the generous insights of AIR Advisors Alia Al Senussi, Sarah Broughton, Sarah Brown, José Esparza Chong Cuy, Jynne Dilling, Dana Farouki, Ashley Ferro-Murray, Rachel Shechtman, Evan Calder Williams, and Sarah Workneh.

### **About Lugano, AIR Founding Partner**

**Lugano** is an international jewelry brand renowned for its one-of-a-kind wearable works of art. Drawing initial inspiration from the gem rather than design, Lugano's expert artisans craft each piece with exceptional attention to detail and the highest standards. With a passion for building relationships and giving back, Lugano is committed to supporting its communities through various philanthropic initiatives across the US and UK, creating a lasting social impact. For more information and locations, visit [luginodiamonds.com](https://luginodiamonds.com).

### **About AIR Founding Circle**

**Leading Support** is provided by the Arison Arts Foundation, Barbara Bluhm-Kaul and Don Kaul, De Sole Family Foundation, Idit and Moti Ferder, Lewis Family Foundation, Katie and Amnon Rodan, and Steve Tisch and Jamie Tisch. **Major Support** is provided by Deborah Beckmann and Jacob Kotzubei, Rona and Jeff Citrin, Sherry and Joe Felson, Nicola and Jeff Marcus, Gael Neeson | Edlis Neeson Foundation, Charlie Pohlada and the Pohlada Family, Allison and Dan Rose, Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, and Mary and Harold Zlot. **Generous Support** is provided by Sarah Broughton and John Rowland, Marcy and Leo Edelstein, Etkin Family Foundation, Christy Ferer, Sally and Steve Hansen, Nancy Magoon, Erin and Paul Pariser, and Gayle Stoffel.

**The Bluhm-Kaul Keynotes** are made possible through a major gift from Barbara Bluhm-Kaul and Don Kaul.

**The Tisch Program Series**—a dynamic selection of commissions, performances, and dialogues presented throughout the week—are made possible through a generous gift from Steve Tisch and Jamie Tisch.

**Matthew Barney's performance *TACTICAL parallax*** is made possible through major support provided by Gael Neeson | Edlis Neeson Foundation.

### **About Aspen Art Museum**

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1979, Aspen Art Museum is an artist-founded, non-collecting institution dedicated to supporting artists in the development of bold ideas to shape our museum and the field of art today. Aspen Art Museum is both a platform and a place, highly attuned to the advancement of the vital ecosystem of art and the critical discourse surrounding it within the context and community of Aspen and beyond. In July 2017, Aspen Art Museum received the United States National Medal for Museum and Library Services for its educational outreach to rural communities in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and its learning partnerships with civic and cultural partners within a 100-mile radius of the museum's Aspen location. It is the only accredited art museum on the Colorado Western Slope.

### **Media Contacts:**

Emily Alli / Emma Gordon  
BerlinRosen

[aspenartmuseum@berlinrosen.com](mailto:aspenartmuseum@berlinrosen.com)

Tommy Ralph Pace

Director of External Affairs

Aspen Art Museum

[tpace@aspenartmuseum.org](mailto:tpace@aspenartmuseum.org)