



Art News Now: Chris Ofili's Controversial Painting Gifted to MoMA, Richard Oldenburg Dies, First Palestinian Art Museum in US Opens & More News

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by Pat Rogers

Have a minute? Get caught up with art news people are talking about. In this edition, Lindsay Pollock joins the Whitney, The Shed in NYC holds a slate of performances, the first US museum devoted to Palestinian art and culture opens in CT and other news from the art world at large.

Chris Ofili's controversial painting *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996, that included elephant dung as medium, has been gifted to MoMA by hedge fund manager and billionaire art collector [Steve Cohen](#), [reported Bloomberg](#). The painting caused major unrest and a lawsuit when exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum in 1999 as part of a group show of work of Young British Artists held in the collection of advertising icon Charles Saatchi. NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani described the painting as an offense to Catholics and attempted to cut city financing to the Brooklyn Museum when the museum wouldn't remove the artwork.

The painting was accepted by MoMA's acquisition committee on April 16, 2018 along with three other black artists, according to Bloomberg. In 2015, *Holy Virgin Mary* sold for 4.6 million at Christie's in London and broke an auction record for Ofili, [reported Bloomberg](#). Cohen is a museum trustee and collector of modern and contemporary art. In 2017, his Steven and Alexandra Cohen Foundation donated \$50 million for MoMA's capital campaign, according to the news story.



"The Holy Virgin Mary" by Chris Ofili. Mixed Media. ©Chris Ofili ©Fair Use. Courtesy WikiArt.

MoMA also accepted for acquisition work by three other black artists, [reported Bloomberg](#). The works are the painting *No Title (The Ugly American)*, 1962/1964, by Herve Telemaque and gifted by trustees Marie-Josée and [Henry Kravis](#) in honor of Jerry Speyer; the painting *Sweet Thang (Lynn Jenkins)*, 1970, by Barkley Hendricks; and the sculpture installation *Leaning*, 1980, by Maren Hassinger. The work was exhibited last year at the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition "We Wanted a

Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85.”

The first US museum devoted to researching and preserving Palestinian art and culture had its Grand Opening on April 22, 2018 in Woodbridge, CT, announced the museum. It's first Open House is Sunday, April 29, 2018 from 1 to 5 p.m. The museum in New Haven County is founded by Faisal Saleh, a Palestinian American businessman and entrepreneur. The museum will present photography, film, art, oral histories and host performances, lectures and more, according to the museum. The opening exhibition features work by [11 artists](#) including the New York-based Palestinian-American abstract painter [Samia Halaby](#).

The museum aims to “tell the Palestinian story to a broad worldwide audience,” Saleh stated in the release, and is non-political and non-religious. The museum is managed by a board of directors who are entirely of Palestinian heritage with a Global Advisory Board made up of Palestinian and non-Palestinian members, according to the museum. The plan is to move the museum to a major city after securing financial backers, [according to Artforum](#). For details on the museum, visit the website at www.palestinemuseum.us.

Richard Oldenburg, the former director of MoMA from 1972 to 1995, died on April 17, 2018, reported [The Boston Globe](#). He was 84 years old and passed away at his New York City home. Oldenburg was the brother of Pop artist Claes Oldenburg. He received his B.A. from Harvard with part of his career spent in publishing in management at both Doubleday and Macmillan. During his tenure at MoMA, Richard Oldenburg spearheaded a \$55 million expansion for the museum and oversaw retrospectives for Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. He increased MoMA's annual budget from \$7 million to \$50 million, increased its endowment from \$20 million to \$180 million and saw attendance rise from 853,996 to 1.28 million, [according to The Boston Globe](#).

Lindsay Pollock has been appointed the new chief communications and content officer of the Whitney Museum of American Art, announced the museum. A former editor-in-chief for Art in America, Pollock is also widely known as the author of *The Girl with the Gallery*, a biography of art dealer Edith Halpert. She begins her new position on May 7, 2018. In addition to her position with Art in America, she contributing writing to the Art Newspaper, the New York sun and held marketing positions with Sotheby's and the Central Park Conservancy.

The opening of The Shed may be a year away but that's not holding back the powers that be. A pre-opening program “A Prelude to The Shed” gets the excitement going with two weeks of free programming unfolding from May 1 to 13, 2018 on an undeveloped lot at Tenth Avenue and West 31st Street in New York City, courtesy of architect Kunle Adeyemi and artist Tino Sehgal who created the temporary venue. Click [here](#) for programming. Nearly all of the programs are sold out but click [here](#) for free tickets. The Shed is expected to open in spring 2019 at the intersection of the High Line and Hudson Yards on the West Side. It will present performing arts, visual arts and pop culture.