

Whitney Biennial: Three Must-Sees

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[Podcast]

With 55 artists spread out over five museum floors – and a raft of performances that will take place through May – the [Whitney Biennial](#) can be a mind-boggling show to absorb in one visit. Listen to my conversation with Soterios Johnson on WNYC's **Morning Edition**.

Here are three pieces not to miss:

[Curtis Mann](#)

On the fourth floor, a simple but elegant photo collage, titled [“After the Dust, Second View \(Beirut\),”](#) combines 120 found photographs that document the 33-day war in Lebanon in 2006. After putting them together, Mann went about erasing large parts of them with bleach. Look at the piece from a distance, and you’ll see twisted pieces of urban infrastructure floating through what looks like an explosive yellow cloud. Get up close, and you’ll be able to observe the ghostly shadows of streets and buildings that had once been filled with life – memories that haven’t been completely eliminated, despite destruction all around.

[Kerry Tribe](#)

An 18-minute video on the third floor explores memory in a more literal – but nonetheless moving – fashion. Inspired by the true story of an unnamed patient from the 1950s who lost his ability to make and retain new memories after a brain surgery, [Tribe’s “H.M.” imagines the man’s story in traditional documentary style](#). The 16mm reel is run through two projectors aimed at side-by-side screens, resulting in a 20-second delay that creates an echo, not to mention an air of confusion. The actor who plays H.M. is wonderfully cast, a gentle soul who appears cooperative, puzzled and trapped, unable to connect to the world around him. It is anxiety-inducing to watch – for what else are we but a collection of flesh and bone and memory?

[Kate Gilmore](#)

[In this humorous video piece \(also on the third floor\)](#), Gilmore, decked out in a red, polka-dot Minnie Mouse dress and a pair of black tights and heels, punches and kicks her way into and out of a tower of dry wall. It’s the sort of wonderfully “inappropriate” behavior that channels every woman’s inner Power Puff Girl – while also busting a hole (literally) through traditional notions of femininity. Right next to the video, the shredded dry wall tower is available for inspection – making it clear that the last place anyone would ever want to be is between a rampaging Gilmore and a pile of construction materials.

