



SINK OR SWIM From top: Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Still #45," which is part of the Whitney's *America Is Hard to See* exhibit; the museum's glass facade.



NEW DAY AT THE MUSEUM

Bidding adieu to its Upper East Side location after nearly five decades for new Renzo Piano-designed digs in the Meatpacking District, the just-reopened **Whitney Museum of American Art** (99 Gansevoort St., whitney.org) is off to a much-discussed debut that's garnering both praise and controversy. Assistant Curator **Jane Panetta** discusses the museum's stance on finding itself as *the* topic of art-world conversation and takes us inside its new home. —Sahar Khan

The design of the new building is said to affect the way visitors experience exhibits. How? We have four major floors that are different sizes, different shapes, have different ceiling heights—we can create varied experiences of art, but under a single roof. Also, the site is incredible. The eighth-floor gallery is skylit, and both ends of the fifth-floor gallery have windows—one facing the river and the other facing the city. That view is unique for a museum to have; it connects you to the surrounding neighborhood.

Tell us about the museum's opening exhibition, *America Is Hard to See*. It's drawn entirely from our collection, and it spans 115 years—so the breadth of the collection itself. We took a comprehensive look and pulled out certain themes to focus on. Eventually we whittled the checklist down to more than 600 works across all media.

What constitutes an American artist? That has changed over time, but for now it doesn't necessarily mean an artist who was born here or one who permanently immigrated here or became a citizen. Any artist who came here for a significant amount of time, who was educated here or spent a big chunk of time here, we treat as an American artist.

Do you consider Renzo Piano, who's done considerable work in the United States, an American artist, especially given the controversy around the Whitney hiring an Italian architect to design an American art museum? When our team was selecting the architect for this project, they asked people what their favorite museum was, and what kept coming back was different museums Renzo had designed. I've never heard [director] Adam Weinberg try to claim Renzo as an American—he felt comfortable in asserting that we'd picked the best architect whom we felt was up to the challenge and who'd design the best building.

Artnet News posited that the new Whitney might herald a golden age for New York's art institutions. Thoughts? That's a grandiose, sweeping claim, but we feel strongly that this building and the accompanying exhibition and performance programs are going to be a significant contribution to the cultural landscape of New York and the United States. There's a lot going on with other institutions at this moment; that said, we're the ones who built a new home and put our entire collection on view for the first time. When I saw the *Artnet* article, I said, 'We're up for that challenge.'

Not in Name Only

Chef **Michael Anthony**—a finalist for outstanding chef in this year's James Beard awards—has delighted diners as Gramercy Tavern's executive chef for eight years. So NYC foodies were intrigued to learn he'd be in charge of the dining options—a revamped **Untitled**, plus the upstairs **Studio Café** for museumgoers—at the Whitney Museum of American Art's new downtown incarnation.

His menus highlight regional and seasonal ingredients with an emphasis on vegetables, cooked and plated employing a lightness that reflects the restaurant's airy setting. "The concept of 'transparency' means a lot of things to different people," Anthony says. "To the museum, it means accessibility and openness. To the architect, it clearly means the masterful use of light in that space, which is—at all times of the day and night—astounding. And to me, it means telling the story of our thoughtfully sourced food, and our attempt to cook it with care and precision so that it's memorable and tells a story."

To that end, Anthony expects the menus at both eateries to change frequently, in keeping with the freshest seasonal ingredients. "Even in a bustling place filled with lots of creative people and exciting ideas under the roof of that museum, [a meal at Untitled is] a chance to step away from some of that stimulus and experience some tactile, sensory pleasure," he says. untitledatthewhitney.com
—Kathryn Maier

A RIOT OF COLORS
A dish of shaved asparagus with turnips and mizuna at Untitled

