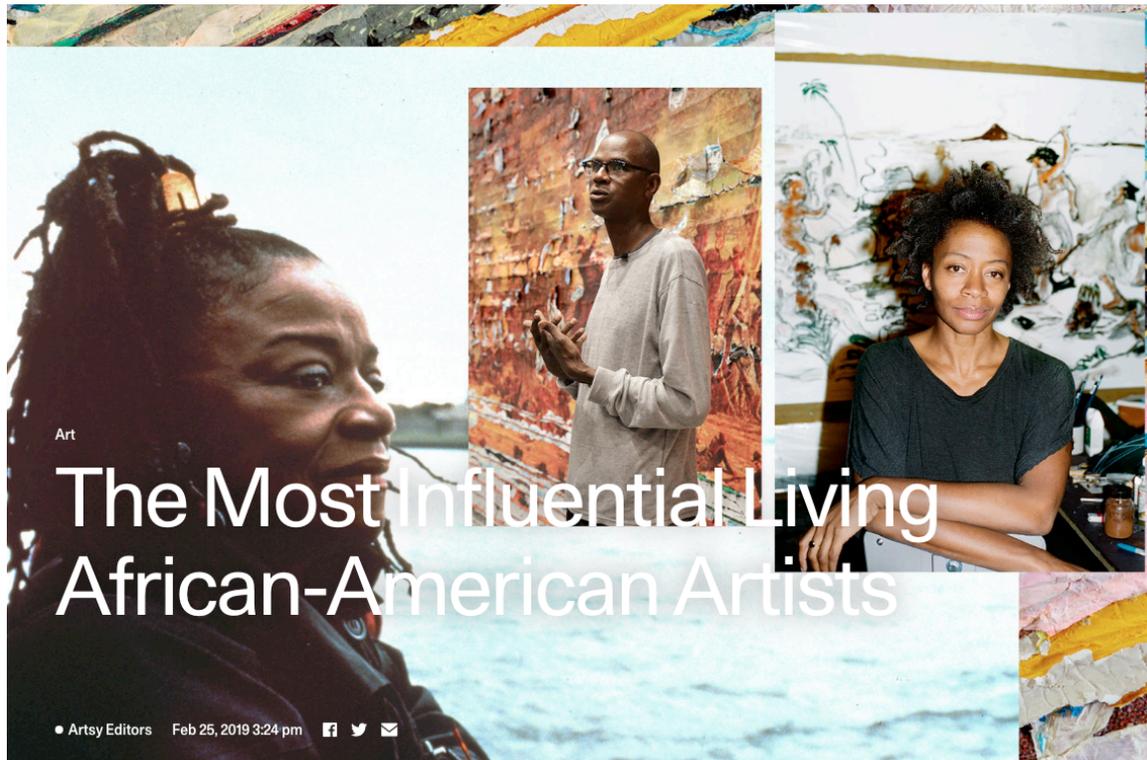


ARTSY



In 1926, the historian Carter G. Woodson instituted Negro History Week. The second-ever African-American recipient of a Ph.D. from Harvard (after W.E.B. DuBois), Woodson wanted to acknowledge the vibrant cultural achievements of African-American individuals that were rippling through the country. At the time, Harlem was brimming with poets such as Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, while Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller were developing Chicago's jazz scene. In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially transformed Woodson's initiative into the month-long celebration we honor to this day: Black History Month.

While it's impossible to capture the full impact of black artists on art history, we asked prominent art historians and curators reflect on 20 living African-American artists who are making a

mark on painting, photography, performance, and sculpture. Below, with the artists listed alphabetically, are their reflections.



## Pope.L

B. 1955, Newark, New Jersey. Lives and works in Chicago.



Pope.L, *The Great White Way, 22 miles, 9 years, 1 street* (performance), 2000–09. © Pope.L. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

From Christopher Y. Lew, Nancy and Fred Poses Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art:

It's never what you expect—Pope.L's performances, installations, drawings, and paintings often play in the edge of the absurd to tackle weighty issues in society. In one particular instance, I encountered his work in a restaurant bathroom as a voice from overhead, emanating from the ceiling and intoning that “ignorance is a virtue.” Pope.L's *Whispering*

*Campaign* (2016–17) for Documenta 14 wove itself into the fabric of Kassel and Athens with bits of language seeping from air vents, jerry-rigged PA systems, and live performers strolling the streets. His art meets us where it is needed, mixed with the everyday and without separation from life.