

In Memoriam: Art World Figures Who Died in 2023

Francesca Aton, Tessa Solomon | December 29, 2023 3:07pm

This year, we lost innovative artists, curators, writers, collectors, and patrons who pushed the bounds of what constitutes art, each with their own means of expression.

Pope.L brought art to the people, reaching beyond institutions and into the street, putting statements about the condition of Black Americans out into the open. With vivid defiance, Juanita McNeely captured American women's experiences, making a painting about abortion before the original passing of Roe v. Wade. Vera Molnár propelled us forward with her early usages of computers in her art.

Others left far too soon: Lin May Saeed, whose art encouraged empathy with animals and activist musings, and Vincent Honoré, whose cutting-edge exhibition and criticism championed women and queer artists.

In the case of painter Brice Marden, Barry Schwabsky recalled for Art in America, "It seemed as though Brice Marden had always been there and always would be." While we may take these continued presences for granted, it's important to recall the impact that Marden and others have made. As Schwabsky writes, "He managed to make each of us a little bit more an artist."

Perhaps, then, we ought to remember signs of the people who left us in 2023 will always be with us. Below, a brief look back at the lives of 28 artists, collectors, curators, and more who died in 2023.



Pope.L. | Photo Herb Swanson/Portland Press Herald via Getty Images

Pope.L

Pope.L, an artist whose performances and conceptual artworks prodded the concept of race, died in December at 68. Pope.L amassed four decades of work that alluded to the condition of Black Americans. Provocative, sad, and sometimes shocking, his crawl performances, for which he traversed set distances on his hands and knees, remain some of his most famous works.