

ARTnews

Influential Painter Suzanne Jackson to Get a Traveling Retrospective

BY ALEX GREENBERGER

March 25, 2025 1:38pm



At center: Suzanne Jackson, *deepest ocean, what we do not know, we might see?*, 2021.

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Suzanne Jackson, an influential painter whose work was a star of the 2024 Whitney Biennial, will get a traveling retrospective that kicks off this fall.

The show, titled “Suzanne Jackson: What Is Love,” will first open on September 27 at the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**, which co-organized the show with the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. It will then travel in March 2026 to the Walker before finishing out its run at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

Across the 80-plus works featured will be early figurative paintings, abstractions from her mid-career period, and more recent works, some of which are adorned with refuse and allowed to hang free from the wall. The SFMOMA version of the show will also be a newly commissioned installation, *¿What Feeds Us?*, that will include moss, bark, scraps of African fabrics, Indian sari curtains, and more.

Jenny Gheith, the interim curator and head of SFMOMA’s paintings and sculptures department, will organize the show. In an email, she told *ARTnews* that the exhibition was in part an homage to Jackson’s time spent in San Francisco, where she grew up and attended college.

“Every aspect of ‘Suzanne Jackson: What Is Love’ was guided by conversations with Jackson and shaped by the impulse to reflect and honor the spirit and ethos that suffuse her life and work,” Gheith said. “It is an honor to open Jackson’s retrospective in San Francisco, a city that has informed her creativity, and debut Jackson’s new commission *¿What Feeds Us?*, a large-scale sculptural installation that reflects on the global environmental crisis.”

Jackson, 81, first gained notice during the 1960s in Los Angeles, where she ran Gallery 32. There, she showed art by David Hammons, Betye Saar, and others while she also undertook her artistic practice. “I wanted to paint beauty, even though that was a dirty word,” she **told *Art in America*** in 2023. She began working with acrylic when it wasn’t so widely used in art, and has continued to paint in that medium in the decades since.

She has been based in Savannah, Georgia, since 1996, the year she took Savannah College of Art and Design, and has continued exploring an interest in the environment since then. Part of that exploration has led her to reuse dried acrylic chips for a style she has termed “acrylic in acrylic.”

There has been a surge in interest in Jackson’s art, even prior to last year’s Whitney Biennial. Her art figured in acclaimed exhibitions such as “Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980” and “Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power,” which debuted at Los Angeles’s Hammer Museum in 2011 and London’s Tate Modern in 2017, respectively.