



[home](#) • [artnews](#) • [news](#)

The 100 Best Artworks of the 21st Century

BY

The Editors of ARTnews, Art in America

March 5, 2025 8:00am



A global recession, a pandemic, 9/11, the Arab Spring, Brexit, the rise of Web 2.0, unrest in the face of economic stability, wars in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere: these were but a few of the many events that have defined the past 25 years, a period characterized by tumult and

uncertainty. That all may explain why art appeared to change faster than ever all the while, with artists burning through styles and tendencies with each coming year.

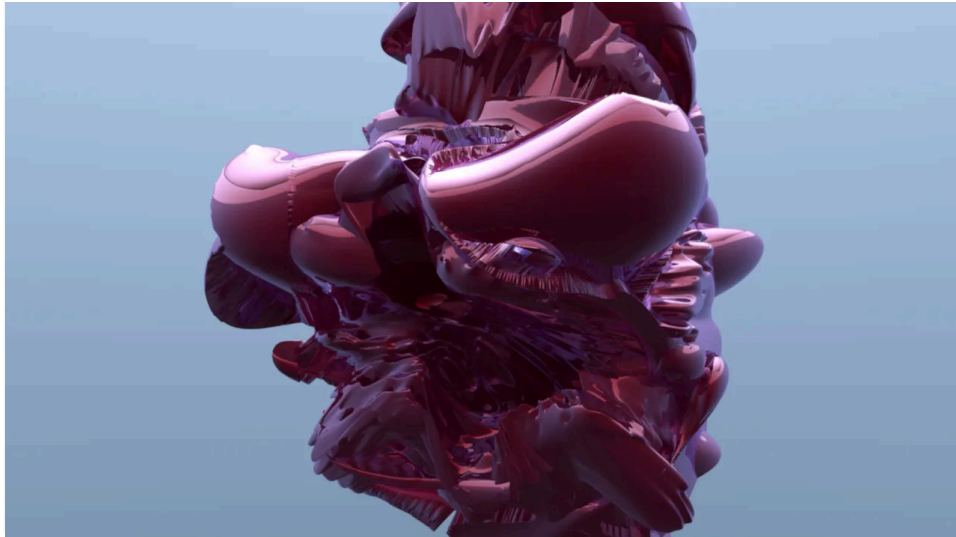
With the 21st century now at the quarter point, we've taken the opportunity to pinpoint the greatest artworks of the past 25 years. Even though we set down some parameters for ourselves (**more on that here** (<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/how-we-made-our-list-best-100-artworks-21st-century-1234734676/>)), it was no small task—one made more difficult by the restless creativity of artists during this period.

The joy of an epic list like this one is that it can't encapsulate everything: we know we've left some artworks off, simply because there was no shortage to choose from. We hope you'll discover some amazing pieces here, reflect on some that are much-loved already, and debate the merits of others. And moreover, we hope to learn of new artworks through the conversations we hope our list inspires.

Below, a look back at the greatest 100 artworks of the 21st century so far, as selected by the editors of *ARTnews* and *Art in America*.

This article features contributions from the following writers: Francesca Aton, Andy Battaglia, Daniel Cassady, Anne Doran, Sarah Douglas, Maximiliano Durón, Alex Greenberger, Harrison Jacobs, Tessa Solomon, and Emily Watlington.

97 Zach Blas, *Facial Weaponization Suite*, 2012–14



Zach Blas: *Facial Weaponization Suite*, 2012–14.

Photo : Courtesy the artist

Produced in the wake of Occupy Wall Street and a couple years after Meta (né Facebook) made facial recognition ubiquitous, Zach Blas's *Facial Weaponization Suite* explores the sinister undercurrent of our surveillance state. For the work, Blas held workshops to collect the facial data of participants, and aggregated it to produce what he termed "collective masks." Bulbous, strange, and an off-putting shade of magenta, the masks are meant not only to make users unidentifiable, but to protest the technology's supposed objectivity. The most successful of them, *Fag Face Mask*, was generated with data solely from queer men in response to efforts to use the technology to determine sexual orientation, a goal obviously ripe for pseudoscience and stereotyping. Other versions respond to the targeting of immigrants and other minorities. More than a decade later, with immigrants, minorities, queer, and trans people under ever-heightening threat, perhaps it's time to take up Blas's call to challenge the techno-capitalist order. —H.J.
