

Oregon's Largest Statewide Art Event

- by [Jen Anderson](#)
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Disjecta's Portland2016 Biennial is one of the most expansive exhibits that's ever been produced in Oregon (Pictured: "Bracking" by Colin Kippen)

How much art is there across the state of Oregon?

Michelle Grabner and Bryan Suereth can tell you. In what they call the “most comprehensive survey of Oregon art, ever,” they drove about 1,800 miles across the state from September to December last year, visiting 107 artists’ studios — from Astoria to Ashland, Pendleton to Roseburg and everywhere in between.

It was all part of their quest to create a wildly diverse lineup for [Disjecta Contemporary Arts Center's Portland2016 Biennial](#), kicking off July 9 and running through September 18.

“We’re giving a real sense of intermixing the art practices throughout the state,” says Grabner, a professor and Chair of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago who is curating this year’s Disjecta Biennial show. “It’s a great experiment.”

Suereth founded Disjecta in Portland 15 years ago. Each of the four biennial events have grown in size, he says, and this year it made sense to expand the footprint even further.

The statewide focus aligns with Grabner's interest in regionalism, which is the idea that different communities create their own movements.

This year's show "is a big, big deal for us," Suereth says. "It's absolutely one of the most expansive exhibits that's ever been produced in the state of Oregon."

It will feature the works of 34 Oregon artists, more than a third from outside of Portland.

They'll show their work at 25 traditional and untraditional exhibition spaces throughout Oregon — including university galleries, museums, vacant storefronts, early 20th century vaudeville theaters, garages and libraries — in Astoria, Ashland, Pendleton, Madras, McMinnville, The Dalles, La Grande and Portland.

In visiting these places, "politically, culturally, the landscape just blew me away," says Grabner, who admits she'd been guilty of thinking Portland represented all of Oregon on her first trip here years ago. "There's always a stereotype when you're not in the state," she says. "Through my own discovery — finding the truth of the state — how do you not activate the entire state?"

To make things even more interesting, most of the artists will be showing their work outside of their home communities. Grabner placed them in different cities, at different types of sites, in order to stretch their boundaries.

For example, Whitney Minthorn, a 25-year-old photographer and touch-up artist who lives on the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Eastern Oregon, will show his work in Portland. "Being Native American and from a small town surrounded by wheat fields, it's important for me to challenge the stereotype and show that we can be modern and successful," Minthorn says.

At the same time, a well-known artist, Jessica Jackson Hutchins, will show her conceptual work — based on found objects like stained glass and sculpture — at an intriguing space, an abandoned Christian Science Reading Room in Pendleton.

"That's important for artists, to give them a sense of experimenting with a new context," Grabner says.

Suereth says he hopes art-loving visitors will plan their road trips accordingly to each corner of the state and take it all in. "Part of the idea is there isn't a lot of contemporary art exhibits in these communities (outside of Portland)," he says. "There will be a conversation, a dialogue generated from it."

For a full list of Disjecta's Portland2016 Biennial events around the state, visit the [official website](#).

about author [Jen Anderson](#)



Jen Anderson writes and edits Travel Oregon's e-newsletters and other online content. She loves finding the latest places to eat, drink and play around the state with her husband and two young boys. Brewpubs, beaches and bike trails top the list.



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