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The Art World's Oscar Picks, Whitney Biennial Star Pat Oleszko Tells All—and More Juicy Art World Gossip

Plus, intrigue at the Whitney Museum and a last look at Frieze Los Angeles.

Harry Tafoya | March 10, 2026



Installation view of Pat Oleszko, *Blowhard* (1995). Photo by Ben Davis.

One of my very favorite pieces in the show is *Blowhard* (1995) by **Pat Oleszko**, a massive, inflatable nincompoop that thrives on hot air. For decades, Oleszko—who also

stars in a solo show at **SculptureCenter**—has put her whole body on the line, making outsized costumes and attention-grabbing sculpture to grapple with worldly chaos. Since Oleszko is one the most senior artists in the show, I thought she could speak best to the idea of never-ending performance. We gabbed over phone about the Met Gala, fashion as art, and being hopelessly exotic.

In Conversation

Wet Paint: What would you would wear if you were invited to the Oscars?

Pat Oleszko: That would depend on why I was being invited because I take into consideration place, subject, my relationship to it, and what I have around the house. So if I were in a film it would have to do with the film. If I were a freelance personage then it would be hopelessly exotic, elaborate, and probably inappropriate for their concept of what you should wear.

WP: I would much rather see you on the red carpet than a bunch of boring celebrities.

PO: Well so would I, and as a matter of fact let's start talking about the Met Gala! Did you know that the theme this year is "fashion as art"?

WP: I did see this.

PO: I said "OK, Iris Apfel is dead, where's my invitation?" I've known fashion as art for a lot longer than they have.

WP: They're going to butcher the theme so badly. But really the thing to do would be for everyone to come get dressed by you!

PO: Yes, that would be excellent. There's always these alternative Oscar parties too. But I think it's more important that you hit them where they hurt—you know, self-indulgent over-expression at the benefit of large corporations.

WP: I really love your show at SculptureCenter, I really think it's such a joy. I wanted to ask what it means for you to put on a show? It seems like you are at the center of a whole circus of activity but you're also working through these loaded and thorny political questions that are much bigger than yourself. Do you have a sense for how performers can channel the first person to a greater end?

PO: I'm a performance person, so what you're seeing in that show are vestiges of performance for which I am the armature/canvas for the ideas. I say "armature" because it makes it sound sculptural. I'm a movable art form. And just as an aside—I've never had an art show that was just on the wall—it always has to have a live rendition to demonstrate that the core of the work is lively, that makes it happen for me. I never had any predilection but to see people's response because I'm on the inside of it. I never had any need to make static work that was going to be on four white walls for people to come and buy. It didn't excite me or astonish me at all.

If I'm thinking about how other people approach that—and I wouldn't dare tell anyone how they should bring themselves into their work—artists can only do what they can do. If their selves are present in their work then that's part of their gift!

WP: What is the kind of engagement you would want out of an audience? What would be the dream for you?

PO: That they come at all [and] with an open heart and a fluid mind is what I want. If any of it sparks curiosity and inspires them to challenge authority, to be creative with

whatever gifts they have or can acquire, to be an individual that interacts with the world on a kind and creative level.

WP: Thank you, Pat!