

Artist Resources – Vija Celmins (Latvian-American, b. 1938)

[Celmins at the Tate](#)

[Celmins at Matthew Marks Gallery](#)

[Celmins on Art21](#)

[Celmins at SFMOMA](#)



Celmins, 2018
Photograph: Eric McNatt

Look through a [learning resource](#) about Celmins, including discussion prompts and activities produced by the National Galleries Scotland.

Read a 1991 [conversation](#) between Celmins and Chuck Close about her infinite drawings. Two years later, [Vija Celmins: Printed Matter](#) was on display at the University of Massachusetts Amherst University, showing work created between 1971 and 1992.

In 1997, Celmins was named a [MacArthur “genius” fellow](#).

The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia co-organized the exhibition [Vija Celmins: Works 1964-96](#) in 1997 with the Institute of Contemporary Art London, the Kunstmuseum Winterthur, and the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt.

[Vija Celmins: A Drawing Retrospective](#) was a 2007 exhibition organized by the [Centre Pompidou](#) that later traveled to the [Hammer Museum](#).

Read an [oral history interview](#) with Celmins produced by the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art in 2009.

[Vija Celmins: Television and Disaster, 1964-1966](#) was co-organized by [LACMA](#) and the [Menil Collection](#) in 2011. The exhibition focused on the artist’s paintings and sculptures that reflect on “the mediated view of the first televised war.” Watch an [interview](#) with Celmins produced by the Getty Research institute the same year, available on YouTube.

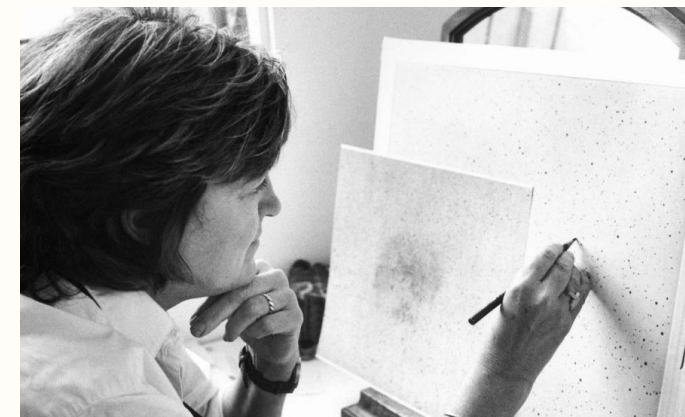
[Vija Celmins: “Intense Realism”](#) was on display at the Saint Louis Art Museum in 2014.

[Secession](#) organized a solo exhibition of Celmins’ work in 2015. Watch an [exhibition talk](#) with the artist and Robert Storr organized by Friends of the Secession Vienna.

In 2019-2020, [Vija Celmins: To Fix the Image in Memory](#) was co-organized by the [Met Breuer](#) and [SFMOMA](#). The major retrospective (the artist’s first in over 25 years) then traveled to the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#). Read reviews in the [New York Times](#), the [New Yorker](#), the [Paris Review](#), and the [New Criterion](#). Go behind the scenes of the exhibition by watching an interview produced by the [Met](#) and another produced by [SFMOMA](#) about the artist’s life in (and out of) the studio.

A solo exhibition of Celmins’ work was on display at [Glenstone](#) in 2021-2022. Watch a video of the installation on [YouTube](#).

In 2023, [Vija Celmins | Gerhard Richter: Double Vision](#) was on display at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, revealing a “transatlantic dialogue” between the two renowned artists.



Celmins in the Gemini G.E.L. Artist Studio, Los Angeles, 2002
Photograph: Sidney B. Felsen

Vija Celmins (Latvian-American, b. 1938)

Snowfall (coat), 2021-2023

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2024:27.1

Vija Celmins is fascinated by natural environments including the ocean, spider webs, rocks, and the night sky. Her works contemplate both the tiny details and the vast expanse of the known universe, often depicted in monochromatic color without the direction of a horizon line. **Snowfall (coat)** is a meticulous depiction of snow collecting on the back of a winter coat. Taken out of context, the snowflakes look as if they are stars in a cosmic sky. According to the artist, she produced this work while “thinking about winter in all its implications.”

On view April 24 – July 28, 2024





Vija Celmins (Latvian-American, b. 1938)

Untitled (Night Sky #1), 1994-1995

Charcoal on paper

Private Collection; L2023:74.4

“Lately I have been painting a work over and over... sanding it off and painting it again on top of itself. Same image over and over. Actually I tend to end up with a simple-looking single image that may have six months of work under it... it lets you in for a little bit and you think you may be seeing something that isn’t there. The black night sky paintings are especially hard to penetrate”
– Vija Celmins, 2004

Vija Celmins was born in Latvia just before the outbreak of World War II and spent her early childhood as a refugee. After her family settled in the United States, she studied painting at the John Herron School of Art in Indianapolis and at the University of California Los Angeles. Celmins often returns to the same subjects, with a focus on natural environments including the ocean, spider webs, and rocks. **Untitled (Night Sky #1)** is one of the artist’s star field constellation paintings, a series that she began in the early 1980s and continues to produce today.

On view August 9 – November 19, 2023