

June 8, 2017

## ARTADIA ANNOUNCES AWARDEES FOR EIGHTH HOUSTON AWARDS

Houston, TX - Artadia is pleased to announce the Awardees for the 2017 Houston Artadia Awards: **Regina Agu** and **Kaneem Smith**. As the 2017 Houston Artadia Awardees, **Agu** and **Smith** will receive \$10,000 in unrestricted funds, as well as access to the ongoing benefits of the Artadia Awards program. This is Artadia's eighth time providing unrestricted Awards to artists in Houston since the first Houston Artadia Awards in 2003. The 2017 Awards application was open to visual artists living in Harris County, TX for over two years, working in all media, and at any stage of their careers. **Agu** and **Smith** join an exalted group of 61 artists who have received the Houston Artadia Award.

In the first round of jurying, **Ryan N. Dennis**, Public Art Director and Curator, Project Row Houses, Houston, TX; **Claire Gilman**, Senior Curator, The Drawing Center, New York, NY; and Los Angeles-based artist **Ryan Trecartin** selected five Finalists: **Regina Agu**, **Catherine Colangelo**, **Gabriel Martinez**, **Kaneem Smith**, and **Sarah Welch**.

**Evan Garza**, Director, Rice Public Art, Rice University, joined **Dennis** for the second round of jurying, conducting studio visits with the five Finalists to determine the Awardees.

"I am so happy to have spent the day visiting studios with my colleague **Evan Garza**. We were impressed with all the candidates and know that while all couldn't be awarded this time around, there will be opportunity in the future," **Dennis** said. **Garza** also expressed his excitement about the Finalists: "**Sarah Welch**, **Catherine Colangelo**, and **Gabriel Martinez** each demonstrated incredible skill and exceptional promise. Each artist is deserving of further recognition and they represent the incredible caliber and disciplinary diversity of contemporary practice in Houston."

**Dennis** said of the Awardees: "**Regina Agu** and **Kaneem Smith** represent two dynamic women working in different mediums, but both are very focused and articulated the vision of their work with grace and passion. **Regina**, an artist that has a collaborative spirit, is informed by deep research and presents text-based work along with collage and photography, and is weaving narratives together in a refreshing way. **Kaneem**, who moves between sculpture and fiber works, pushes the viewer to think about African American history and the Diaspora poetically and powerfully. I could not be more thrilled to award these two artists and look forward to seeing what they accomplish with this support."

**Garza** stated: "**Regina Agu** and **Kaneem Smith** are incredibly deserving of the Houston Artadia Awards. Each artist is spectacularly focused in her respective practice, demonstrating skill, exceptional critical rigor and thought, and whose works are pioneering and impressive in subject and presentation. Artadia is fortunate to be able to provide these artists with the recognition and support they so deserve." He also elaborated on the jurying process: "I'm grateful to Artadia for the opportunity to meet and award some of Houston's most talented artists. As a new member of Houston's curatorial community, Artadia made it possible for me to get to know these artists and their exciting work."

Artadia is now holding Awards cycles in each one of its program cities every year, allowing the organization to provide more consistent support to distinct arts communities across the United States. The 2018 Houston application will be open from April 15 - May 15.

Artadia is a national non-profit organization that supports artists with unrestricted, merit-based Awards followed by a lifetime of program opportunities. Artadia is unique in that it allows any artist to apply, engages nationally recognized curators to review work, and culminates in direct grants. Since 1999, Artadia has awarded over \$3 million to more than 300 artists in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.

The 2017 Houston Artadia Awards are generously supported by The Brown Foundation, the Houston Endowment, Artadia's Board of Directors, and Council members.

## 2017 HOUSTON ARTADIA AWARDEES



Regina Agu, *Sea Change* (installation view at Project Row Houses), 2016, vinyl print, 80 x 6 feet

### REGINA AGU

“My work is conceptually oriented towards language, history and representation. I address these as they coalesce and intersect in contemporary ideas around the landscape and communities of color. I produce drawings, installations, photographs, performances, texts, and collaborative public projects.”



Kaneem Smith, (left to right) *Reap and Sow*, 2014, linen, encaustic wax, cotton bolls 4 x 5 x 3 inches; *Wring Out*, 2014, green cotton, burlap, encaustic wax

### KANEEM SMITH

Kaneem Smith's sculptural installations draw themselves from a familial and historical standpoint of personal experience and the human condition. Smith's exploration of three-dimensional form and installation incorporates deceptively subtle ideas of the exploitation of human anthropology, archeology, and American history. These concepts run a common thread throughout her body of work.