

## Why I Founded Artadia, a Nonprofit Supporting Emerging Artists

By Chris Vroom

Oct. 10, 2014



The Artadia gala drew an elite crowd to the Upper East Side on Tuesday evening.

Like 0

The strength of an idea can be judged by the quality of the people who embrace it. As I looked around the grand sitting room that **Karen Mehiel** transformed into a veritable art gallery for [Artadia](#)'s 15th anniversary benefit—held this past Tuesday night at her home in the Carhart Mansion on Manhattan's Upper East Side—museum directors, curators, collectors, and artists from around the country browsed the works that lined the walls, sampling hors d'oeuvres and sipping champagne. Feeling a bit like I was punching above my weight in this august group, I was nonetheless gratified and proud that so many friends recognized, as we do, that artists truly do represent an important foundation of creative culture and deserve recognition and support—and that we all have the opportunity to participate in building what will become our cultural legacy.

Founded in the wake of the **National Endowment for the Arts**'s decision to eliminate its storied fellowship program, Artadia has provided nearly \$4 million in direct support to artists

since 1999. For those 15 years, Artadia has enjoyed a ringside seat for observing the evolution of innovative artistic practice, and the nearly 40 works presented at the gala—and auctioned that evening by **Sotheby's Gabby Palmieri**—reflected some of the finest talent in American art today.



Theaster Gates's *Coupe, Coop* (2013)

This iconic [Theaster Gates](#) mixed-media piece was one of the highlights of the evening. Our studio visit with the artist in 2008 made it clear that social engagement and artistic production can be successfully combined. Theaster's work not only graces many of the most important collections in the world, but he is also literally transforming neighborhoods in Chicago, St. Louis, and Omaha through his **Rebuild Foundation**.



Dan Colen's *260 Days* (2013)

**Dan Colen's** use of unconventional materials has made him at once controversial and one of the most sought after artists today. This piece is made with studs on canvas and sold to a New York-based collector.



At top, Alexis Smith's *East Meet West* (2014); at bottom, Kim Dingle's *Studies for Lemon Tart* (2011)

The vibrancy of the Los Angeles scene—where Artadia held an award ceremony in January, honoring **Cayetano Ferrer**, **Nicole Miller**, **Vishal Jugdeo**, **Stanya Kahn**, and **Kerry Tribe**—was captured with these two knockout works by **Kim Dingle** and **Alexis Smith**.

Overall, the auction was a smashing success, exceeding the most optimistic expectations with 100 percent of all lots sold, and setting the stage for the launch of Artadia's first-ever New York awards this coming spring.

The genesis of the idea that launched Artadia came from listening to artists on countless studio visits. We recognized that artists view the world in a fundamentally different way, and that the works they produce offer the viewer not only beautiful visions of that world but also provocative reflections on the issues of our time. They give us different ways of seeing and take us on a journey that opens up limitless possibilities for intellectual and aesthetic growth. Fostering this process is Artadia's mission, and at this week's gala it was cheering to see how widely our aim resonates across the art world.