

ENTERTAINMENT

## Uptown, Garfield Park artists Eliza Myrie and Caroline Kent win \$10K from national arts nonprofit Artadia



By DARCEL ROCKETT  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE | JUL 08, 2020



Eliza Myrie (left) and Caroline Kent (right) are the recipients of the eleventh annual Chicago Artadia Awards. They receive \$10,000 in unrestricted funds and access to the ongoing benefits of the Artadia Awards program. - Original Credit: Elizabeth Haynes/Caroline Kent (Elizabeth Haynes/Caroline Kent / HANDOUT)

As the world continues to watch numbers in hopes they come down or stay the same, two Chicago artists got to see their bank accounts go up in the amount of \$10,000 thanks to winning the 2020 Chicago [Artadia](#) Awards. Sculptor/printmaker [Eliza Myrie](#) and abstract painter [Caroline Kent](#) received the unrestricted funds this week as part of the national nonprofit's 11th award cycle. The national nonprofit gives money annually to visual artists (in any medium) living within Cook County for more than two years.

Chosen from five finalists, Uptown resident Myrie garnered the LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Artadia Award for her work that looks at “questions of colonialism, race, borders, pronouns, and materiality”; while Kent, a Garfield Park

resident, took home the Liberty Specialty Markets Artadia Award for her “bold yet highly sophisticated explorations of the relationship between shape, line and color.”

“I was so struck by the work of the awardees Caroline Kent and Eliza Myrie, both of which tackle existing power structures and hierarchies in different and nuanced ways,” said juror Jennifer Carty, associate curator of Modern & Contemporary Art at The Smart Museum at University of Chicago, in a statement. “Both of these bodies of work feel particularly relevant to the current moment in which we live and the futures we endeavor to imagine.”

It’s the first national award for Kent, who moved to Chicago from Minneapolis three years ago. Knowing the area where George Floyd was murdered and producing work during a pandemic, Kent said her studio has become many things — a place for times of solitude, a space to feel safe and a place to create.



Coronation for a lesser-known king, 2020 Acrylic on wall, Acrylic on canvas, Acrylic on wood, 108 x 68", 2018 (Caroline Kent / HANDOUT)

“There was a lot of fear of the unknown, given the economy, the virus, protecting family ... it was real fear vs. psychological fears that you’re up against in the studio,” Kent said. “I just started focusing. What was important to me was that (my children) kept seeing me make and they kept seeing me push through, even though there were days of boredom for them or there were conversations around sickness. It’s more poignant than ever for me to do what I do as a painter, to show up and to represent at this moment. I am trying to go forth in a moment of faith and believing that what I do is going to matter in the future, whether that’s just for my family as legacy or in a larger cultural context.”

Excited to thrive in the Chicago art community, Kent is looking forward to her first solo show with Kohn Gallery in Los Angeles in November and spending her Artadia award on supplies and future projects.

“I want to be able to build some large sculptures to be in conversation with some of the paintings,” she said. “This is going to afford me a lot of movement and on the real, I have two little ones – ages 4 and 6 – and being in the studio for me, means I have to have a sitter for them to have time to be in my studio to make. So, this money allows me a little more freedom to be in there more.”

Myrie will be using her funds on tools and projects that have been waiting in the wings – \$2,000 to hire a fabricator, buying materials, etc.

“I am very lucky to get the award in this year, when a whole bunch of other stuff is completely screwy and I welcome it,” she said. “The opportunities to make and the ways that I have come to realize my practice have really changed (during the pandemic) and what I’m excited about with Artadia, is it means that some of those things can happen now, in place. I can hire someone out, rent a space. That’s really exciting.”

Since 1999, Artadia has awarded over \$5 million to 342 artists across Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Boston, and San Francisco. Award recipients also receive benefits from Artadia that includes networking with curators, visibility in Artadia’s online Artist Registry and regular dialogue with Artadia’s staff and local affiliates, who offer guidance and support.





ring, 2018: Basaltic clay, concrete, hardware/step bolts/nuts, neoprene flat washers, hose, corrugated cardboard, enamel, 8-foot diameter ring, 36 x 4 x 28-inch concrete slab, 20 x 8 x10 inch ceramic anchor - Original Credit: Eliza Myrie (Eliza Myrie / HANDOUT)

During this time of semi-stasis, Myrie has been working with artists Jina Valentine and Heather Hart on a project called the [Black Lunch Table](#), an archival project that seeks out community members to have conversations about the Black narrative in the technological age. The organization trains people to become editors of Black artists' pages on Wikipedia. Myrie says working with other artists to make sure people of color are being written into *the* encyclopedia of our time helps during these times — as does supporting other artists, their work, and their processes.

“Just being in communion with other artists during this time could mean saying: ‘Yo, this sucks’ and sometimes it means: ‘Let’s dialogue about what’s going on in your studio with a virtual studio visit,’” Myrie said. “I’ve needed to reimagine something as a digital object or figure out how it can live, not as a physical thing in space, which is very difficult for a sculptor. But, as much as things can adapt, they’ve adapted. We’re trying to do what we can do.”

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