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ARTADIA ANNOUNCES 2021 CHICAGO FINALISTS



Top Left to Right: Andrea Carlson, Melissa Leandro, Cecil McDonald, Jr. **Bottom Left to Right:** Carlos Javier Ortiz, Celeste Rapone, Nate Young

Embargoed through March 23, 2021 1:00pm ET

(CHICAGO, IL | March 23, 2021) – **Artadia**, a nonprofit grant making organization and nationwide community of visual artists, curators, and patrons, is pleased to announce that **Andrea Carlson, Melissa Leandro, Cecil McDonald, Jr., Carlos Javier Ortiz, Celeste Rapone** and **Nate Young** have been selected as the 2021 Chicago Artadia Awards Finalists.

The Finalists will each receive virtual studio visits with second-round jurors, who will ultimately select three artists to receive \$10,000 unrestricted funds.

Press-approved images of each artist's work are available [here](#).

The 2021 Chicago Artadia Award application was open to visual artists working in any visual media, at any stage in their career, who have been living and working within Chicago Cook County for a minimum of two years.

This year's Finalists jurors were **Cathleen Chaffee**, Chief Curator, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; **Denene De Quintal**, Assistant Curator, Native American Art, Detroit Institute of Arts; and **Mia Lopez**, Independent Curator, Chicago.

Of the process, **Denene** notes, "The Artadia Award cycle was an incredible opportunity to experience the dynamic Chicago art scene. I was amazed by the depth of talent and look forward to learning who the Awardees will be."

Of the Finalists, **Mia** states, "This year's applicants embodied the diversity of artistic excellence that Chicago is known for - narrowing down such a talented pool was difficult. It's exciting to see that despite the challenges of the last year the artist finalists are persevering and creating visionary new work." Echoing Mia's sentiment, **Cathleen** notes, "The range and strength of work we considered really reconfirmed the vibrancy of the Chicago art scene and the engagement of the city's artists. It was affirming to see how much promising work has come from such an unprecedented year."

Since its founding in 1999, Artadia has awarded over \$5 million in unrestricted funds to over 350 artists. Celebrating visual artists and the foundational role they play in shaping society, the Artadia Award benefits three artists annually in each of six major US cities with high concentrations of creative workers—Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. Beyond the grant, the Award includes lifelong access to a community of fellow artists and patrons. The Artadia Award is designed to provide essential funding and recognition to artists at pivotal points in their careers, strengthen their communities, and spur new levels of career achievement.

The 2021 Chicago Artadia Awards are generously supported by the Joyce Foundation, the LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation, The Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, the Artadia Board of Directors, Artadia Council Members, and individual donors across the country.

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About [Andrea Carlson](#)

Andrea Carlson (Ojibwe, b. 1979) creates large-scale works on paper from her home on unceded Potawatomi land in Chicago, Illinois. Her art practice includes painting, drawing, and arts writing on subjects ranging from museum studies, Indigenous Futurisms to assimilation metaphors in film. For previous exhibitions her artwork has required a willingness on behalf of institutions to engage their patrons in thinking critically about the display and representations of cultural difference. By citing pieces from the museum's collection, Carlson re-presents objects into her own fictional landscapes. Carlson states, "The museum is a landscape in it's own right, accreting and assimilating objects foreign to itself." Her art is in the collections of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, The British Museum, the Walker Art Center, and the National Gallery of Canada.

About [Melissa Leandro](#)

Melissa Leandro (b. 1989, Miami, FL) explores her cultural identity and family memories to create vibrantly layered, topographical textile works filled with her drawn and collected imagery. Her textile works are vibrant, animated and heavily layered through traditional and non-traditional processes of stitching, quilting, weaving and batik dyeing. By mirroring often personal moments of daily life, she manifests thoughts of family history, remembered childhood fantasies and nostalgic cultural ephemera. These works are specific to Leandro's hybrid culture as a first-generation US Latinx artist moving between Costa Rica, Miami, Chicago and abroad.

Leandro holds a BFA and MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and is currently teaching at the Art Institute as a Lecturer and Advisor. She was awarded the Craft Fellowship Grant, from the Illinois Arts Council (2020), the Wingate Artist Fellowship from Vermont Studio Center Residency (2019), the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship (2017), and the Luminarts Fellowship (2017) from the Luminarts Cultural Foundation, Union League of Chicago. She has exhibited at The University Club of Chicago, Rockford University (Rockford, IL), the Wright Museum of Art (Beloit, WI), DePaul Art Museum (Chicago, IL), Andrew Rafacz Gallery (Chicago, IL), Frieze Art Fair NYC (2020) among a variety of other venues.

About [Cecil McDonald, Jr.](#)

Cecil McDonald Jr. uses photography, video, and text to explore the intersections of masculinity, familial relations, and the artistic and intellectual pursuits of black culture. McDonald studied fashion, house music and dance club culture before receiving a MFA in Photography at Columbia College Chicago. In 2017, *In The Company of Black*, his first comprehensive monograph was published by Candor Arts and was shortlisted for first photographic book of the year by The Aperture Foundation and Paris Photo.

He is most interested in the intersections of masculinity, familial relations, and the artistic and intellectual pursuits of black culture. His artistic expression celebrates black culture and works to reveal the full spectrum of black life, not just the extremes that permeate public discourse – the dichotomy of violence or celebrity. Often his work pays respect to the three environments where he feels black people can be themselves: church, dance clubs, and home.

About [Carlos Javier Ortiz](#)

Carlos Javier is a director, cinematographer and documentary photographer who focuses on urban life, gun violence, racism, poverty and marginalized communities. In 2016, Carlos received a Guggenheim Fellowship for film/video. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in a variety of venues including the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts; the International Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester, NY and the Library of Congress. In addition, his photos were used to illustrate Ta-Nehisi Coates' *The Case for Reparations* (2014) Atlantic Magazine. His films "We All We Got" and "A Thousand Midnights" have screened at the Tribeca Film Festival, Los Angeles International Film Festival, AFI Film Festival, PBS Online Film Festival and Art Basel, Black and Blue, Stadtkino Basel cinema. Carlos Javier has taught at Northwestern University, the University of California, Berkeley and an undergraduate course workshop at the University of Chicago on the intersection of the arts and human rights.

About [Celeste Rapone](#)

Celeste Rapone (b. 1985) was raised in Wayne, New Jersey. She received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2007 and her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013, where she is currently an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Painting and Drawing. Her work has been shown at Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago, Marianne Boesky Gallery in NY, Josh Lilley Gallery in London, and Roberts Projects in LA, among other spaces. Her work has been featured in *New American Paintings*, *New City*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The Georgia Review*, and she is a 2018 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Rapone lives and works in Chicago, IL and is represented by Corbett vs. Dempsey and Josh Lilley Gallery.

Rapone fuses material invention, humor, high-low free play, art history, and autobiography all in service of detailed 21st-century narratives that prioritize women in impossible positions (both anatomically and in their given set of circumstances). Her paintings are constructed intuitively, beginning as a series of abstract colors and forms that become more specific—narratively, spatially, and figuratively—throughout the painting process. Rapone's situational paintings of the everyday aim to tap into the artist psyche through the lens of the contemporary moment.

About [Nate Young](#)

Nate Young received his B.A. from Northwestern College, Saint Paul, MN in 2004. He earned his M.F.A. from the California Institute of the Arts and completed a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2009. Young's recent solo exhibitions include *A Tale of Today*, The Driehaus Museum, Chicago, IL (2020), *The Transcendence of Time*, Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago, IL (2020); *(re)collection*, The DePree Art Center at Hope College, Holland, MI (2020); *...WELL!*, Julius Caesar, Chicago (2019); and *Cleromancy, monique meloche* (2018). His work has been included in numerous group shows including; *The Long Dream*, MCA, Chicago, IL (2021), *FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial of Contemporary Art* (2018); *Four Saints in Three Acts*, DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, (2017); *Chicago Invites Chicago*, Galerie

Lelong, New York (2016); *Retreat*, curated by Theaster Gates, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago (2014). He is represented by Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago.

Using strategies of Conceptualism, Nate Young investigates the nature of identity on an ontological level. His work highlights how meaning, embedded in the aesthetic of objects, resides within fragile networks and contextual systems. Young's recent ongoing project observes his family lineage, detailing the fissures found in his grandmother's stories about his great grandfather and his horse. Excavating these familial accounts connects his practice to the gaps found in larger, related histories, presenting these connections through drawing, sculpture, video, and immersive installations that utilize sound, absence of light, and sculpture to project a narrative void.