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## Artists Lava Thomas, Marcela Pardo Ariza named recipients of 2020 San Francisco Artadia Awards

Tony Bravo | August 24, 2020 Updated: August 27, 2020, 12:17 pm



Artist Lava Thomas, a 2020 Artadia Award winner, stands inside her studio in Berkeley in 2019.  
Photo: Yalonda M. James / The Chronicle 2019

In spite of 2020's ongoing losses for the Bay Area creative community, not all news in the art scene is bad news this summer.

Artists Lava Thomas and Marcela Pardo Ariza have been named the recipients of the 13th annual San Francisco Artadia Awards, the **nonprofit visual arts organization** announced Monday, Aug. 24.

The award includes \$10,000 in unrestricted funds and access to Artadia's artistic programs, which include studio visits with curators and collectors as well as consultations with the nonprofit's staff members about issues facing the artist community.

"I am absolutely thrilled to be a recipient of the 2020 San Francisco Artadia Award," Thomas said in a statement. "I was an Artadia finalist in 2018, so receiving the award this year is especially gratifying; it comes at a critical juncture in my practice."



Artist Lava Thomas designed this sculpture of Maya Angelou titled "Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman."  
Photo: Lava Thomas

Thomas, an accomplished multidisciplinary artist based in Berkeley, is known for exploring themes of race, gender and memorialization in her work. In the past year she has been in the news over her sculpture dedicated to the late poet and author Maya Angelou, who once lived in San Francisco and worked as a streetcar conductor. Thomas' piece — a 9-foot bronze structure meant to recall the form of a book inscribed with Angelou's face and her quote, "If one has courage, nothing can dim the light which shines from within" — won the 2019 San Francisco Arts Commission competition, which asked artists to create a work dedicated to Angelou at the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library. The work was later **rejected by San Francisco Supervisor Catherine**



**Stefani** because it wasn't a representational bronze statue akin to the older, Eurocentric monuments typical of civic art in the last century.

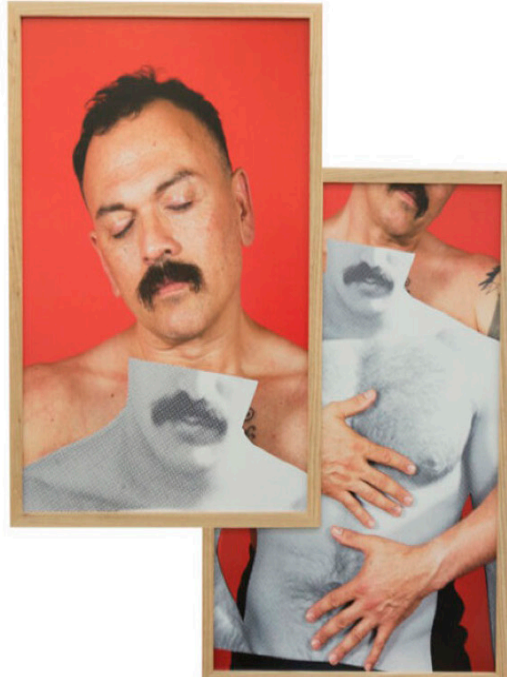
Public outcry ensued, and the arts commission eventually **apologized to Thomas** during a city meeting hosted on Zoom in August.



Marcela Pardo Ariza won an Artadia Award in the 13th annual presentation.  
Photo: Courtesy Marcela Pardo Ariza

Fellow awardee Ariza is a San Francisco artist and curator who explores relationships of representation, intergenerational kinship and queerness through constructed photographs and site-specific installations. Recent projects have included site-specific installations on Bay Area gay bars closed by the coronavirus shutdown.

“It is so heartwarming to be an awardee at this moment in time. It’s definitely one big highlight in the midst of 2020,” Ariza said in a statement. “I’m stoked to join the intergenerational web of artists and curators around the country that are part of Artadia.”



“Bruno & Marcus” by Marcela Pardo Ariza.  
Photo: Marcela Pardo Ariza

Thomas and Ariza were selected from a list of five finalists, along with Zeina Barakeh, Sofía Córdova and Chanell Stone. The finalists were chosen by jurors Allison Glenn, an associate curator of contemporary art at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; Anthony Huberman, the director and chief curator of the CCA Wattis Institute; and Xiaoyu Weng, the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation associate curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.



Lava Thomas, "Mugshot Portraits: Women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rosa Parks" (2018)  
Photo: Phillip Maisel / Rena Bransten Gallery

Artadia is a national nonprofit based in Brooklyn that awards artists grants in San Francisco, New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston and Los Angeles. Since 1999, Artadia has awarded more than \$5 million to more than 344 artists.

Applications for the San Francisco Artadia Awards are open to artists in any of five Bay Area counties.

In 2019, multidisciplinary artist Angela Hennessy and painter Mike Henderson were recipients of the San Francisco Artadia Awards.

The 2020 San Francisco Artadia Awards were supported by the Facebook Art Department, the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, Artadia's Board of Directors and Artadia San Francisco Council members as well as individual donors across the country.