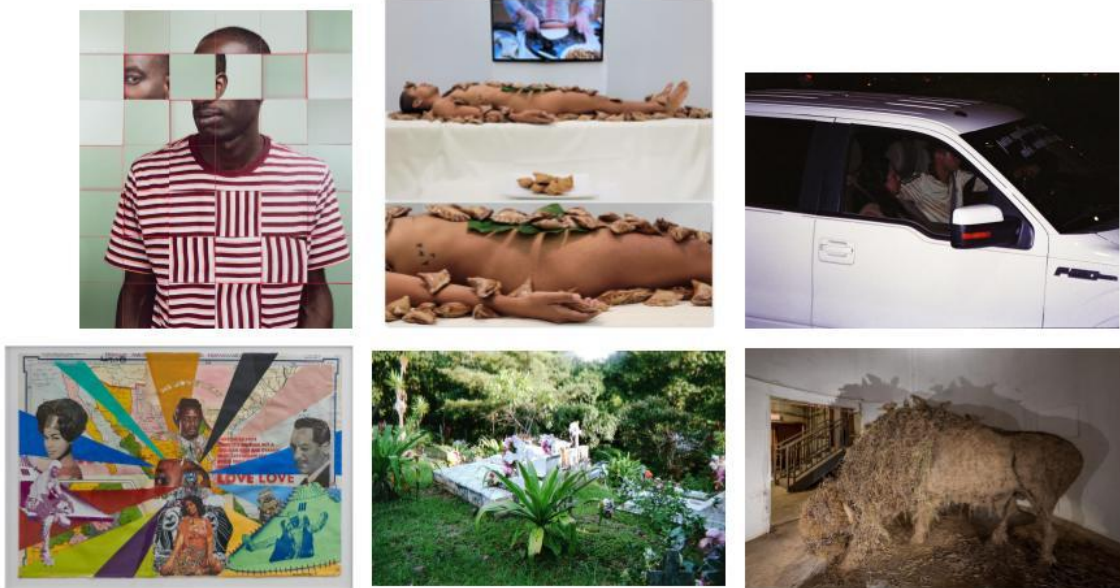


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## ARTADIA ANNOUNCES 2021 HOUSTON FINALISTS



**Top, Left to Right:** Karen Navarro, Preetika Rajgariah, Verónica Gaona.  
**Bottom, Left to Right:** Robert Hodge, Jessica Carolina González, Cindee Travis Klement

### Embargoed through November 11, 2021, 1:00pm ET

(Houston, TX | November 11, 2021) – **Artadia**, a nonprofit grant making organization and nationwide community of visual artists, curators, and patrons, is pleased to announce that **Verónica Gaona, Jessica Carolina González, Robert Hodge, Cindee Travis Klement, Karen Navarro, and Preetika Rajgariah** have been selected as the 2021 Houston 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 Houston 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 Harris County for a minimum of two years.

This year's Finalists jurors were **Natalie Dupêcher**, Assistant Curator of Modern Art, the Menil Collection; **María Elena Ortiz**, Curator, the Pérez Art Museum Miami; and **Jami Powell**, Curator of Indigenous Art, Hood Museum of Art.

Regarding the process, **María Elena Ortiz** notes, "Houston has an incredible artistic community, exemplified with a magnificent pool of applicants. I was impressed by the thematics of the work, the rigorous output, and creative excellency."

Of the Finalists, **Jami Powell** notes, "The finalists' work conveys the multiplicity and complexity of human experiences and the ways in which art helps us to imagine possible futures."

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 Houston Artadia Awards are generously supported by The Brown Foundation, John R. Eckel Jr. Foundation, Cecily Horton, the Stolbun Family Foundation, Artadia Board of Directors, and individual donors from across the country.

#### **Press Contact**

Davor Svetinovic

davor@artadia.org | 212 727 2233

### **About Verónica Gaona**

Verónica Gaona is an interdisciplinary artist from Brownsville, Texas, a city along the U.S. México border, living and working in Houston. Gaona has exhibited at Lawndale Art Center, Blaffer Art Museum, Art League Houston, and Amarillo Museum of Art among others. Gaona has been in residence at Desert Unit for Speculative Territories in Marfa, Texas and the Saint-Nazaire School of Art in Nantes, France.

Gaona investigates notions of migration, architecture, and death by conducting location-driven research across the Texas-México border landscape. Considering the voices of displaced and exploited communities, Gaona materializes characteristics of diaspora such as transnationality and impermanence to redress traditional approaches to memorialization. Her artwork exists at the intersection of installation, performance, digital media, and sculpture and it brings to the foreground labor and spatial issues at play.

### **About Jessica Carolina González**

Jessica Carolina González is a multidisciplinary artist based in Houston, Texas. Her work utilizes traditional archives and archives of the bloodline to explore conflicts of representation in a post colonial landscape. Working within themes of memorialization, violence, and spirituality she recontextualizes internal and external histories through photography and performance. By recalling the personal, the political, and the laborious histories impressed within the body, she reclaims the space within visual culture in which Central American communities are often absent from or misrepresented.

González' interest in combining archival sources comes from the desire to project and explore the intricacies produced when they are put in conversation with each other. Her work has been featured at Art League Houston as part of Latino Art Now Here Ahora! and Día de los Muertos Community Altar: De Amor, Nadie se Muere, for Pangea World Theatre in Minneapolis, MN. González was a featured panelist in "*Caged, Enraged, and Engaged: Challenging American Immigration Policy*" at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX, and has produced translating work for Ediciones Vigía in Matanzas, Cuba.

### **About Robert Hodge**

Robert Hodge (American, b.1979) is a multidisciplinary artist based and working currently in Houston Texas. Hodge's practice includes multimedia paintings, collages, music based projects and installations. Hodge has exhibited nationally and internationally and is currently finishing the album "*DJ Screw Forever*" in collaboration with the Contemporary Museum of Houston.

Grounded in the rich continuum of African American history and cultural expression, Robert Hodge's work celebrates resilience and reclamation, with his commemorations of African American musical and cultural icons serving to both preserve the past and illuminate the present.

### **About Cindee Travis Klement**

Cindee Travis Klement is a Houston-based visual artist who works in sculpture, mixed media, site-specific installation, and printmaking. Her recent work addresses conservation issues, looking specifically at the deep environmental interrelationships between bison herds and living soil, art activism that reimagines traditional urban landscape, wind erosion, native bees, and recovery from Hurricane Harvey. Klement completed the BLOCK Program at The Glassell School of The Museum of Fine Arts Houston in 2018.

Klement's practice is inspired by researching natural systems in Texas' ecological history that build soil health, absorb water and sequester carbon. Her work reimagines Houston's landscapes, proposing holistic restoration of ecological balance — awakening urban consciousness to our kinship with living systems and restoring what is lost. She believes that widespread environmental change begins with envisioning (and making visible) the wisdom inherent in the natural world.

### **About Karen Navarro**

Karen Navarro is an Argentine-born multidisciplinary artist currently living and working in Houston. Her work has been exhibited at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Croatia VISURA Biennale; Artpace San Antonio, Holocaust Museum Houston, Amsterdam Melkweg Expo, Houston Center for Photography, and Museo de la Reconquista, among others. Navarro has won numerous awards and grants, among them the Artadia Fellowship, the Top Ten Lensculture Critics' Choice Award, and the Houston Center for Photography Beth Block Honoraria, and has been shortlisted for several more, including the Photo London Emerging Photographer of the Year Award and The Royal Photographic Society, IPE 163.

Informed by the experience of being an immigrant and the ways Navarro sees identity as a cultural and social construct, her unconventional photo-based portraiture and multimedia practice investigate the intersections of identity, self-representation, race, gender, and belonging. Navarro transforms traditional prints into three-dimensional objects by cutting and incorporating tactile elements such as wood, paint, resin and embossing. The physical deconstruction of the photographs transforms and challenges the tradition of portraiture and invites the viewer to challenge their own perceptions and biases, by highlighting the complexities that makeup who we are.

### **About Preetika Rajgariah**

Preetika Rajgariah (b. 1985) is a multidisciplinary artist whose works examines the complicated intersections of cultural identity, race, capitalism, and sexuality while referencing her traditional upbringing as an Indian born American. She has been in residence at Oxbow School of Art, ACRE, Vermont Studio Center, and the School of Visual Arts NYC, and she has exhibited and performed in spaces such as Untitled Miami Basel, the Asia Society Texas Center, Roots & Culture and the Donnelley Foundation in Chicago, the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts in San

Francisco, *Women & Their Work in Austin*, and *Diverseworks Houston*. She received her MFA from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign and currently lives and works in Houston, TX.

Through painting, object making, video installation, and performance, Rajgariah weaves together her unique life experiences as a queer, Indian born Texan, with culturally loaded materials to explore the ways in which an immigrant experience counters and aligns with a southern American upbringing. She has a direct relationship to the materials she uses in her work: saris her mother wore, sindoor powder from a failed marriage, rakhis she ties to my brother, hair shorn from her head, and yoga mats from the local community - all to decolonize beauty standards, unlearn capitalist programming, and recognize the nuanced difference between appropriation and appreciation.