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FINALISTS FOR THE 2022 21c KANSAS CITY ARTADIA AWARD



Left to right: Jill Downen, Kathy Liao, Ruben Castillo.

(Kansas City, MO | August 8th, 2022)

21c Museum Hotels, a multi-venue contemporary art museum and award-winning hospitality company, and **Artadia**, a nonprofit grantmaker and nationwide community of visual artists, curators, and patrons, are thrilled to announce that **Ruben Castillo**, **Jill Downen**, and **Kathy Liao** have been selected as the 2022 21c Kansas City Artadia Award Finalists.

The Finalists will each receive virtual studio visits with the jurors, who will ultimately select one artist to receive \$10,000 in unrestricted funds. The 2022 21c Kansas City Artadia Award is generously supported by 21c Museum Hotels, the Artadia Board of Directors, Artadia Council Members, and individual donors across the country.

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

The 2022 21c Kansas City Artadia Award application was open to visual artists working in any visual media, at any stage in their career, living and working within Cass, Clay, Jackson, Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami, Platte, Ray, and Wyandotte Counties.

This year's jurors were **Daisy Nam**, Executive Director and Curator, Ballroom Marfa, and **Ikechukwu Onyewuenyi**, Curatorial Assistant, Hammer Museum.

On the awards process, juror **Onyewuenyi** remarked, "the 21c Artadia Award's process allows a deep dive into the Kansas City artists actively working on and pushing their practice."

Fellow juror **Nam** shared, "It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know artists in a city I haven't had access to." **Onyewuenyi** agreed, "It is interesting to see themes throughout the applicant's work that are specific to Kansas City." He also noted, "there has been a migration of artists post art school that speaks to the vibrancy of the city."

The 2022 21c Kansas City Artadia Awardee will be announced in mid-August.

About 21c Museum Hotel Kansas City

21c Museum Hotel Kansas City includes a 120-room boutique hotel, contemporary art museum, and The Savoy restaurant. 21c Kansas City is located between the Power & Light District and River Market downtown - the perfect base to explore the City of Fountains. The property offers 8,000 square feet of exhibition space featuring rotating, curated contemporary art exhibitions free of charge, seven days a week. 21c Kansas City has 19 suites, including the rooftop 21c Suite with expansive views of downtown. The Savoy, led by executive chef Brandon Brumback, offers a dining experience with deep ties to the community, featuring seasonal ingredients and products from local farmers, distilleries, and family-owned businesses.

About 21c Museum Hotels

21c is a multi-venue contemporary art museum combined with a boutique hotel and chef-driven restaurant with nine properties across the U.S. The company was founded by Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson, contemporary art collectors and preservationists committed to expanding access to thought-provoking contemporary art. Each 21c property features a public exhibition space that presents rotating solo and group exhibitions that reflect the global nature of art today and commissioned site-specific installations curated by Museum Director, Chief Curator Alice Gray Stites. 21c collaborates on arts initiatives with artists and organizations worldwide, including the North Carolina Museum of Art, Contemporary Arts Center, Speed Art Museum, Creative Capital Foundation, Creative Time, For Freedoms, and others. Since opening in Louisville, KY, in 2006, 21c Museum has presented nearly 100 exhibitions, including *Cuba Now!*; *Alter Ego: A Decade of Work by Anthony Goicolea*; *Hybridity: The New Frontier*; *Aftermath: Witnessing War, Countenancing Compassion*; *SEEING NOW*; *Wild Card: The Art of Michael Combs*; *Albano Alfonso: Self-Portrait as Light*; *Pop Stars! Popular Culture and Contemporary Art*; *Labor&Materials*, *Fallen Fruit: The Practices of Everyday Life*; *The SuperNatural*; *Dress Up, Speak Up: Regalia and Resistance*; *The Future is Female*; *Truth or Dare: A Reality Show*; *Refuge*; and *Wim Botha: Still Life with Discontent*.

About Artadia

Artadia is a nonprofit grantmaking organization and a nationwide community of visual artists, curators, and patrons. Over two decades, Artadia has worked collaboratively to foster a more just arts economy and improve the conditions necessary for artists from all backgrounds to thrive. We elevate artists' careers at critical moments in their practice through a proven combination of recognition, grantmaking, community support, and advocacy. Since its founding in 1999, Artadia has awarded over \$6 million in unrestricted funds to over 360 artists in 8 cities, with partnerships like the 21c Artadia Award allowing an even further reach.

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About [Ruben Castillo](#) (he/him)

Ruben Bryan Castillo is a visual artist and educator born in Dallas, TX, and currently working in Kansas City, MO. His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally and is included in collections such as the Crossroads Hotel (Kansas City, MO), Mulvane Art Museum (Topeka, KS), Mexic-Arte Museum (Austin, TX), National Museum of Mexican Art (Chicago, IL), the Zuckerman Museum of Art (Kennesaw, GA), the Turner Print Museum (Chico, CA), [Queer.Archive.Work](#) (Providence, RI), and The University of Colorado Special Collections (Boulder, CO). He was awarded a Charlotte Street Foundation Studio Residency from 2017 – 2019, has been an artist-in-residence with Arrowmont School of Craft for Summer Pentaculum and In Cahoots Residency, and served as a studio assistant at Penland School of Craft.

Ruben's work investigates themes of intimacy, queerness, memory, and desire using drawing print-based media as a conceptual foundation. His most recent imagery draws from a personal archive of photographs and materials, providing evidence of queer traces from everyday phenomena. Whether they are images of places, rituals, or things shared between lovers, his work is about the hope, ability, and fantasy to connect.

About [Jill Downen](#) (they/them)

Jill Downen, (born 1967) is a non-binary American artist based in Kansas City who works in sculpture, drawing, and site responsive installations. Significant awards include the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, the Stone and DeGuire Contemporary Art Award, the Charlotte Street Foundation Visual Artists Award and a Santo Foundation Grant. Jill Downen has created site responsive installations at The Momentary/Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, The Oklahoma City Museum of Art, and for Open Spaces: The Exhibition. Their residencies include MASS MoCA, the MacDowell Colony National Endowment for the Arts residency, and Cité International des Arts residency in Paris. Downen has lectured about their work extensively, including the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. and the Luce Irigaray Circle Philosophy Conference in New York. They hold a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute and an MFA from the Sam Fox School at Washington University in St. Louis. Jill Downen is the chair of sculpture at the Kansas City Art Institute and is represented by Bruno David Gallery in St. Louis.

Jill Downen invites viewers to understand the world through bodily senses and ways of knowing that are often private and experiential. Their art merges the body and architecture with themes of construction, destruction, restoration and meditation. A key motif is the blue plumb line, a construction tool and metaphor for truth(s), that offers viewers an orientation as they adjust their pace, alter their perception, and maneuver through fragile environments in a post truth culture.

About [Kathy Liao](#) (she/her)

Kathy Liao was born in Taipei, Taiwan. Liao received her MFA in Painting from Boston University and BFA in Painting. She is a recipient of various awards including the 2020 Charlotte Street Foundation Visual Artist Award, Elizabeth Greenshield Foundation Grant, and the public art commission for the new Kansas City International Airport. Her recent exhibitions include the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art and Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City.

Intimate routines of travel, connection, and bridging distances are etched in Liao's memory like a well-worn track through repetition; these are familiar rituals performed by many immigrant families, navigating the liminal space in between. Liao's recent paintings and wall drawing installations document the fluid state between experience, memory, and place. Like well-worn film negatives, she revisits images, snapshots, and memories through iterations, until they begin to morph, overlap, and degrade. The result may be an invitation to enter into an overwhelming yet familiar space, or only a flat wall with traces of history left visible.