



Artadia Awards \$10,000 to Verónica Gaona, Robert Hodge & Preetika Rajgariah

by [Jessica Fuentes](#) | January 6, 2022



Verónica Gaona, Robert Hodge, & Preetika Rajgariah Image: Artadia

Last month, the New York-based nonprofit [Artadia announced the finalists](#) for their 2021 Houston Awardees. Each finalist received a virtual studio visit with jurors [Natalie Dupêcher](#), Assistant Curator of Modern Art at the Menil Collection, and PJ Gubatino Policarpio, independent curator, writer, and Manager of Youth Development at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Of the six finalists announced, [Verónica Gaona](#), [Robert Hodge](#), and [Preetika Rajgariah](#) were selected to receive the \$10,000 prizes.

Mr. Policarpio stated, “This year’s awardees’ bold and multifaceted work challenge systems of power and notions of belonging with intellectual clarity and technical rigor that advance their practices forward with innovation.” Ms. Dupêcher added, “In these very different but rigorous and richly imaginative practices, Hodge, Gaona, and Rajgariah each explore some of the most pressing issues of our time.”

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Verónica Gaona, "Migrant Camp"

Born in Brownsville, Texas, Verónica Gaona’s work is shaped by her research and conversations with people who have been displaced and/or exploited along the Texas-México border. She presents the stories and experiences of these communities through installations, performances, digital media, and sculpture. Ms. Gaona has exhibited at Lawndale Art Center, the Blaffer Art Museum, Art League Houston, and the Amarillo Museum of Art, among other venues. She has been in residence at Desert Unit for Speculative Territories in Marfa, and the Saint-Nazaire School of Art in Nantes, France.



Robert Hodge, "The pan piper," 2019, Mixed media, 71 x 43 Inches.



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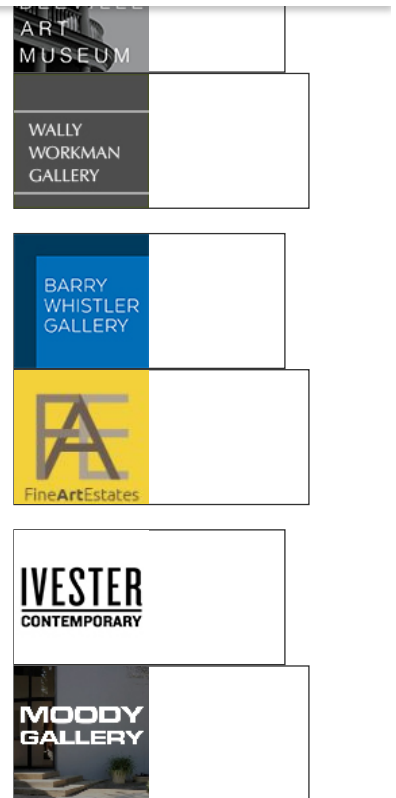
Working with found objects and cut-out images, his art commemorates African American **musicians** and **cultural icons**. Mr. Hodge's practice includes multimedia paintings, collages, music based projects, and installations. He has exhibited nationally and internationally and is currently finishing the album *DJ Screw Forever* in collaboration with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.



Preetika Rajgariah, "what belongs to you shall come to you," 2020, Fabric and paint on yoga mats, 48 x 45 Inches.

As an Indian-born and Texas-based queer artist, Preetika Rajgariah's work is informed by her personal experiences. She tackles topics of cultural identity, race, capitalism, and sexuality through painting, sculpture, video installation, and performance. Her work often makes use of culturally specific materials, like saris, jewelry, yoga mats, and sindoor powder (a red colored cosmetic powder worn traditionally by married Hindu women). She has exhibited and performed at Art League Houston, the Asia Society Texas Center, and DiverseWorks in Houston; Roots & Culture and the Donnelley Foundation in Chicago; the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts in San Francisco; Women & Their Work in Austin; and the Untitled Art Fair in Miami.

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