

News

Chicago Artists Exploring Meaning-Making Win 2023 Artadia Awards

SaraNoa Mark, Nyeema Morgan, and Julia Phillips will each receive \$15,000 unrestricted grants.



Rhea Nayyar April 11, 2023



2023 Chicago Artadia Award recipients from left to right: SaraNoa Mark, Nyeema Morgan, and Julia Phillips (all images courtesy Artadia)

Chicago-based artist SaraNoa Mark thinks of public monuments — even ancient ones — as constantly evolving. Between 2019 and 2020, they spent nine months in Turkey conducting observational and fieldwork research on the Anatolian living rock monuments to investigate public art's role at the intersection of significance, place, and image. With an interest in both natural and manmade mark-making, Mark reflects on what information is worth cementing into permanence and what is discarded or worn away after time.

Mark is one of three artists selected for the 2023 Chicago Artadia Awards, announced today. Along with Nyeema Morgan and Julia Phillips, also Chicago-based, they will receive an unrestricted \$15,000 prize from the grantmaking nonprofit with support from the Joyce Foundation, the LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Foundation, the Walder Foundation, and the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation. Mark, Morgan, and Phillips were chosen for the award by a two-tiered jurying process coupled with virtual studio visits with Janet Dees, a curator of modern and contemporary art at Northwestern University's Block Museum, and René Morales, the chief curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

“Mark’s work stood out for me as an exceedingly thoughtful exploration of the power of mark-making,” René Morales said in a statement. “Their deceptively simple work contains far-reaching implications about place, the nature of collective memory, museum practice, and the post-colonial condition.”



A detail shot of SaraNoa Mark’s “Carved Conversations” (2021), roughly 700 carved asphalt stones installed within four steel frame open containers, 4 feet 5 inches x 2 feet 5 inches x 2 inches

Grantee Nyeema Morgan also explores text-based artifacts through her interdisciplinary practice that subtly but playfully acknowledges how we ascribe meaning and articulate importance through image and words. Morgan, who received her MFA from the California College of Art’s Painting and Drawing department in 2007, uses type, printmaking, sculpture, and other mixed media elements to decode personal and collective histories — “from the familiar format of jokes to the art historical canon,” juror Janet Dees remarked — and the means in which they are passed along.



Nyeema Morgan, "horror horror" (2018), Monoprints, artist's cherry frame and rubber 85 1/2 x 43 x 36 inches; 18 inch diameter (rubber)

Julia Phillips is a multidisciplinary artist spending her time between Chicago and Berlin with her dual citizenship from Germany. Phillips's practice is influenced by functionality, using tools to allude to power exchanges between the individual and the institution. As in "Mediator" (2020), a delicate but evocative glazed ceramic and stainless steel piece, her work often connotes the experience of physical labor upon an object, using sculptural fragments cast from her own body accompanied by mechanical parts such as wingnuts, handles, and other armature bits.

Dees remarked that she was taken with Phillips's sculptural practice, especially her "ability to investigate and convey complex psychological, physical, and spiritual dynamics with elegant concision."



Julia Phillips, "Mediator" (2020), glazed ceramics, stainless steel, granite, 69 x 112 1/4 x 112 1/4 inches

Artadia has awarded over \$6 million in unrestricted funds to over 380 artists across Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, and the San Francisco Bay Area. The organization also recognized Bobbi Meier, Jacqueline Surdell, and Orkideh Torabi as the three additional finalists for the 2023 awards.

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