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## ANNOUNCING THE 2023 21c RESEARCH TRIANGLE ARTADIA AWARD FINALISTS



Left to right: André Leon Gray, Gadsisse Lee, Raj Bunnag.

(Durham, NC | August 9, 2023)

**21c Museum Hotels**, a multi-venue contemporary art museum and award-winning hospitality company, and **Artadia**, a non-profit grantmaker and nationwide community of visual artists, curators, and patrons, are thrilled to announce **Raj Bunnag, André Leon Gray, and Gadsisse Lee** have been selected as the **2023 21c Research Triangle Artadia Award Finalists**.

Launched in Louisville, KY in 2021, the 21c Artadia Award marked the beginning of a long-term partnership, which will annually provide **\$15,000** in unrestricted funds to one artist living and working in the unique creative communities where 21c Museum Hotels are located. The 21c Artadia Award is designed to provide essential funding and recognition to artists at pivotal points in their careers, strengthen arts communities, and spur new levels of career achievement.

The 21c Research Triangle Award application was open to visual artists currently living and working within **Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Harnett, Johnston, Nash, Orange, Person, and Wake** counties for a minimum of two years.

This year's Round 1 and 2 jurors are **Dr. Ashley James**, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, Guggenheim and **Hallie Ringle**, Daniel and Brett Sundheim Chief Curator, ICA Philadelphia.

Juror **Hallie Ringle** remarked, "It was an illuminating experience to get a more intimate view of the Research Triangle's art community. Raj Bunnag, André Leon Gray, and Gadsisse Lee have thoughtful, inquisitive art practices that speak to the brilliance of artists based in the South."

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

### **About 21c Museum Hotel Durham**

21c Durham includes a 125-room boutique hotel, contemporary art museum, and Counting House restaurant. Standing tall in the center of downtown Durham, the property offers 10,500 square feet of exhibition space featuring rotating, curated contemporary art exhibitions free of charge, seven days a week. Onsite restaurant, Counting House, offers a dining experience with deep ties to the community, featuring seasonal ingredients and products.

For more information, visit [21cDurham.com](http://21cDurham.com)

### **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 over 100 exhibitions, including *Alter Ego: A Decade of Work* by Anthony Goicolea; *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*; Wim Botha: *Still Life with Discontent*; and *Still Life! Mourning, Meaning, Mending*.

### **About Artadia**

Artadia is a non-profit 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 of all backgrounds to thrive. We elevate the careers of artists 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 nearly 400 artists nationally. Celebrating visual artists and their foundational role in shaping society, the Artadia Award benefits three artists annually in seven major US cities with high concentrations of creative workers—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, and the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information, visit [artadia.org](http://artadia.org)

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**About [Raj Bunnag](#)** (he/him)

Raj Bunnag is a Thai American artist living and working in Durham, North Carolina. He received his BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2012 with an emphasis in Printmaking and his MFA at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2022. He currently is the Curator of Exhibitions at CAM Raleigh and is a Speedball Art Products demo artist. He has shown work nationally and internationally as well as receiving numerous awards for his relief printed work.

Bunnag's artistic practice examines systematic racism inherent to the foundations of the US, its institutions, and its domestic/global policies, through themes in the lineage of print. His current work focuses on the rise of American fascism and the dangers of collective white rage and fear that has been continuously used to shape this nation.

**About [André Leon Gray](#)** (he/him)

André Leon Gray is a multi-disciplinary self-trained artist born and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina where he currently lives and works. He is interested in power structures, social hierarchies, and the synthesis of history and culture, past and present through an art practice that utilizes assemblage, collage, installation, painting, drawing, and video to code multiple layers of pictorial meaning and material relationships. Gray's work is in the permanent collections of the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; the California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA; and the Gregg Museum of Art & Design, NC State University, Raleigh, NC.

Gray is a multi-disciplinary self-trained artist seeking to engage his audience in a dialogue that explores connections between identity, culture, and history while investigating power structures and social hierarchies. Primarily, his work applies symbols, text, and found objects to fuse the past and present into thought-provoking social commentaries, while questioning the duality of remembering and forgetting with a visual language that examines the surrounding structures of our lives.

**About [Gadissee Lee](#)** (she/her)

Gadissee Lee is an emerging Ethiopian-born artist specializing in self-portraiture and conceptual fine art photography. She recently graduated from University of North Carolina Greensboro, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and a concentration in photography. Gadissee's work has been showcased in both group and solo exhibitions at galleries, including the Block Gallery in Raleigh NC, PEEL Gallery in Carrboro NC and the GreenHill Art Center in Greensboro, she is currently exhibiting alongside renowned photographers like John Rosenthal at the GreenHill Art Center. Most recently, she is developing a body of work for a solo exhibition at the Horace Williams House- Preservation Chapel Hill in 2024.

Gadissee's early life experiences have had a profound influence on her creative expression. Her self-portraiture delves into profound personal experiences of loss, loneliness, and cultural displacement, reflecting on the self transformative journey from Ethiopia to the US. Through the medium of photography, she strives to encapsulate the essence of self-preservation and its role in the healing journey towards better mental health and lost childhood. Gadissee's artistic inspiration begins with finding solace in the embrace of the natural world, and transforming it into visually captivating portraits adorned with vibrant fabrics and symbolic props. The resulting body of work serves as a poignant and emotionally charged exploration of the universal human experience.