

ARTADIA
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EST 1999

ARTADIA ANNOUNCES THE INAUGURAL SEEN AWARDEE

The Organization's First SEEN Award will be presented to Aineki Traverso



Images, left to right: Aineki Traverso, *I beheld the wretch*, 2024; Aineki Traverso, photo credit: Walker Bankson.

(New York, NY | January 29, 2025)

The national non-profit arts organization Artadia is thrilled to announce **Aineki Traverso** as the recipient of the inaugural **SEEN Award**.

This Award allows Artadia to expand its impactful Awards program to provide recognition specifically for women, continuing its mission of supporting culturally underrepresented voices. Originated by visionary leaders and long-time friends **Stacey Empson** and **Mary Kemper Wolf**, the SEEN Award seeks to shift the long-standing dynamics of the art world that have favored male artists by recognizing a woman-identifying artist at a pivotal stage in her career. Ancillary programming, including public talks, mentorships, and gatherings will create greater scaffolding beyond the monetary award, further laying the groundwork for a holistic system of support for women artists.

“After thoughtful consideration, we are proud to announce **Aineki Traverso** as the inaugural SEEN Awardee. While all of the artists considered are undoubtedly deserving, we believe Traverso's work stands out for its powerful and prescient quality. Her unique visual storytelling is both captivating and elegant. We are confident that this recognition will propel her practice to

new and bold heights, allowing her to flourish even further as an artist,” shared **Empson** and **Kemper Wolf**.

“Being named the inaugural SEEN Awardee has profoundly impacted me. I am grateful to Stacey Empson, Mary Kemper Wolf and Artadia for this recognition. This award has given me the opportunity, resources and time to allow me to expand my practice with new paintings and installation work. I'm excited to continue creating and sharing my work,” shared **Traverso**.

Each year, Artadia successfully conducts open calls in each of the seven program cities—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Three Awardees are chosen in each city to receive unrestricted funds of \$15,000. The SEEN Award will be retroactively dedicated to one woman-identifying artist from the current year's awardees. **Aineki Traverso** is a recipient of the **2024 Atlanta Artadia Awards**.

2024 Atlanta Award juror **Lauren Cross**, Gail-Oxford Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts, The Huntington, remarked on Traverso's practice, “I am blown away with the work that Traverso is doing to not only create deeply personal paintings that capture vignettes of her life but that also reshape how one experiences painting itself. Through her different approaches to display and site-specificity, she creates new avenues for contemplation and interpretation that I am really excited to see.”

Fellow juror **Monica Obniski**, Curator of Decorative Arts and Design, High Museum, said “Traverso's luminous paintings incorporate figures and expressions from an image archive combined with the artist's memory and imagination to create captivating works that expand contemporary ideas about vision, technology, and our environment.”

Wolf and Empson are the initial seeders of the fund and will invite other women to join the cause. The Award is **funded by women, for women**, serving as a key principle that underpins this initiative.

“The SEEN Award goes beyond simply funding—it's a commitment to creating an encompassing system of support for women-identifying artists,” shared Artadia's Executive Director **Patton Hindle**. “By offering additional programming that centers the Awardee in a robust community of woman-identifying leaders in their municipality, we will be able to provide a comprehensive foundation for these artists to thrive. This multi-layered support system ensures that artists are not only recognized for their work, but are empowered with the resources, guidance, and community necessary to sustain and elevate their practice.”

The SEEN Award is supported by Stacey Empson, Mary Kemper Wolf, an anonymous funder, and individual donors across the country.

About Aineki Traverso

[Aineki Traverso](#) (b. 1991) is a painter based in Atlanta and a current resident in the Studio Artist Program at Atlanta Contemporary. She uses the rhetoric of painting to find ways of reconciling a

world and society that exist in a state of post-environmentalism, borne of climate change and advancing technology. Her work has most recently been exhibited in spaces such as Swan Coach House Gallery, Johnson Lowe, and Whitespace Gallery. Aineki has attended residencies at R&F Handmade Paints, Vermont Studio Center, Hambidge Center for Creative Arts, and VCCA. She graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 2013 with a concentration in film theory.

Aineki's painting exists within the amalgamation of figuration and expressionism, exploring the nuances of memory, nature, and technology as they relate to the human body. While weaving a personal narrative, her paintings speak to a mode of preservation through different styles of rendering, and the act of mark-making as a way to communicate memory and denote the passage of time. Her work references the flora, humans, and landscapes of her life to suggest new social settings or methods of care for self and others in the midst of overconsumption.

About Artadia

Since its founding in 1999, Artadia has awarded over \$6 million in unrestricted funds to over 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.

About Stacey Empson

Stacey Empson is a board and healthcare industry executive with strategy, technology and transformation experience at businesses ranging from start-ups to global professional services firms. As a PwC partner for more than a decade, Empson leads work at some of the world's most recognized healthcare organizations, and she is also appointed to the PwC Foundation Board. Previously, she founded and grew consultancies to acquisition; integrated a firm into a Fortune 50 technology company; and practiced law. Empson was named a Chicago Business Journal Woman of Influence and has served on numerous boards of directors, including the women's board of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

About Mary Kemper Wolf

Mary Kemper Wolf is a cultural leader, strategist and independent curator. Mary has served as Chair of the Board of Trustees at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art since 2013. Her current curatorial project entitled JewelHouse, is a collaboration with artist Summer Wheat to convert a former historic planetarium on the grounds of Kansas City Museum into a monumental, site-responsive contemporary artwork. Additionally, she is leading 30X, a national public art and ecology concept to align with the global goal to protect 30% of Earth's land and water by 2030, she will co-produce the companion documentary film series that will highlight Indigenous-led conservation and restoration efforts in America through contemporary art. Mary's passion for co-creating impact driven art experiences stemmed from her early-career research on one of America's most prolific Expressionist painters, Frederick J. Brown, which became the subject of a documentary film she wrote and directed, *120 Wooster Street*, which aired on PBS and at The Kennedy Center. She has also served on the boards of Mass MOCA, The American Jazz Museum and Addison Gallery of American Art. She was appointed to the Public Art Executive Committee

for Kansas City International Airport and the Art Advisory Committee for CPKC Soccer Stadium (the first stadium in the world purpose-built for a professional women's team).

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