



THINGS TO DO

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## Atlanta artist is Artadia's first SEEN award recipient

Aineki Traverso secures national prize that uplifts 'a woman-identifying artist at a pivotal stage in her career.'



Aineki Traverso, winner of Artadia's inaugural SEEN award, in her studio at Atlanta Contemporary. (Courtesy of Artadia and Aineki Traverso/Walker Bankson)

By Cinque Hicks - ArtsATL

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Painter Aineki Traverso's studio at Atlanta Contemporary bears all the hallmarks of [an artist](#) with relentless creative impulses. Traverso works on many large-scale canvases at once, moving from painting to painting as inspiration hits. The walls are punctuated here and there with family photos, sketchy doodles and what appear to be small bits of larger compositions.

Given that her signature expressionistic style includes many elements of unfinished figures, how does she know when a work is complete? “A painting lives and dies many times while I’m working on it,” she says. But she relies on an inner sense of completeness to know when the painting has reached a final state. “Or,” she confesses, “when someone tells me to stop.” Traverso is one of three Atlanta artists awarded an Artadia artist grant in 2024. Artadia, a New York-based nonprofit, has been making unrestricted cash grants to artists in [select cities](#) since 1999. Over \$6 million has been distributed since the organization’s founding. Other 2024 grantees were Ariel Dannielle and Sergio Suárez.



Credit: Photo courtesy of Artadia and Aineki Traverso

Aineki Traverso, "I beheld the wretch," 2024. (Courtesy of Artadia and Aineki Traverso)

Now Artadia has deepened its commitment to Atlanta and to Traverso by naming her the inaugural winner of the organization’s new SEEN Award. The award is designated for women-identifying artists and is funded exclusively by women. It takes the form of support for the kinds of activities that can boost an artist’s career — public talks, gatherings and mentorship — as well as the prestige of being recognized for extraordinary work.

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2024 grant awardees

The award was originated by health care industry executive Stacey Empson and independent curator Mary Kemper Wolf, and is supported by individual donations from women across the country. As noted in a news release from Artadia, the award is designed 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.”



Credit: Photo courtesy of Artadia and Aineki Traverso

"Blessings," 2024. (Courtesy of Artadia and Aineki Traverso)

Traverso's remarkable paint-handling and mark-making caught the eye of Artadia judges last year, including curator Lauren Cross, who called Traverso's works “new avenues for contemplation and interpretation.” The paintings — often in the form of diptychs and triptychs — draw from a trove of family photographs and other sources to convey a sense of the passage of time. Multiple figures and marks weave, pushing and pulling green, ocher and amber hues in what resembles a mixed web of memory and reality.

Traverso is currently at work on shows with deadlines approaching, including at [Wolfgang Gallery](#). Until then, the paintings currently in her studio will doubtless experience many deaths and resurrections before their final birth into life.

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*Cinqué Hicks is editor-in-chief of ArtsATL.*