

ARTADIA  
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## ARTADIA ANNOUNCES 2026 CHICAGO AWARDEES



**Left to right:** Jonathan Michael Castillo (photo credit: J. Daniel Hud), Nick Raffel (photo credit: Lauren Leving), and Mindy Rose Schwartz (photo credit: T.W. Li).

**EMBARGOED THROUGH THURSDAY, APRIL 16TH AT 1PM ET/12PM CT**

(Chicago, IL | April 16, 2026)

**Artadia**, a non-profit grantmaking organization and nationwide community of visual artists, curators, and patrons, is thrilled to announce the 2026 Chicago Artadia Awardees: **Jonathan Michael Castillo**, the 2026 Joyce Foundation Artadia Awardee, **Nick Raffel**, and **Mindy Rose Schwartz**.

The 2026 Chicago Artadia Awards application was open to visual artists working in any visual media, at any stage in their career, who have been living and working within Cook County for two consecutive years at minimum. We received **377** applications, with **52%** of the applicants identifying as African, African American or Black, Multiracial, Arab, Arab American, Asian or Asian American, Latina/e/o/x, Middle Eastern, or North African; **54%** as women, gender nonconforming, or nonbinary; and **53%** as emerging artists.

This year's Chicago Artadia Awards are supported by the Joyce Foundation, the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, the Artadia Board of Directors, Artadia Council supporters, and individual donors across the country.

The Awards decision was reached after an extensive two-tiered jurying process. This year's finalists for the Awards included **Jonas N.T. Becker**, **Le Hien Minh**, and **Sherwin Ovid**, selected by Round 1 jurors **Ionit Behar**, Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator, MCA Chicago; **Laurel McLaughlin**, Curator and Director of the Collective Futures Fund, Tufts University Art Galleries; **Sara O'Keeffe**, Senior Curator of the Sculpture & Architecture Park, Art Omi.

"Reviewing the applications for the Chicago Artadia 2026 Awards reaffirmed the extraordinary strength of the city's artistic community," shared **Behar**. "Across both emerging and mid-career practices, artists demonstrated a remarkable level of boundary-pushing experimentation. The depth and quality of the submissions made the selection process both challenging and deeply rewarding, and it was a true pleasure to engage so closely with such compelling work. The six finalists are each at pivotal moments in their careers, albeit in distinct ways. Being recognized as finalists for this award offers a well-deserved platform to amplify their practices and bring greater visibility to the depth and diversity of their work."

"It was both an honor and a deep responsibility to serve as a 2026 Chicago Artadia Awards [Round 1] Juror alongside Ionit Behar and Sara O'Keeffe," said **McLaughlin**. "Delving into Chicago-based artistic research, material innovation, and socio-politically-engaged world-building demonstrated the immense cultural knowledge in the region and inspired me to continue reaching out to these practitioners. The finalists embody the catalyzed otherwise thinking of artists in our deeply divisive moment."

"Artadia could not be more essential in today's cultural landscape, providing critical support to artists who witness the contradictory conditions of our world and linger on the long tail of history," reflected **O'Keeffe**. "The finalists selected each draw upon and reformulate inherited forms, often with a wink and nod. It has been an honor to be part of the process with my fellow jurors and encounter the work of so many brilliant artists in Chicago."

All six finalists held virtual studio visits with Round 2 jurors **Ionit Behar**, Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator, MCA Chicago, and **Daniel Merritt**, Chief Curator, Aspen Art Museum.

"**Jonathan Michael Castillo** photographs with a deep sense of care and intimacy—something that is immediately palpable in his images of interiors within Chicago's immigrant-owned businesses," shared Behar. "His work carries both emotional resonance and visual sensitivity, revealing spaces shaped by labor, memory, and community. As he expands this project beyond Chicago into broader geographies, the Artadia Award feels especially timely and critical, offering meaningful support at a pivotal moment in the evolution of his practice."

"The photographs of Jonathan Michael Castillo are vital testaments to the experiences of immigrants, merging incisive portraits with careful depictions of interiors," added Merritt. "Castillo is forging new paths in documentary photography, a discipline with a vast and complex history. Through an enduring commitment to communities within and around Chicago, Castillo is now poised to bring his talents to a national stage, where the lives of immigrants demand visibility and celebration."

"Working primarily through site-specific interventions, **Nick Raffel** demonstrates a keen sensitivity to the particularities of each context," said Behar. "A generous and gentle form of institutional critique aptly describes Raffel's practice. Rather than adopting an oppositional stance, Raffel engages institutions from within, attending closely to their structures, rhythms, and internal logics."

He frequently collaborates with specialists across disciplines—designers, fabricators, architects—expanding the conceptual and material possibilities of his work."

"The works of Nick Raffel are exquisite interventions in spaces yearning for change," said Merritt. "Using simple, yet precise machines to create apertures and opportunities for movement and circulation within buildings, Raffel is an artist committed to improvement via the redirection of energy. These are gentle, yet persistent provocations: if art can tangibly improve an environment, why not embrace those changes for the long haul?"

**"Mindy Rose Schwartz** has been a vital yet under-recognized presence in Chicago's art scene since the 1990s," reflected Behar. "Her sculptures and installations blur the boundaries between fine art and craft, combining humor, pathos, and critical reflection to reveal the emotional and cultural resonance of everyday materials. At a pivotal moment—where the political and personal are fully integrated into her work—Schwartz is poised for broader recognition. This award would honor both the rigor of her practice and her enduring impact on Chicago's contemporary art landscape."

"Mindy Rose Schwartz gives form to feeling," added Merritt. "With humor, exceptional craftsmanship and a refined eye, Schwartz creates unforgettable artworks that probe indescribable emotions. Her practice both reflects and refracts trends in popular culture and domestic traditions, with an eye toward the complex wonder of the natural world. She is one-of-a-kind, and her influence on subsequent generations of artists is beginning to be acutely felt."

"It was a distinct pleasure spending time with each of the finalists for the 2026 Chicago Artadia Awards," concluded Merritt. "These are artists at pivotal moments in their respective practices, and it was thrilling to learn more about how they will confront the future. Through illuminating conversations with my co-juror Ionit Behar, I found this group to be both inventive and attuned to the nuances of human experiences, resulting in art that is sensitive, agile and generous."

"Getting to engage deeply with the work of the six finalists was a true privilege," reflected Behar. "Sharing this process of dialogue and deliberation with my co-juror, Daniel Merritt, was both enriching and generative, expanding the way I experienced and understood their practices. Artadia's commitment to supporting artists is vital, and I'm honored to have been part of this process and to contribute to that support."

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

**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.

**Press Contact**

Elise Anderson | Marketing and Program Assistant, Artadia | [elise@artadia.org](mailto:elise@artadia.org)

## **About the Awardees**

### [Jonathan Michael Castillo](#) (he/him)

Jonathan Michael Castillo's work is focused on people, place, the communities and groups that people form, the social issues that affect populations and how people navigate larger systems of government and bureaucracy. Utilizing photography, video, installation and handmade paper his projects operate as both social documentary and socially engaged art. Topics such as immigration, labor, economics, debt, government systems and how those subjects overlap are prominent themes in his work.

Castillo (b. 1982, Los Angeles, CA) is a visual artist, photographer and educator based in Chicago. His work has been featured with The New Yorker, Wired, The Chicago Tribune and CBS: Los Angeles. Jonathan was recently commissioned to create a large-scale permanent installation of his work at O'Hare International Airport as part of the Terminal 5 expansion project. In 2023 he was commissioned to make work for the city of Chicago's Citywide Plan in partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Planning and Development.

### [Nick Raffel](#) (he/him)

Nick Raffel's work in sculpture and installation considers architectural and infrastructural systems which facilitate the flow of air, water, and gas. Recent works intervene in pre-existing mechanical systems, questioning their efficiency, sustainability, adaptability, and healthfulness. Raffel considers passive solutions to energy production and the ways designed objects, including his sculptures, are situated within and relative to natural forms of energy.

Nick Raffel (b. 1982, Portland, Maine) lives and works in Chicago. Upcoming and recent exhibitions include Bodenrader, Chicago; Artists Space, New York City; Cushion Works, San Francisco; Swiss Institute, New York City; Bridget Donahue, New York City; Fondazione Prada, Venice; Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University, Middletown; Prairie, Chicago; Pied-à-terre, San Francisco, and Kunstverein Nürnberg. Raffel holds an MFA from the University of Chicago.

### [Mindy Rose Schwartz](#) (she/her)

Mindy Rose Schwartz is a sculptor and installation artist whose work draws on personal memory and craft traditions to conjure objects that feel both familiar and uncanny. She is interested in ways the intended significance or function of mass-produced objects can oscillate in our perception being sites of fear or control as well as sentiment, longing, and pleasure. Her work has dealt with processing loss, creating objects as memorials, and vehicles for affective transformation.

Mindy Rose Schwartz lives and works in Chicago. She holds an MFA in studio arts from the University of Illinois in Chicago and has an upcoming solo show at M. LeBlanc Gallery in Chicago. Solo exhibitions of her work have been featured at Sophie Tappeiner in Vienna (2025), Interstate Projects in New York (2021), Et. Al. Gallery in San Francisco (2020), Queer Thoughts at Balice Hertling in Paris (2017), Queer Thoughts in New York (2017), and at Atlanta Contemporary (2017).

Selected group exhibitions include: Artists Space in New York City, US (2025), King's Leap in New York City (2024), Tatjana Pieters Gallery in Ghent, BE (2021), The Renaissance Society in Chicago, US (2002), Room E-10 27 in Berlin, DE (2018), Carlos Ishikawa in London, UK (2018), Cooper Cole in Toronto, CA (2017), Alter Space in Los Angeles, US (2016), Galerie Hussenot in Paris, FR (2015) and Arcadia Missa, UK (2015). She was a recipient of the Helen Coburn Meier and Tim Meier Foundation, Meier Achievement Award (2012), a 3Arts Fellowship at Ragdale Residency (2010).

### **About the finalists**

[Jonas N.T. Becker](#) (they/them)

Jonas Becker's work examines land, labor, and extraction, often reflecting underrepresented rural issues. His research-based practice excavates layers of marginalized histories, drawing attention to the ways systems of power place value on bodies and the landscape. Becker works across mediums, including photography, film, sculpture, and performance. Increasingly, he has centered this work in the Appalachian region, where he is from.

Jonas N.T. Becker (b. Morgantown, WV) has exhibited internationally, recently including a survey exhibition at The Wexner Center for Contemporary Art, and exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, FotoFocus Biennial, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, and the Driehaus Museum. His work is published in Frieze, The Brooklyn Rail, and MIT Press/New Museum's anthology Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility. Recent awards include the Magnum Foundation Counter Histories Award, Lucas Artist Residency at Montalvo Art Center, and Wexner Artist Residency Award. Becker lives and works in West Virginia and Chicago, where he is an Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

[Le Hien Minh](#) (she/her)

Le Hien Minh is a Vietnamese artist currently based in Chicago, whose work is shaped by her experiences growing up in post-war Vietnam during the 1980s and 1990s, a time of nation-building marked by utopian dreams, political upheaval, and the harsh realities of a war-torn country, which formed the foundation of her artistic vision. Rooted in these experiences, Minh examines the collision point between lived reality and visionary possibility, creating works in which the boundaries between actuality and potentiality, the real and the imagined, remain fluid. Her contemplative yet provocative work blends mysticism, cultural investigation, and matriarchal concepts, addressing human-made systems, both visible and invisible, that govern our world.

Le Hien Minh is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships from the Finnish Cultural Foundation (Finland), the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Japan), the Goethe- Institut (Germany), the Asian Cultural Council (New York), the 3Arts Ignite Fund (Chicago), and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. Her work has been featured in exhibitions across galleries and institutions such as the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan; the Vietnam National Fine Arts Museum, Hanoi; and the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, as well as in public spaces, including the historic Buddhist temple Myorakuji (Japan) and Töölönlahti Bay (Helsinki). In 2026, Minh presents her work in The Spirits of Maritime Crossing, a Collateral Event of the 61st Venice Biennale, held at the historic Palazzo Rocca Contarini Corfù in Venice.

[Sherwin Ovid](#) (he/him)

Sherwin Ovid's work makes productive misuse of the language of rational geometric diagrams, using drawing and hybrid media to chart speculative crossings between physical and virtual space. Through handmade and digitally altered marks drawn from Afro-Caribbean cosmograms and hidden networks, his practice navigates geographic symbols as shifting coordinates that encode presence, loss, and unsettled relations to place and to one another. His traces of broken grids and improvisational gestures are layered as provisional maps—unstable diagrams that question orientation, belonging, and territorial boundaries.

Ovid, who hails from Trinidad while currently based in Chicago, is an artist whose career is grounded in a generative studio practice shaped by teaching and an ongoing interest in how we inhabit space. He earned his MFA as a Lincoln Fellow at the University of Illinois at Chicago and is an Assistant Professor of Instruction at Northwestern University. His work has been exhibited at institutions including the Chicago Cultural Center, Gallery 400, UIS Visual Arts Gallery, Cleve Carney Art Gallery, and Goldfinch Gallery and has received support from the Illinois Arts Council, 3Arts Award, and Helen Coburn Meier and Tim Meier Foundation.