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Artadia honors 3 Bay Area artists with 2023 awards

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A video still from Sofia Córdova's film "el niagara en bicicleta."

Photo: Courtesy Matthew Gonzalez Kirkland

Bay Area artists Ranu Mukherjee, Sofía Córdova and Heesoo Kwon have been named recipients of the 16th annual San Francisco Bay Area Artadia Awards.

This year's winners will each receive \$15,000 in unrestricted funds and access to Artadia's extensive network of visual artists, curators and patrons. Each award has been increased by \$5,000, the first time in five years, as a direct "response to artists' needs during this critical time," according to the organization. The nonprofit grantmaking organization **has been around since 1999**, with its awards program funding artists in seven major U.S. cities.

Mukherjee, a multidisciplinary Indian American artist based in San Francisco, was an Artadia Award finalist in 2019 and was thrilled to hear that she had been named a winner this year. She often combines South Asian, European and American influences in her work, reflective of her identity.

“The recognition is definitely affirming,” Mukherjee told The Chronicle. “I feel like I’ve been working for a long time, so when these things happen, it really means a lot.”

Among her current projects is a film installation that will investigate energy and the paradox of sustainability by looking at rare earth and lithium mining with the help of Bay Area choreographer Hope Mohr and local dancers. The installation is part of a larger project that Mukherjee has been working on titled “Ensemble for Non Linear Time.”

This focus on mining will also be present in her upcoming residency exhibition at **Mills College Art Museum** in Oakland, for which Mukherjee is creating a drawing atop a dance floor that is based on a meditation about a mine in a forest.

“I’m thinking about mining in two different ways,” Mukherjee told The Chronicle. “One is the way in which we need to mine in order to get energy, the energy that we use for our lifestyle. But then also mining is this sort of mythical structure ... so I try to bring the somatic bodily dimension into conversations about things like mining or the natural world.”

Córdova, a Puerto Rican-born mixed-media artist based in Oakland, creates works across a variety of mediums spanning performance to photography. She was stunned when she found out she had been selected by Artadia.

“For a long time now, I have been in a state of production where I really pool resources from my community, and that’s been really beautiful. But this allows me to be resourced in a different way,” she said of the prize money. “It means I get to pay my collaborators more; it means I get to have a little bit of ease in how I make the work.”

She plans to use the \$15,000 in a way that she described as “half glamorous and half practical,” with a portion going toward expenses and the rest toward artistic endeavors.

Córdova currently has a show at the Buffalo Institute for Contemporary Art in New York and is working on a project that centers around labor organizing and personal narrative.

Kwon, a multidisciplinary Korean artist who moved to the Bay Area in 2017 to start the master of fine arts program at UC Berkeley, uses digital technologies like 3D scanning and animation to re-create her female ancestors. In 2017, she created Leymusoom, an autobiographical feminist religion that serves as a means of resistance and a framework for investigating her past.

She has a show in the fall at the Institute of Contemporary Art San Jose and will be featured in the same Mills College Art Museum exhibition as fellow awardee Mukherjee.

“A true visionary, Kwon has established an autobiographical feminist religion that is at the core of her work, using self-taught technologies such as 3D scanning and animation to create a universe void of patriarchy and misogyny,” said Christine Koppes, director of curatorial affairs at ICA San Francisco.

Koppes served as one of this year’s jurors, along with Jordan Stein, independent curator and founder of Cushion Works; Matilde Guidelli Guidi, associate curator at the Dia Art Foundation; and Jennifer Inacio, associate curator at the Pérez Art Museum in Miami.

The other Artadia finalists were Sholeh Asgary, Quinn Girard and Xandra Ibarra.