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Arts Council announces recipients of DeHaan Artist of Distinction Awards and the Robert D. Beckmann, Jr. Emerging Artist Fellowship Program

INDIANAPOLIS–The Indy Arts Council has announced the final round of 2021 recipients of the DeHaan Artist of Distinction awards and the 2022 Beckmann Emerging Artist Fellowship Program awards. Among the awardees: A visual artist who grew up under a military dictatorship and who reflects on Indiana war memorials; a poet who explores themes of Blackness, womanhood, identity, and the “riot of Black joy”; and a dance choreographer who will host a performance of new works by LGBTQ+-identifying choreographers.

The DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award Program, which expanded statewide in 2021, supports up to six contemporary visual artists annually with grants of up to $10,000 each for aspirational projects and an exhibition of their work at Gallery 924 at the Arts Council. This year’s exhibition is August 5-September 23. The Robert D. Beckmann, Jr. Emerging Artist Fellowship Program awards two $3,500 fellowships each year to qualified and talented artists in music, dance, theater, literature, media and/or visual arts.

2021 DeHaan Artists of Distinction

Anila Quayyum Agha’s large-scale sculptures have appeared at art fairs and biennials, solo and group exhibitions, and in art museums and in private collections around the world. Her new installation, “Gathering Storms,” will reference the effects of climate change and be created from components often attributed to women’s work, like beads and needles. Agha hopes to simultaneously “strengthen the dialogue on climate change that is affecting racial and class dynamics while reducing the footprint on the natural world.”

Brazil native and long-time Indiana resident Artur Teixeira da Silva creates idea-driven and research-based installations, video art, photography, painting, printmaking, performance, and sculpture. His work, “We Don’t Remember the Same,” will reference the Indiana State Soldiers and Sailors Monument, the Mishawaka Civil War Soldiers Monument, and the American Civil War Memorial in Michigan City. “I aim to challenge the mythology around the military and spotlight how this myth affects all Americans,” said da Silva, “but specifically new immigrants of color.” da Silva is a visiting assistant professor in the New Media department at Indiana University South Bend.

Huntington resident Bryan Ballinger is a muralist who sets animals–human and otherwise–in settings that suggest a story that viewers can make their own. He will use his grant to extend his murals into the third dimension using 3D modeling and printing. Inspired by a collaborative project in Fort Wayne in which artists each painted a fiberglass bench, Ballinger
will print functional fiberglass sculptures to reflect the themes of the mural. “The bench could feature a character from the mural, or have environmental design elements that blend directly into the mural, like leaves and plants and structural elements that continue into the flat painted mural,” Ballinger said. “Then people could sit on the bench and literally be sitting in the mural itself.”

New Harmony-based weaver **Laura F. Nicholson** intends to make “a body of work which will fill a space with my artwork in a continuous, free-hanging set of tapestries, totaling over 80 feet in width.” Inspired by the 300-foot-long Bayeux Tapestry, which is installed on a curved wall, Nicholson will explore what she calls the “beauty/desolation” of industrial agriculture and its impact on climate by creating a large-scale tapestry installed on a curvilinear structure that mimics the country roads she travels in and around her native Posey County.

**Kelvin Burzon’s** work explores the intersections of sexuality, race, gender, and religion. It is driven by his Filipino-American background, his interest in religion’s role in culture and familial relationships, as well as Catholicism’s traditions, imagery, theatricality, and psychological vestige.

Applications are now open (with quarterly deadlines) for 2022 DeHaan Artist of Distinction awards.

**2022 Beckmann Emerging Artist Fellowship Program recipients**

**Chantel Jeanette Massey’s** first poetry collection, “Bursting At The Seams,” is the story of a Black girl growing up in the Midwest. Her work advocates for wellness, human rights, and social justice through use of confessional poetry exploring themes of Blackness, womanhood, identity, memory/archive, familial relationships, the process and act of giving up self-betrayal, and the riot of Black joy. Massey will travel to Brittany, France, to attend the Le Stylo Noir Writer’s Retreat to develop new work for a second edition of “Bursting At The Seams,” which she said will be focused on, “my own ancestral connection to Indiana, Black joy, intersectionality, and how my mother's healing is connected to my own.”

Dance Kaleidoscope company member **Natalie Clevenger** is a queer choreographer who focuses on LGBTQ+ themes with an emphasis on gender binaries. “As a dancer, we often are forced to fit into a binary or express ourselves as dictated by the choreographer,” she said. “My movement quality naturally exemplifies masculine traits, such as strong, broad movements and high jumps.” Clevenger will host a performance of new works by LGBTQ+-identifying choreographers to create a democratic, gender-inclusive space for dancers in which they are not limited by or cast according to how they present.

**Taylor Marie Bamgbose’s** two passions are art and mental health. Her most recent series of paintings, “State of Mind,” “explores the nuance of emotion, creating space for the viewer to reflect on how emotion is at work in their life, for better or worse,” she said. Bamgbose will use her Beckmann award to increase accessibility to her work through the production of high-quality prints and invest in the development of her career through promotional activities and professional networking.
About the Christel DeHaan Family Foundation

Since 1997, CDFF board members have overseen grants in excess of $60 million to arts, arts education, education, child welfare, and human need organizations. Throughout its history, the Foundation has refined its giving strategies and operations to optimize its support provided to arts and cultural organizations with a special emphasis on the performing arts. Support for the DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award program began in 2017 to engage the visual arts community. Learn more at christeldehaanfamilyfoundation.org.

About the Indy Arts Council

The Arts Council is a nonprofit service organization dedicated to fostering meaningful and equitable engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations thrive. Connect with the Arts Council on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @arts councilindy, and online at indyarts.org.

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