

3Arts Awards



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UNDER EMBARGO THROUGH NOVEMBER 8

3Arts goes “Next Level” with third year of \$150,000 *Next Level/Spare Room Awards* to three women visual artists

Visual artists A.J. McClenon, Pooja Pittie, and Reveca Torres each receive \$50,000 as 2022 3Arts Next Level/Spare Room Awardees

CHICAGO, IL (November 8, 2022)— **3Arts**, the Chicago-based nonprofit grantmaking organization, announced the recipients of the third annual **3Arts Next Level/Spare Room Awards**—\$50,000 unrestricted cash awards given to three women visual artists who are past 3Arts awardees—during its 15th annual 3Arts Awards celebration hosted virtually on [November 7, live on YouTube](#). With support from an anonymous donor at the Chicago Community Foundation, this year’s **3Arts Next Level/Spare Room Awards** honor visual artists **A.J. McClenon, Pooja Pittie, and Reveca Torres** in recognition of their outstanding work in the arts and commitment to increased visibility for their communities.

“Our **Next Level** program is an exciting and uncommon concept in the grantmaking field, in which artists have the opportunity to receive a second award of a higher amount,” said 3Arts Executive Director **Esther Grisham Grimm**, “It is one of the many ways that we as an organization show our ongoing support to our 3Arts community of artists throughout their entire careers and reflects our commitment to investing in the creative heart of our city.”

During the November 7 event, 3Arts celebrated ten **3Arts Awards** recipients with \$30,000 in unrestricted cash grants. Another ten artists were selected by past 3Arts awardees to receive \$2,000 unrestricted grants through **Make a Wave**, an artist-to-artist grant program.

3Arts premiered new commissions by past 3Arts awardees during the awards celebration, including in a new performance featuring **Aram Han Sifuentes** in the all-women percussion group Woori Sori (“Our Voice”); a new music video for her original song “Walls + Ceilings” by **Bethany Thomas**; a new dance film by **Robby Lee Williams** with fellow dancer Connor Cornelius and visual artist Genevieve Ramos; and a new video from **Santiago X**’s Land Acknowledgement series. A recording of the entire evening’s celebration is available to view on 3Arts’ YouTube channel.

The celebratory evening was co-chaired by **Candace Hunter** (past 3Arts awardee), **Lynn M. Lockwood** (civic leader), and **Mel Smith** (3Arts Treasurer).

The 2022 recipients of the 3Arts Next Level/Spare Room Award (\$50,000 per artist):

A.J. McClenon



A.J. McClenon is an interdisciplinary artist, born and raised in Washington, D.C. and who now calls Chicago a second home. Among McClenon's ongoing work, *VEGA* is an interdisciplinary project that includes performances, writing, video and mixed-media drawings/collages, and objects that explore histories of Black escapism. McClenon received a Master of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a Bachelor of Arts and minor in creative writing from University of Maryland, and studied at The New School. McClenon has presented her work at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, LA Film Forum, Echo Park Film Center, Danspace Project, Woman Made Gallery, Roman Susan Gallery, Links Hall, National Museum of African American History & Culture, and Hyde Park Art Center.

"To me, this recognition is a vindication of faith: faith in the work, in the community, and in the process of creation. The 3Arts community works hard to push forward sustainable practices in the arts with unyielding intention, compassion, and the truest kind of empathy. This award will open up a new world of collaboration, a reachable focus, and the freedom to work in a way that I haven't been able to ever before," says McClenon.

Pooja Pittie



Pooja Pittie is a visual artist who lives and works in Chicago. Born and raised in India, Pittie began her career in accounting and finance. In 2016, she decided to pursue her lifelong passion for art and shifted her focus to painting full-time. Pittie has an incurable and progressive form of muscular dystrophy. Her painting process explores the constantly changing relationship between a slow-moving body and an active mind. Pittie is an alumna of the HATCH residency at Chicago Artists Coalition and the Center Program at Hyde Park Art Center. As a Board member of both organizations, she is an advocate for equity and accessibility in the Arts. Her paintings have been exhibited at EXPO Chicago, Art Miami, and the Union League Club of Chicago. Pittie is represented

by the McCormick Gallery in Chicago.

"For the past few years, the 3Arts community has been a safe and inclusive space for me to learn and grow as a disabled artist. I am grateful for the opportunity to support each other as we navigate the complexities of working as disabled artists. The award will give me the freedom to dive deeper into the themes of my practice, and at the same time, allow me to take a deep breath and create space for new ideas," says Pittie.

Reveca Torres



Reveca Torres uses painting, illustration, photography, film, movement, and other media as forms of expression and tools for advocacy and social justice. After completing degrees in Fashion Design and Theatre Arts, Torres worked as a costume designer and simultaneously with organizations doing disability work in health, advocacy, recreation, and peer support. She is the founder of BACKBONES, a nonprofit and community for people living with spinal injuries (SCI) and is co-director of ReelAbilities Film Festival Chicago. Torres received fellowships with the Hulu+ Kartemquin Accelerator Program as well as Docs in Progress. She was also selected for the Craig Neilsen Visionary Award for her art and advocacy work. *Tres Fridas Project*, Reveca's collaboration with

artists Mariam Paré and Tara Ahern, recently exhibited alongside *Frida Kahlo: Timeless* at the Cleve Carney Museum of Art.

"The Next Level award comes to me at a time where I am feeling more confident in the stories I am telling and the ways I am telling these stories through my lens as a woman of color with a disability. Receiving my second award from 3Arts makes me feel seen by my community and puts me in a wonderful place by providing visibility and funds for me to make space for others with disabilities in the art world and society at large," says Torres.

The 2022 *Next Level/Spare Room Award* judges are **Linda Earle**, **Allyson Esposito**, and **Sacha Yanow**.

As previously announced, the 2022 recipients of 3Arts Awards (\$30,000 per artist):



Dance artists **Winifred Haun** and **Sarita Smith Childs**; musicians **Akenya** and **Nashon Holloway**; teaching artists **Peregrine Bermas** and **Simone Reynolds**; theater artists **Miranda Gonzalez** and **Omar Abbas Salem**; and visual artists **Rozalinda Borcilă** and **zakkiyyah najeebah dumas-o'neal**.

As previously announced, the 2022 recipients of the *Make A Wave Awards* (\$4,000 per artist):

Zahra Glenda Baker (vocalist, storyteller, and teaching artist); **Maggie Brown** (vocalist and teaching artist); **Stephanie “Stef Skills” Garland** (street art muralist and educator); **Leah Ra’Chel Gipson** (interdisciplinary artist and scholar); **Terry Guest** (playwright, actor, and director); **Malik Johnson aka 99TheProducer** (cellist, composer, and producer); **Ivan Lozano** (visual artist and podcaster); **Elisabeth YJ Seonwoo aka Kerberus** (dancer); **Andrea Yarbrough** (maker, curator, and educator); and **Wai Yim** (actor, director, choreographer, and playwright).

About 3Arts

3Arts is a nonprofit organization that supports Chicago’s women artists, artists of color, and Deaf and disabled artists who work in the performing, teaching, and visual arts. By providing cash awards, project funding, residency fellowships, professional development, and promotion, 3Arts helps artists take risks, experiment, and build momentum in their careers.

3Arts extends special thanks to an Anonymous Donor at the Chicago Community Foundation for their support of the 3Arts Next Level/Spare Room Award, to 2022 3Arts Awards Presenting Partner, the Walder Foundation, and to the 2022 Award Partners: The Chandler Family, Gary & Denise Gardner Fund, The HMS Fund, Stan Lipkin & Evelyn Appell Lipkin, The Reva & David Logan Foundation, and The SIF Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation. One of the ten 3Arts Awards, designated for Nashon Holloway as the 3Arts/BMO Community Award, is named in honor of the 114 community donors who contributed to a crowdfunding campaign to fund the award along with a \$15,000 match from 2022 Community Award Partner, BMO Harris Bank.

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For more information about 3Arts, please visit www.3arts.org.

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