



THE HEINZ AWARDS

for the Arts, Economy and Environment

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Harnessing the Power of Art to Inspire Examination and Reflection: Heinz Family Foundation Names Jennie C. Jones and Gala Porras-Kim Recipients of the 29th Heinz Awards for the Arts

PITTSBURGH, September 17, 2024 — The Heinz Family Foundation today named artists Jennie C. Jones and Gala Porras-Kim recipients of the prestigious 29th Heinz Award for the Arts. As part of the accolade, Ms. Jones and Ms. Porras-Kim will each receive an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

Jennie C. Jones' captivating works of painting, sculpture and sound are influenced by minimalism and abstract art of the 20th century and by avant-garde music of the same era. Her work tells a more complete story of the cultural and social happenings of the time while also bringing past visual art movements into a contemporary context. Her work is found in collections ranging from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to the Studio Museum in Harlem.

A lifelong music enthusiast, some of her early works focused on the bygone physicality of listening to music — opening an album or flipping a vinyl record over — by making sculptures of cables, album covers and cassette cases. Her works on paper played with visual elements of sheet music, and in 2000, she made her first sound piece. Through her innovative approach to object-making, she often paints on acoustic panels that direct sound toward the viewer.

At Ms. Jones' first solo museum show, “Higher Resonance,” hosted in 2013 by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, her paintings of muted gray and fluorescent yellow were accompanied by a re-composition of music by Olly Wilson and Alice Coltrane, among others. Exhibition Curator Evelyn Hankins commented in *Smithsonian Magazine*, “When they’re in a gallery with no sound, they are these beautiful autonomous objects. But then you put sound in the gallery, and they become activated.”

In 2011, she first exhibited “sound art” in tandem with visual art at The Kitchen in New York City, and in 2020, debuted at Alexander Gray Associates. For “These (Mournful) Shores,” her 2020 outdoor sculpture for the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts, she fashioned a wind-activated harp at the end of a granite wall extending from the museum. Her vision was for the instrument to “sing to the permanent collection,” more specifically to two stormy seascapes by Winslow Homer that Ms. Jones read as portraits of the Middle Passage.

“Those who encounter my work will hopefully experience a need to pause and be inspired to investigate further — rewarded with close looking,” says Ms. Jones. “With or without a sonic element, it is my intention that these acoustic panel paintings create a hush in the spaces they occupy. I consider them to be always ‘working,’ active not passive. My artworks lean into the objecthood of painting with nuance and grace. In doing so, I hope to expand the viewers’ expectation and preconceived ideas about what Black cultural production looks and sounds like.”

“Dynamics,” Ms. Jones’ solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, opened in 2022 and marked the first solo presentation by a Black woman in the museum’s rotunda. The show included a sound installation that sent her subtle tones throughout the museum’s spiral. Like her acoustic panels’ ability to diffuse sound, the neon colors in her paintings appeared to produce their own light, reflecting their hue onto gallery walls.

In 2025, she will install an ensemble of instrumentalized sculptures on an exterior rooftop at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and she will continue to expand her use of acoustically active materials, paint and sound at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis.

“We honor Jennie for her deeply contemplative, multidimensional compositions that reframe minimalism and engage us in experiences that are both visual and musical,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Jennie’s work defies established genres, interlacing elements of sound, space, color and objects in ways that are profoundly moving. Her layered works are immersive, inviting us to reflect and ponder while experiencing moments of subtle beauty and meaning. The enduring impact of her compositions, together with the intellectual curiosity and artistic excellence she brings to her work are wonderful reflections of the spirit of The Heinz Awards.”

Gala Porras-Kim is an interdisciplinary artist whose skilled work with cultural and ethnographic objects calls into question who has agency to interpret history. Her works range from meticulous drawings to installations that morph through exposure to natural elements, echoing the physical transformation of museum objects that conservators diligently work to make immutable. In mining prestigious collections, Ms. Porras-Kim looks for lapses in provenance that give way to fresh interpretations. Through her artworks, which are oftentimes informed by direct engagement and exchanges with museums and their staff, she aims to shift policies of object ownership, care and presentation. Within the last few years, Ms. Porras-Kim has shown her celebrated work in a spate of exhibitions across the globe, including in Seoul, São Paulo, London, Mexico City, Los Angeles and New York.

Part of Ms. Porras-Kim’s extraordinary practice is to participate in dialogue with leaders of collecting institutions in hopes of swaying them to consider the intentions and ownership of an artifact’s creator. Documentation of this correspondence has been the subject of several works, including one where she penned a letter to the exhibition coordinator at Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History regarding a show that included two Mesoamerican monoliths extracted from the Pyramid of the Sun. In her plea for consideration of the site’s nonhuman stakeholders, Ms. Porras-Kim offered her full-scale replicas as a form of reconstruction.

In a subsequent letter to Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Ms. Porras-Kim set her sights on the museum’s collection of ritual objects dredged in the early 20th century from Mexico’s Sacred Cenote of Chichén Itzá. The objects were thrown into the cenote by the ancient Maya as votive offerings to their rain god and, until their excavation, had been submerged under water. Now held in dry museum storage, they are unable to perform their ritual function. The letter put in motion a series of artworks and exhibitions that share the title “Precipitation for an arid landscape.” The work reminds audiences that objects morph, decay and shift in cultural relevance over time, even as the institutions strive for their fixed permanence. Among works inspired by the cenotes’ contents are installations of

copal, a tree resin used in Mesoamerican rituals mixed with dust collected from the storage of the museum. Each host institution showing the work must find a way to reunite it with rainwater.

“I often approach a project by paying close attention to the practical limits of institutional policies, where the logic of conservation and registration often breaks down. My work with these institutions aims to recognize that in the same way they form the understanding of objects in their collections as historical, these objects also redefine the places and people that interact with them depending on their past,” says Ms. Porrás-Kim. “One example of this is the project I made for the São Paulo Biennial in 2021. Ash was collected after the fire that destroyed the majority of the collection held by the National Museum of Brazil. Among the collection was the fossilized remains of one of the oldest women in the Americas, and only 80% of the remains were recovered after the fire. The ash in the napkin might contain particles of the 20% that escaped through the fire to become the closest thing to a cinerary urn for this person. When people understand the work, it changes the way that it has been displayed and interacted with to be more in line with cemetery methods than solely museum objects.”

In 2023, Ms. Porrás-Kim participated in the Liverpool Biennial and the Korea Artist Prize Exhibition. She also opened the solo exhibitions “Entre Lapsos de Historias” at the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City; “National Treasures” at Leeum Museum of Art; “Sights Beyond the Grave” at CAAC, Sevilla; “The weight of a patina of time” at the Fowler Museum at UCLA; and “A Hand in Nature,” her solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. For the latter, Ms. Porrás-Kim exhibited new works using a novel approach to examination of the historical record. For a site-specific work, she acquired a section of an ice core from the nearby National Science Foundation Ice Core Facility and allowed what she described as an “organic deaccession process,” wherein air trapped in the ice for thousands of years was released as the ice melted atop a pedestal. The show reinforced her challenge of institutional stewardship of objects and their histories.

“It is an honor to present Gala with the Heinz Award for the Arts, not only for her work as a gifted artist and researcher, but also as a powerful force calling us to recognize that how we understand and think about history, culture, and the preservation and display of historic objects has been heavily influenced by the museums and galleries that we treasure,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Gala engages deeply with these institutions, calling them to examine their practices of acquisition, display and narrative, and to question ownership of indigenous objects. This work is groundbreaking and brave. Now more than ever, we need the intellectual curiosity and courage of artists like Gala to expand our knowledge and compel us to carefully examine long-held practices in the pursuit of truth and justice.”

Created to honor the memory of the late U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards honors excellence and achievement in areas of great importance to him. The 29th Awards brings the total number of recipients to 180 and reflects \$37 million in monetary awards since the program was launched in 1993.

Additional recipients by category are:

Economy: Aisha Nyandoro, Ph.D., Founding CEO, Springboard to Opportunities and Founder, Magnolia Mother’s Trust (MMT), Jackson, Mississippi, is a national leader in the guaranteed income movement. Her work leading Springboard to Opportunities and MMT — the first guaranteed income

program for single Black mothers in the U.S. — is not only helping to alleviate economic injustices but also reframing the narrative around poverty.

Economy: Jessica Sager and Janna Wagner, Co-Founders, All Our Kin, New Haven, Connecticut, train, support and sustain family child care educators, arming these home-based providers with the resources and community connections they need to create quality early childhood environments and run successful small businesses. Their program, All Our Kin, not only raises the earning power of providers but also raises the quality, availability and sustainability of child care.

Environment: Scott Loarie, Ph.D., and Ken-ichi Ueda, Co-Organizers, iNaturalist, San Rafael, California, have galvanized millions of nature enthusiasts, researchers and conservation biologists to record and map nature observations across the planet through iNaturalist. Together, observers crowdsource one of the world’s largest biodiversity databases that has contributed to thousands of publications and led to the discovery of new species.

Environment: Amira Diamond and Melinda Kramer, Co-Founders, Women’s Earth Alliance (WEA), Berkeley, California, are working to protect the environment, end the climate crisis and ensure a just, thriving world by empowering women-led climate initiatives. These partnerships are helping to protect forests and rivers, save threatened indigenous seeds, launch sustainable farms, conserve coral reefs and protect land rights.

Recipients of the 29th Heinz Awards will be honored in Pittsburgh in October. For more information on the awardees, visit www.heinzawards.org.

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of the recipients, please contact Abby Manishor at amanishor@burness.com or 917-539-3308.

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About the Heinz Awards

Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrates the accomplishments and spirit of the Senator by recognizing the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the areas of greatest importance to him. The Awards, administered by the Heinz Family Foundation, currently recognize individuals for their contributions in the areas of the Arts, the Economy and the Environment. Nominations are submitted by invited experts, who serve anonymously, and are reviewed by jurors appointed by the Heinz Family Foundation. The jurors make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which subsequently selects the Award recipients. For more information on the Heinz Awards, visit www.heinzawards.org.

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