

The Burke Prize 2019

October 3, 2019 through April 12, 2020

Museum of Arts and Design, Floor 3



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Burke Prize 2019

***Burke Prize 2019* presents the sixteen finalists of the Museum's juried Burke Prize, which recognizes an artist's extraordinary achievement in craft. Named for Marian and Russell Burke, two passionate collectors of craft and longtime supporters of the Museum of Arts and Design, the prize is an unrestricted award of \$50,000 given to a professional artist age forty-five or under working in glass, fiber, clay, metal, and/or wood. The award aims to encourage growth and experimentation among a new generation of artists who are advancing the craft disciplines.**

Attesting to the vitality of the field, this group of finalists illustrates the rich variety of work being made by contemporary craft practitioners across the United States. The artworks in the exhibition, selected to be indicative of the respective artists' oeuvres, encompass a wide range of themes,

including explorations of the immigrant experience, contemplations of the past through the lens of material culture, and meditations on whose stories we choose to memorialize. Together, they constitute a timely reflection on what it means to be American today.

Burke Prize finalists include Elizabeth Alexander, Indira Allegra, Bisa Butler, Amber Cowan, Tanda Francis, Bojana Ginn, Raven Halfmoon, Salvador Jiménez-Flores, Lauren Kalman, Helen Lee, Linda Lopez, Jaydan Moore, Sophia Narrett, Sara Rahbar, Julie Schenkelberg, and Sarah Zapata.

Burke Prize Jurors include Julia Bryan-Wilson (Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, UC Berkeley; Adjunct Curator, Museu de Arte de São Paulo), Valerie Cassel Oliver (Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts) and Cannupa Hanska Luger (Artist, 2018 Burke Prize Winner).

Bojana Ginn (Center of Gallery)
Serbia, born 1974; lives in Decatur, Georgia

***Praising Softness / Pink Gluons on the
Small of the Back, 2017/19***

**Sheep's wool, LED lights, paper, and
hardware Courtesy the**

Bojana Ginn's multimedia light installations draw from the diverse disciplines of mathematics, science, and art. Trained as a medical doctor, Ginn is particularly concerned with the ethics of transhumanism, a philosophy that advocates for the use of science and technology to accelerate human evolution. Her work investigates questions of humanity and nature in an increasingly digitally engineered world.

A site-specific installation for MAD, *Praising Softness / Pink Gluons on the Small of the Back* uses wool and light to create an enigmatic experience that foregrounds the spiritual nature of the materials and offers a healing presence as an alternative to the harsh realities of contemporary life. Ginn often works with sheep's wool, chosen for its connection to the folklore of her native Serbia, as well as for the animal's role as a symbol of innocence and gentleness in the Christian tradition. The installation points to a utopian vision of clean, gentle, and natural material possibilities for the future.

Sarah Zapata (Right/East Gallery)

United States, born 1988; lives in Brooklyn, New York

From left:

A little domestic waste I 2017

A little domestic waste VII 2017

Natural and synthetic fiber, handwoven fabric, steel, cement, and coiled rope

Sarah Zapata uses labor-intensive textile processes to investigate her queer Latinx identity. Born and raised in a conservative Texan community, Zapata studied traditional Andean weaving techniques to combat her sense of isolation from her Peruvian heritage. Utilizing these and other traditional methods of weaving, along with coiling, latch hooking, and sewing, Zapata creates installations and sculptures that integrate fiber with commonplace objects, such as hairweave and mannequin parts, to explore female eroticism.

***A little domestic waste I and VII* were originally part of the immersive installation *If I Could*, titled after the 1970 Simon and Garfunkel song “El Condor Pasa (If I Could),” which integrates elements of American and Andean folk music. In a similar blending of cultures, Zapata combines American rug-making with Peruvian handweaving techniques as an embodiment of her cultural identity. The coiled bases of the *A little domestic waste* sculptures reference the pre-Columbian burial bundles of Paracas, Peru, in which people were buried (or mummified) in the fetal position with intricate textiles of personal significance.**

Raven Halfmoon (Right/East Gallery)

United States, born 1991; lives in Helena, Montana

***STILL HERE* 2019 Glazed stoneware**

Raven Halfmoon creates ceramic sculptures that reflect her identity as a Native American (Caddo Nation) woman living in the United States. Her sculptures advance the Caddo legacy of ceramics dating to the eighth century, and explore the dichotomy between Native self-identity and the constructed perceptions of indigenous culture.

***STILL HERE* depicts an indigenous woman in ceremonial Caddo face paint. The dignified expression on the figure's face coupled with its large scale conveys a defiant advocacy for the artist's culture. Halfmoon's statement "STILL HERE" challenges the widespread assumption that indigenous culture is a matter of the past, when in fact there are over five hundred**

tribes in the United States alone. This misconception is a result of centuries of attempted erasure on the part of the US government, including the breaking of treaties, seizure of lands, and forced relocation of Native Americans.

Sara Rahbar (Right/East Gallery)

Iran, born 1976; lives in New York, New York

***Flag #54 America* 2017**

Vintage United States flag and found objects

***Liberation for all (206 Bones)* 2017**

Mixed media

Having left her homeland of Iran after the Iranian Revolution and the start of the Iran–Iraq War, Sara Rahbar seeks to convey in her work the sharply contrasted feelings of separation and belonging inherent in her diasporic experience. The artist’s personal experience frames a larger exploration into nationalism, violence, and the complexity of the human condition.

***Flag #54 America* is part of Rahbar’s poignant ongoing “Flag” series, which combines the American flag with a variety of Middle Eastern textiles, livestock tack, equestrian gear, and aspects of military**

dress, including tags, embroidered badges, and camouflage. *Liberation for all* (206 *Bones*) calls into question political decisions that result in untenable violence toward humankind. Both works symbolize the artist's internal duality as an Iranian American living in a time of conflict between her native and adopted homelands.

Julie Schenkelberg

**United States, born 1974; lives in Detroit,
Michigan (Right/East Gallery)**

Homage to Finding 2017

**Burnt wood from Detroit homes, wax, and
silver leaf**

Julie Schenkelberg primarily creates architectural installations with materials scavenged from scrapyards and abandoned domestic and factory buildings throughout the Midwest that speak to the area's bygone industrial history and subsequent economic hardship. She assembles these materials alongside casts of personal objects and family heirlooms, such as 1910s wallpaper from her grandparents' home. Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, Schenkelberg often explored the deteriorating buildings and found inspiration in scene shops in the theater where she worked, honing her eye to discover beauty in the chaos of a postindustrial Rust Belt.

***Homage to Finding*, an unusually diminutive work by the artist, combines found materials, such as wood gathered from burned homes in Detroit, with wax casts of the artist's personal items, including jewelry, dishware, books, mirrors, and Madonna statues, recontextualizing objects that speak to place within an autobiographical narrative.**

Lauren Kalman (Right/East Gallery)

United States, born 1980; lives in Detroit, Michigan

Flourish (1) and Flourish (2), 2019

Gold-plated copper and bronze; inkjet print

Lauren Kalman investigates beauty, adornment, and body image through unconventional wearable objects that she activates on her own body and then documents in photography and video.

***Flourish (1) and (2)* are part of a larger series made at a now defunct nineteenth-century jewelry factory in Germany. The artist used the factory's commercial dies and presses to create hundreds of golden foliate elements, which she then composed into a mask reminiscent of medieval chain mail in *Flourish (1)* and exaggerated metallic bodily fluids in *Flourish (2)*. The works highlight the pain and discomfort that are often endured in the effort to attain socially prescribed notions of beauty.**

Elizabeth Alexander

United States, born 1982; lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Right/East Gallery)

Let Him Speak First (positives) 2019

Extracted wallpaper print, cast paper, adhesive, wood, paper, and board

Elizabeth Alexander creates sculptures, installations, and multi-media artworks that use pattern and ornamentation to explore the intersection of traditional gender roles and social class through a feminist lens. Speaking about her extraction of decorative prints from found objects, the artist says: “Appropriating once coveted domestic symbols of beautification and success such as wallpaper, upholstered furniture, and porcelain ware, I survey the cost and absurdity of social climbing through material veils.”

The installation seen here is titled after the phrase “Let him speak first,” found in a vintage advice book for new wives, which promoted a patriarchal domestic hierarchy. While the home is often idealized as a place of congenial stability, the deteriorating domestic environment presented in *Let Him Speak First (positives)*, and the violence with which the chandelier has crashed to the floor, suggests otherwise.

Jaydan Moore (Right/East Gallery)
United States, born 1986; lives in Richmond,
Virginia

***Platter/Chatter*, 2018, Silver-plated platters**

Jaydan Moore's practice centers on themes of memory and transformation. Trained as a metalsmith, he deconstructs found silver-plated tableware from the 1940s to the 1970s and reassembles it into sculptures and wall hangings.

The consolidated form of *Platter/Chatter* is built from dozens of vintage trays that show the scratches and discoloration they have acquired through the years. The uniform decorative patterns seen throughout the platters point to the mass production of silver-plated tableware during the mid-twentieth century, a development that made silver objects affordable and led to an increase in their status as family heirlooms. Moore's interventions highlight the ubiquity

of these platters, which through their melding and piercing interlace numerous personal histories to give insight into the broader material culture of the United States.

Indira Allegra (Right/East Gallery)

United States, born 1980; lives in Oakland, California

BODYWARP Lineage III and IV, 2017

Wood and steel

BODYWARP Lineage VI, 2017

Wood, steel, hemp, and polyester

Casting III and IV, Video

Indira Allegra poetically expands the possibilities of fiber beyond its physical form. Through performance, film, writing, and sculptures constructed from loom components, she engages the language of weaving to explore political and emotional tensions unspoken in society and carried within the body.

The three sculptures and two videos seen here, from Allegra's "BODYWARP" series, demonstrate how the artist employs the

loom to record and rewrite narratives of historical memory and trauma relating to the oppression and violence enacted on women's bodies by the labor of weaving. In her *Casting* films, she activates elements of looms and other weaving tools through movement and dance, using herself as the metaphorical thread of the warp to shift dynamics of power between the loom and the body.

Sophia Narrett (Center Gallery)
United States, born 1987; lives in Brooklyn, New York

***Wishes*, 2019, Embroidery thread, fabric, aluminum, and acrylic**

Sophia Narrett's embroideries investigate themes of fantasy, desire, and love, and are stitched with cotton thread in a style that emphasizes her training as a painter. Erotic encounters are set alongside images sourced from popular culture and the Internet, which imbues Narrett's work with an unexpected and fantastical quality that conveys the multifaceted nature of contemporary intimate relationships.

Despite its mature content, *Wishes* evokes a childlike innocence through the use of a candy color palette and children's architecture, including sandboxes, kiddie pools, wooden jungle gyms, and a rainbow rock-climbing wall. With an abundance of

rabbits and a voyeuristic elephant present in the composition, humor is intrinsic to the work. However, Narrett draws the viewer deeper into the complexities of intimacy and relationships through shifts in power dynamics across each vignette, often revealing darker possibilities. Like a storyboard, the composition is a stitching-together of scenes, which at first seem to be directed by a man brandishing a conductor's baton. However, it is the woman—a self-portrait of the artist—standing behind him who is puppeteering the actions and desires unfolding below, thus reorienting the gender dynamic.

Salvador Jimenez-Flores

**Mexico, born 1985; lives in Chicago, Illinois
(Left/West Gallery)**

La resistencia de los nopales híbridos, 2016

***Nopales híbridos: An Imaginary World of
a Rascuache-Futurism, 2017***

**Terra cotta, porcelain, underglazes, gold
luster, and terra cotta slip**

Salvador Jiménez-Flores' multidisciplinary work focuses on themes of migration, stereotypes, cultural appropriation, and the complexities of Mexican-American cultural identity. When Jiménez-Flores moved to the United States he spoke limited English. Art became his primary method of communication and means of commemorating his heritage. His practice prioritizes the depiction of Latinx people to ensure their representation in art for future generations.

The “Nopales” series (*nopales* is Spanish for “prickly-pear cacti”) uses humor to challenge existing Latinx stereotypes in the United States. Likenesses of the artist, wearing shiny sunglasses and sticking out his tongue, are portrayed on cactus pads made of terra cotta and porcelain. This irreverent aesthetic references the work of Robert Arneson, father of funk ceramics, and also draws on the rich history of portraiture in Latin American visual culture, from Frida Kahlo’s paintings to Peruvian Moche vessels. The *nopal*, notable for its resilience in extreme conditions, is an important icon in Mexican culture—so much so that it is emblazoned on the country’s flag. For the artist, the cactus’s endurance symbolizes hope for the future.

Bisa Butler

(Left/West Gallery)

United States, born 1973; lives in West Orange, New Jersey

***Les Sapeurs* 2018**

Cotton, silk, and wool

Bisa Butler quilts technicolor portraits of black people using a range of fabrics that include vintage lace, satin, cotton, wax prints, and hand-painted African textiles. Her layering of color, pattern, and textile showcases the artist's painterly style, which results in highly realistic works rendered in vibrant palettes.

The title, *Les Sapeurs*, is taken from the name for the members of the Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (Society of Influencers and Elegant Persons), a male subculture in two West African countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo. Sapeurs participate in an elaborate form of

“dandyism,” buying and wearing elegant suits and shoes, often in colorful fabrics evocative of Butler’s own work. Sape tradition began in the fifteenth century during French colonial rule of the region and continues to be an expression of rebellion against the legacy of European colonialism.

Linda Lopez (Left/West Gallery)

United States, born 1981; lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas

Pink Furry, 2018, Glazed ceramic

Jade Dust Furry with Gold Rocks, 2018

Asphalt Dust Furry with Gold Rocks, 2017

Glazed ceramic

Linda Lopez’s candy-colored ceramic sculptures are born of the nuances of language she experienced growing up in a multilingual immigrant household. Her mother, a Vietnamese refugee, and her father, a Mexican immigrant, spoke little English during her childhood. The minimal English they used to discuss their domestic life gave human attributes to inanimate objects, as in: “Don’t eat on the couch or the crumbs will make the couch sick.” These uncommon but vibrant phrases prompted the artist to create a visual language that endows objects with a similar sense of animation.

Pink Furry, Asphalt Dust Furry with Gold Rocks, and Jade Furry with Gold Rocks, seen here, resemble succulents, anemones, and even mops that appear to self-propagate, sprouting globular arms that make up the titular “fur.” Devoid of function, the works acquire a life of their own.

Amber Cowan (Left/West Gallery)

United States, born 1981; lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dance of the Pacific Coast Highway at Sunset, 2019, Frameworked American pressed glass

Snail Passing Through the Garden of Inanna, 2019, Frameworked American pressed glass

Amber Cowan reworks vintage glass tableware to create vignettes that explore mythological and personal narratives. The artist transfigures the found broken and discarded decorative glass inventory of industrial factories: after melting down the raw cullet (broken pieces of glass), she transforms it—using a torch, bonsai shears, and presses—into a multitude of botanical tendrils, flowers, leaves, and beads, which she then assembles into sculptures. Her works are inspired by seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century Baroque and Rococo design, Catholic iconography, art history, American material culture, and United States glass production.

Cowan's *Dance of the Pacific Coast Highway at Sunset* celebrates female independence and commemorates the artist's many solo trips to California, represented by the two ballerinas who move gracefully across a coastal landscape. The nearby *Snail Passing Through the Garden of Inanna* includes a twofold reference to goddess mythology, a topic the artist explores frequently. The titular Inanna is an ancient Mesopotamian goddess of love, beauty, sex, fertility, war, justice, and political power, and the work's central pressed-glass cup features Salacia, the Roman goddess of the sea.

Helen Lee

(Left/West Gallery)

United States, born 1978; lives in Madison, Wisconsin

***1/f*, 2018 Glass, steel, and motors**

Helen Lee explores the transformational nature of language as informed by her experiences and cultural background as a second-generation Chinese American. She investigates the inherent and unintentional consequences of bilingualism in the form of mistranslations, misinterpretations, and other communication challenges, as well as the complexities of her own cultural duality. The evolutionary nature of language and meaning is highlighted by her use of glass, which itself is a material in a constant state of flux: liquid to solid, hard to malleable.

Lee's exploration of language extends to the breath, the spoken word, and sounds of the natural world. The multi-part installation *1/f* references pink noise—the technical term

for the noise signal most commonly occurring in nature and biological systems. The work imagines units of language as transparent glass spheres that glide along a glazed surface to produce an immersive aural atmosphere of crashing waves.

Tanda Francis (Left/West Gallery)

United States, born 1977; lives in Brooklyn, New York

Paula, 2016

Altar Ego, 2018, Concrete and metal

Tanda Francis creates monumental sculptures depicting subjects of African descent for personal and public spaces. Her sculptures challenge the traditional monument, inspire consideration of who is commemorated and why, and reinforce the importance of black female figures.

The works shown here are maquettes, or preliminary models, for two of Francis' public artworks. The triple portrait *Altar Ego* was installed for one year in its final form as *Adorn Me* in Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park. The faces feature scarification, a reference to thirteenth-century sculptures from the ancient Nigerian Ife civilization, and are supported by a neoclassical pedestal. The

juxtaposition of artistic styles from different cultures underscores the artist's perspective on the connected legacies of colonialism and gentrification.