



XL Insurance

AXA Art Prize

2019

AXA Art Prize

With its emphasis on figurative art, the AXA Art Prize (formerly known as the XL Catlin Art Prize) provides a unique platform for emerging artistic talent from across the U.S. As a leading Fine Art insurer, our mission is to protect and safeguard art. Through the AXA Art Prize, we aim to advance the age-old practice of figurative art. In giving these talented young artists a forum for their works to be shown, critiqued and discussed, we reward their risk-taking and champion their desire to continue this tradition for the benefit of future generations.

The AXA Art Prize is brought to you by AXA XL, a division of AXA Group. AXA XL provides insurance and reinsurance solutions to clients in more than 200 countries. We insure some of the world's most acclaimed galleries, art collections and dealers. AXA XL is an established patron of the arts and continues to drive initiatives designed to support and celebrate emerging talent.

axaartprize.com
axaxl.com

AXA XL

I am consistently impressed by the students whose works are included in this inspiring art contest and traveling exhibition.

The forty students competing for the AXA Art Prize come from varying backgrounds, cultures and life experiences. And while all their works are within the figurative tradition, the media and styles represented are similarly diverse; from oil on canvas to collage to woodcut print.

Despite the diversity of the artists, a recurring theme of storytelling comes through in the submissions. As finalist Alex Gerasev noted, “For me, figurative work is the most powerful way to share stories of the human condition.” Or as Adam Wever-Glen put it, “The image of the figure has an incredible ability to communicate human experience ... which makes for great storytelling.”

Several of these stories are about lives lived; historical figures, a mother, a father. Some are set in the moment and explore contemporary themes and topics, including climate change, national borders and gender identity.

Whatever the perspective or theme, the stories told by these artists are moving, compelling, thought-provoking, inspiring and important. In the words of Joan Daniel Cordova Rodriguez, he aimed to “ignite conversations in a world that seems to hear but rarely listens.”

I hope that visitors to the traveling exhibition will find the artworks as engaging as I do and share our enthusiasm in helping the next generation of figurative artists launch their careers.

Greg Hendrick
CEO, AXA XL
Stamford, CT





To make life visible

by David Ebony
Contributing editor, Art in America

At the Strand bookstore in New York, I recently picked up a used copy of *New Tendencies in Art* by Argentine poet and critic Aldo Pellegrini (1903-1973), which has been out of print for a while. Originally published in 1966, it was the second edition of 1969 that made an indelible impression on me when I first came upon it some years later in the library while still in grade school. I couldn't take my eyes off the cover image – the left panel of Francis Bacon's unnerving, rather lurid painting *Double Portrait of Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach* (1964). In this work, Bacon presents a wildly abstracted figure with mashed facial features, shown nude from the waist down, wearing only a white t-shirt, reclining – or more like writhing – on a blazing red chaise lounge. With its bravura brushwork, the painting conveys a thrilling sort of convulsive energy. And despite the obvious distortions of the figure and its calculated distance from reality, the picture appeared to me to be utterly convincing and altogether “real.”

I had already been a devotee of his mentor, Graham Sutherland, an English painter of fantastic landscape-inspired images, perhaps best known today as one of the preeminent portrait painters of the twentieth century. The subjects of Bacon's portrait, Freud and Auerbach, also became of special interest to me over the years; the latter was the focus of my first feature-length article for *Art in America* magazine published in December, 1994. And I've also written about Freud's work on a number of occasions.

The burning question I had in revisiting Pellegrini's book at this time was "Could these *New Tendencies in Art* still be relevant, let alone *new*?" After fifty years of tumultuous upheavals in the art world, they could not possibly be current, or so I thought. I have seen certain trends rise in the art world like phoenixes for a few years and then crash to the ground, while others shone brightly for longer durations. Pellegrini's view of art might be anachronistic or perhaps even unintelligible today but rereading certain passages in the book proved me wrong. He writes of the relationship between abstraction and figuration in terms that are still valid. Francis Bacon, et al., represent for the author the "new figuration" of the 1960s, with a strong emphasis on humor and the grotesque. For a subsequent generation, "new figuration" would be associated with the "neo-expressionism" of the 1980s, led by artists like Julian Schnabel, David Salle and Eric Fischl.

Although abstraction perhaps had the upper hand in the postwar period of Pellegrini's book, he discusses art in terms of the intensity, clarity of vision and sincerity of expression that transcend all eras and define the principal attributes of an art work, regardless of its label "abstract" or "figurative." Every figurative work, as some critics have noted, is composed of certain arrangements of purely abstract elements – lines, forms, gestures and colors – that coalesce in a certain way to convey some aspect of the observable world and/or its inhabitants. Works of abstract art, on the other hand, inevitably allude to some aspect of empirical reality – the color of the sky, an architectural form, or a tossed salad, to cite just a few examples. Perhaps most importantly, the influential and unforgettable works of art – whether in terms of bringing attention to political causes, personal issues, or formal breakthroughs – ought to encompass a quest for truth, and resonate with that remarkable ambition no matter how abject the work's image or materials may appear to be.

"Art is not a phenomenon isolated from the surrounding reality," Pellegrini writes. "When art is free and authentic, it is always an expression of its ambient epoch, of the dominating characteristics of the society in which the individual is creating. The artist is always present [in his or her work] as a concrete being, and it is this quality that represents humankind in its surroundings at a given moment of time." In a section titled "To Make Life Visible," he asks a number of poignant questions. "In what measure do artists show us an aspect of reality, and to what degree do they become our guides to this reality?"

To make life truly visible requires a high degree of talent, intelligence and technical ability. All of the finalists featured in this year's AXA Art Prize exhibition demonstrate an extraordinary gift to make life visible. This diverse group explores issues of identity, conveying an autobiographical scenario, perhaps, or simply reflecting a moment in time. Some establish a credible narrative, fanciful or otherworldly though it may be. With works that suggest new tendencies in figurative art, these image-makers act as our guides to an exhilarating and hitherto unimagined reality.





Artists

Aurora Abzug

Charity Baker

Merritt Barnwell

Claire Bowman

Caley Buck

Brooke Catania

Susan M B Chen

Joan Daniel Cordova Rodriguez

Arleene Correa Valencia

Alexandria Couch

Chloe Crawford

Katie Croft

Josie Del Castillo

Michael Loren Diaz

María Fragoso

Alex Gerasev

Georgia Hinaris

Lanise Howard

Maggie Hubbard

Ericka Jeffries

Leasho Johnson

Jocelyn Khosla

Jin Lee

Kathryn Mecca

Luisiana Mera

Naomi Nevo Ben Ari

Uzo Njoku

Prinston Nnanna

Jackson O'Brasky

Zoë Papini

Anna Park

Laurel Richardson

Destiny Ryan

Victor Manuel Salinas

Jusun Seo

Lauren Sitarchuk

Andrew Snow

Valerie Suter

Adam Wever-Glen

Rhealin Wlos

Ritual

2018

oil on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Aurora Abzug

Bard College

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Ritual inserts my body into an art historical narrative by posing myself, as a female nude, to be consumed by the viewer's gaze. I subvert this vulnerability by making it the focal point of a commentary on my difficult relationship with food and self-image.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My work is about navigating relationships with others and with ourselves in the age of social media and ubiquitous computing. I'm interested in the ways we feel compelled to present ourselves and in the anxieties inherent to the curation and performance of identity.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I applied to the AXA Art Prize in hopes that by extending my work's audience, I could show others the strength and viability of figurative realism as a tool to take on contemporary, and particularly feminist, issues.

How do you approach a new work?

When beginning a new painting, I am compelled to pick a person, theme or object that will teach me something about my values or ideology as I work. Having a relationship with my subject is essential, and I aim to explore this relationship as I paint.

www.aurorabja.wixsite.com/portfolio

Instagram | @auroraabzug



Lucy

2018

oil on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Charity Baker

New York Studio School

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Lucy is a work I made last summer while painting in upstate New York on the Canadian border. I wanted to make strong and meaningful figurative work within the expressive landscape, to create a psychological narrative. Here my friend Lucy is standing alone in a special hemlock grove named "Scott's Hangout."

How do you describe your work and practice?

My work is partially autobiographical. I am captivated by human interaction, intimacy and landscape. My paintings are also influenced by acosmist philosophy in which I develop figures to be transformative in our physical and spiritual society. My work is based on observation and experience.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

The AXA Art Prize has a strong reputation in the art world and I am honored to be in this exhibition. As an emerging figurative artist, I was led to the AXA Art Prize because of its unique emphasis on and support of this genre in the contemporary art world.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

I see painting as a technology that can explain the human spirit and our journey on this earth. The figure contributes a psychology to my paintings, and the rich history of figurative painting informs my subject matter.

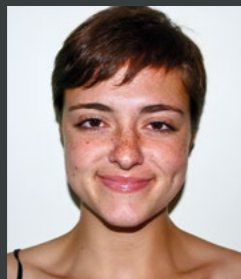
www.charitybakerart.weebly.com
Instagram | @charitylynnbaker



Peter and Natalie

2018

oil on cardboard | 28.25 x 29 inches



Merritt Barnwell

Yale School of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This painting is based on a series of photographs of group portraits I staged last year. I was playing with the idea of feeling disconnected and alienated in a crowd of people. I wanted to create a kind of geometry with the positioning and interaction of the figures. Also, I wanted to capture a casual interaction of figures through a very staged process.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I am currently exploring many different media and combining graphic design, sculpture and painting. I am most interested in figurative art and in depicting the dynamics of interacting figures.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I participated in the exhibit last year and was excited and motivated by the whole experience. It is the only contest I've found that caters to the specific area of art I really identify with, and I loved seeing and meeting all the artists last year. It was an incredible experience and working with the New York Academy of Art also was very special.

What is your background in art?

I have a strong background in figurative art, taking classes in and out of school in sketching and painting the human form. In addition, I have been taking classes in graphic design and sculpture in college.

Instagram | @merritt_barnwell



We Are Your Mirrors

2019

linocut on Mulberry paper | 25 x 37 inches

edition 1 of 6



Claire Bowman

University of Dayton

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This piece is about the tangled relationship women have with their minds, their bodies and each other. Seeing others manifest their insecurities through the process of self-objectification encourages other women to do the same, perpetuating the process of over self-analysis and objectification of the female figure.

How do you describe your work and practice?

Conceptually driven by feminist theory, my work is largely concerned with society's body standards for women. Relief printing reflects these concerns. Cutting into the surface and creating deep, irremovable marks mirror my own and other women's experiences with trying to conform our bodies to society's ideals.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was encouraged by one of my professors to look into the AXA Art Prize since my work is inspired by and concerns the human figure. The prestige of the show, as well as that of the jurors and curators associated with it, further motivated me to apply.

How has your school environment nurtured your practice?

My professors were by far my greatest asset. Through their continued support and encouragement, I was given a space to challenge myself and my work, truly engaging with my concepts in insightful, intelligent ways. Without their help, my work would never have developed to the level it has.

www.clairebowmanstudio.com
Instagram | @clairebowmanstudio



Tangerine

2018

oil, oil pastel, and colored pencil on canvas |
40 x 30 inches



Caley Buck

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Tangerine revisits my undergrad entrance portfolio one year later, exemplifying the growth of my practice since then. Caryatids explore imagery of strong women, literally (each is a stone sculpture). Irregular brushstrokes take a contemporary hammer to the immaculate marbles sculpted by the likes of Rodin and Cordier.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My practice embraces a more eclectic approach, at times teetering on the edge of craft. I frequently use media such as mirrored glass, carved wood and shag rugs. This may lie with my tendencies towards maximalism, the conglomerate result of both my kitschy attitudes and acquiescence to Horror Vacui.

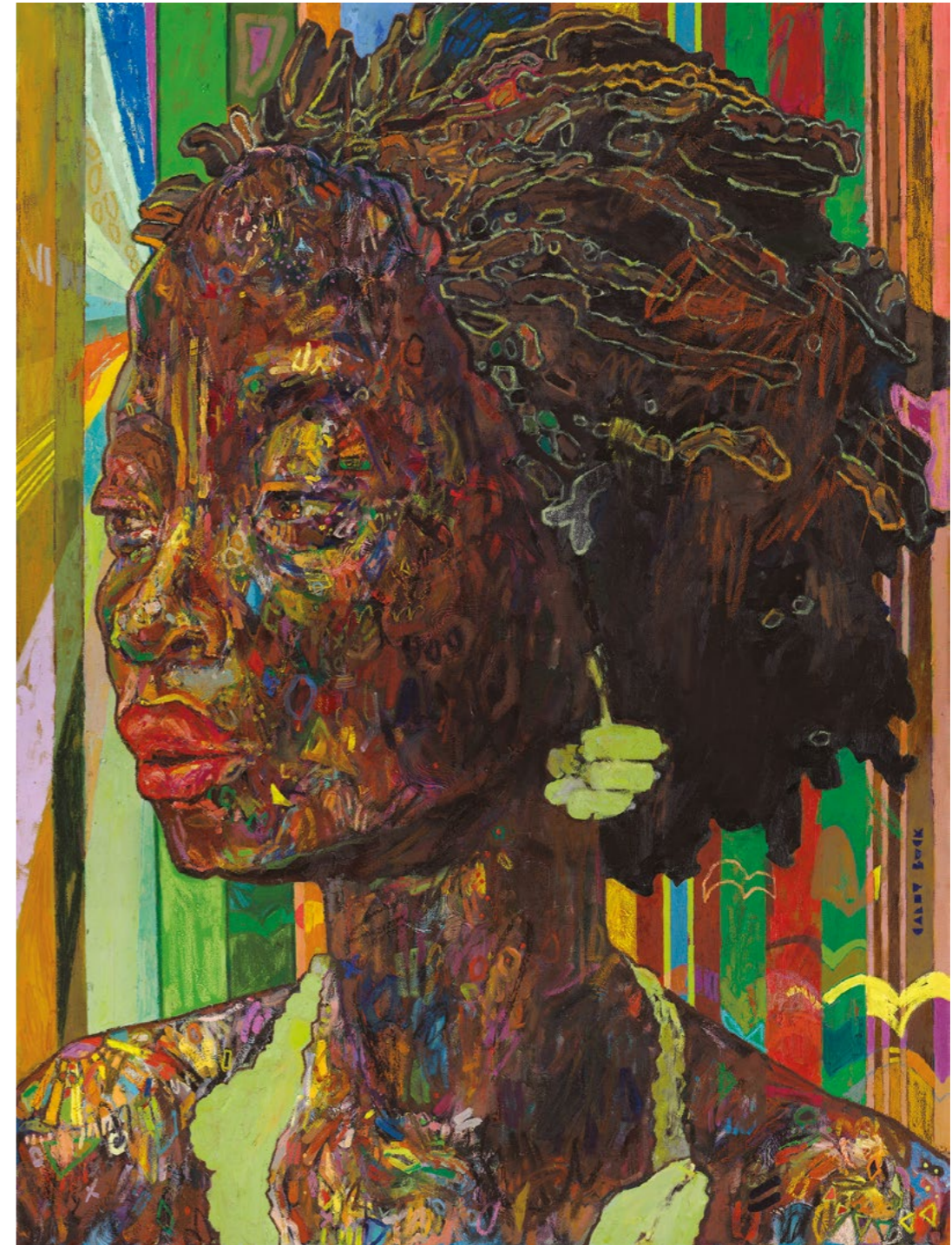
What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

Exposure. Both to such esteemed jurors as well as from the nature of a traveling exhibition. Additionally, I solely work figuratively, so that was awfully convenient.

What themes regularly resurface?

Recently: language, wordplay, me being a fool and trying to deny it, the sincerity of art, etc. I've begun two series of delusionally didactic works. One proposes that the word "several" means precisely "seven" as opposed to the widely upheld, imprecise "many"; the other that "Stephen" should always be spelled "Steven."

www.caleybuck.com
Instagram | @caleybuck



Good Thing You're Pretty

2018

oil on aluminum | 18 x 24 inches



Brooke Catania

Endicott College

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This painting is part of a series exploring how portraiture can empower one to respond confidently to gender-based criticism. *Good Thing You're Pretty* is a self-portrait that depicts my unedited reaction to the type of backhanded compliment alluded to in the title of the piece.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I work primarily with portraiture because I find the human face to be both infinitely fascinating and challenging. In my work, there is always more attention to detail in the eyes, nose and mouth because these are the accents that make a face unique or memorable.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

The information for the AXA Art Prize was sent to me by a professor who always encourages her students to promote themselves confidently as artists. Exposure can be intimidating, but I knew I would be lucky to be considered alongside so many other incredible young artists, regardless of the outcome.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

Figurative work is a way to connect to others on a personal level that is unobtainable in everyday life. There is no greater gift than when another person trusts you to study and represent their most vulnerable possession and show the public how beautiful they are.

www.brookecataniaart.com

Instagram | [@brookecatania_art](https://www.instagram.com/brookecatania_art)



Waiting

2018

oil on linen | 30 x 24 inches

collection of Carla Shen



Susan M B Chen

Columbia University School of the Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

I question ideas of visibility in response to the lack of Asian-American representation in figure paintings within Western art institutions. This painting pays homage to the importance of #representationmatters and the social media phenomenon #subtleasiantraits – a group of millennial Asians across the West yearning to feel inclusion.

How do you describe your work and practice?

By painting portraits of Asian-Americans, I survey members of my racial community to understand the psychology of race and the varying viewpoints on ideas of home, immigration, prejudice, family, identity, longing and loss.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I believe figurative work has the ability to empower one's sense of self-worth. Particularly with Asian-Americans living in a society that rarely shows Asian-American faces in everyday media, I hope exposure from the AXA Art Prize can help a community feel included, accepted, and part of a greater social conversation.

What is your background in art?

As a first-generation American, seeing from both the lens of an ethnic majority in Asia as well as that of a minority in America, I question my own identity and sense of belonging through self-perception. This is in contrast to how society prefers to see me, namely through restrictive personas or stereotypes.

www.susanmbchen.com

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Alienated in the Red Clay Land That Birthed Me, They've Now Crowned Me "the King of No Man's Land"

2019

acrylic on paper | 46 x 35 inches



Joan Daniel Cordova Rodriguez

Lamar Dodd School of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

It is about humanity's constant alienation of "the other," and about this other's struggle to survive in a society that unconsciously strives for homogeneity and assimilation. It deals with the historical and current disenfranchisement of peoples in an abundant yet increasingly fragmented world.

How do you describe your work and practice?

Unaware of my origins, my work exists in the mythology and stories I've created for myself. It is imagined yet reflects our fabricated realities. Regarding my art practice, I consider myself a multimedia creative. Most of my paintings are conceived in my readings and writings, often extracted from my daydreams and personal experiences.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was motivated by the desire for my work to reach a wider audience and to ignite conversations in a world that seems to hear but rarely listens. I dream of partaking in the global art conversation and developing a sustainable art practice. The AXA Art Prize seemed to be a step closer to realizing those dreams.

What inspires your work?

Stories told generation after generation, from my great-grandmother to my mother, to my siblings and I, have provided the fundamental fuel for much of my work. I am also deeply interested in the elevation of vernacular visual expressions, world mythology, politics, sex, equality, humanity's power to create realities and futures, the magic in nature and the many manifestations of god(s).

Instagram | @thicclouds_ininkblotest0.0



María Dolores

2018

acrylic on wood shipping pallet | 41 x 42 inches



Arlene Correa Valencia

California College of the Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This painting was inspired by my inability to travel outside of the United States. As an immigrant and DREAMer, I am confined to the borders of this country. Thinking about the importation and exportation of goods, the labor industry in this country, and my own immigrant experience, I was excited to paint a portrait of someone who, like myself, is confined to a physical space: the shipping pallet.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My practice is mainly focused on my personal history in the United States. I use my artwork as a platform to openly discuss the complexities of human migration.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was intrigued by the AXA Art Prize and felt it was appropriate for the portraiture that I am currently investigating.

How do you approach a new work?

My work stems from my desire to prove my existence in the United States, so when approaching new bodies of artwork, it's crucial that this translation is properly examined. I create new works with the hope of properly illustrating human emotions and honoring the pain and resilience of my immigrant community.

www.correavalencia.com

Instagram | @arleenieeee



This Is Not Basquiat

2018

acrylic on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Alexandria Couch

The University of Akron

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This piece responds to my internal struggle, as a person of color, to piece together an identity in environments riddled with imposed expectations and notions from society. These notions extend as far as certain features being the primary identifier for a particular person or ethnic group.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I would define my work as constantly growing and evolving. The more experiences I have, the more my work changes, and this ranges from technical to conceptual ideas. I am an avid sketchbook keeper, and I find that often within the same sketchbook, I make wide jumps between pages.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I received a flyer at a printmaking conference and after researching the AXA Art Prize itself, I concluded that having the opportunity to have professional curators and artists review your work this early in an artistic career is irreplaceable. I thought, "Why not give it a shot?"

How has your school environment nurtured your practice?

The school I attend offers several unique learning and traveling opportunities that students are open to pay and compete for. I have also been lucky to travel with them twice out of the country for free, which were experiences that greatly affected the evolution of my work.

Instagram | @cosmocouch



Reach New Heights I

2017

acrylic on canvas | 48 x 38 inches



Chloe Crawford

Mason Gross School of the Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This work uses an image posted online by someone using the screenname “Artificer4”—one of several artists creating digital images of (mainly white) physically disabled women for sexual purposes. The raw canvas at the top indicates where I could no longer reach, as I painted this work from my wheelchair.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My work is about public and private aspects of disability, including access, identity and knowledge. These “reach” paintings explore a performative and perceived helplessness while critiquing the standard height at which artworks in a gallery or museum typically hang.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was motivated to apply because although I don’t often create figurative work, the disabled body is central to my practice. I am always motivated by the desire to make sure disability is represented in every exhibition.

What inspires your work?

Inspiration is a fraught idea for disabled people, as our regular lives are often taken as extraordinary feats of inspiration. Yet in my art practice, working towards a better future for disabled artists is my greatest inspiration, especially for those without the same access to opportunities that I have as a white woman.

www.chloepascalcrawford.com



Sunbonnet Sue

2019

oil on paper | 22 x 30 inches



Katie Croft

Pratt Institute

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Sunbonnet Sue is a work featuring my daughter. The work was born out of series of portraits of her and questions the cultural ideals and norms of matrilineal heritage and explores how young women form their identity both independent of and deeply connected to their mothers and their family history. As I was creating the work, I was hoping to convey the pride, independence and strength of the girls of her generation while acknowledging the battles that she will have to continue to fight to gain equality in a male-dominated society. With the use of the *Sunbonnet Sue* quilt pattern, I hoped to show respect to the women of previous generations that fought the battles that came before me and that allow my daughter to be who she wants to be, how she wants to be.

How do you describe your work and practice?

Figurative realism with a focus on feminine family narratives and social structures.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was excited by the jury panel and interested to see how my work would compare to work by other students painting in a similar way.

What inspires your work?

My work is inspired by feminine family dynamics and my role as a daughter, mother and wife. I am also curious about generational shifts in the ideas, values and norms of what it means to be a girl and a woman.

www.katiecroftart.com

Instagram | [@katiecroftart](https://www.instagram.com/katiecroftart)



Don't Touch Me, I Am Sensitive

2018

oil on panel | 23.75 inches diameter



Josie Del Castillo

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

I used myself to reflect my emotional sensitivity by depicting myself as a cactus, a symbol that is commonly used in Mexican-American culture. The cactus's thorns form a silhouette around my body to create a defense mechanism. The prickly pear necklace symbolizes the sweetness of my heart, but it also has small thorns to protect itself as well.

How do you describe your work and practice?

Most of my paintings consist of self-portraits and portraits of friends that can also be portrayed as self-reflections. Throughout my paintings, I incorporate iconography of my bi-cultural background, such as plants and textiles that are common along the U.S.-Mexico border. I portray my friends with confidence and in the process of healing. And some self-portraits consist of nudity. Painting myself nude helps me appreciate my body, and hopefully will help inspire other women to appreciate their bodies.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I am trying to expand my exhibitions outside the state of Texas, and this was the greatest opportunity for art students.

What inspires your work?

My work is inspired by my Mexican-American culture, understanding my mental health, and learning to appreciate my body. As I make art, I am learning to appreciate my roots, the struggles of having anxiety and insecurities and hoping to overcome body issues.

www.josiedelcastillo.com

Instagram | @josieleila



Gatekeeper II

2019

acrylic, charcoal, collaged paper, colored pencil,
and pastel on canvas | 56 x 56 inches



Michael Loren Diaz

Arizona State University

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This piece is part of a body of work titled *Limbo*. It is the second version of three that utilize the same motifs and devices. All three explore the psychological spaces of the introspective mind and attempt to grapple with the idea that humans are simply machines.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I make no distinction between drawing and painting; both are about using the illusion of form and space to express one's thoughts. I use this activity of drawing and painting as a tool for introspective contemplation and hope that my work will continually grow and change.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

It is important for me to have my artwork critically judged by art professionals, so I applied for the AXA Art Prize because of the distinguished jury.

How do you approach a new work?

My process is intuitive and generally starts with a simple gesture. I take information from observation and then mix it up through multiple drawings. As the idea begins to come together, I allow it to shift and change even as I start to work on the final canvas.

www.MLDiaz.com

Instagram | [@M_L_Diaz](https://www.instagram.com/M_L_Diaz)



El Paraíso Perdido Será Siempre El Paraíso

2019

oil on canvas | 40 x 34 inches



María Fragoso

Maryland Institute College of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This work depicts a moment of intimacy and sharing, where touch and emotions such as desire are fundamental to exploring the relationships between the figures depicted. The interaction between these and the rest of the imagery introduces a dualistic tension between a sense of pleasure and pain, desire and guilt, aggression and tenderness.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My practice is primarily figurative painting, as well as drawing, printmaking and ceramics. My paintings blur the line between reality and the uncanny, where art historical references can encounter my personal history in order to engage with notions of cultural identity, gender and sexuality.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I have close friends who have been part of the exhibitions in the past years, which motivated me to participate. Also, I was motivated by the opportunity to discover other artists working in contemporary figurative painting and being able to be part of the conversations that the exhibitions might originate.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

In art history, I am drawn to the figure in paintings and pay attention to the interactions that exist between them. In my work, I look to recreate and reinterpret these relationships, as an opportunity to question notions and roles of cultural identity, gender, sexuality, love, sex and religion.

www.mariafragoso.com
Instagram | @mariafragosoj



Caravan

2018

ink on paper | 30 x 40 inches



Alex Gerasev

Lesley University College of Art and Design

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This piece addresses displacement, alienation and instability, and the forces that cause those conditions. It was inspired by my own family history of forced migration; current events at the US-Mexico border; and the impact of climate change.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My work addresses the themes of immigration/migration and climate change and is rooted in the stories and struggles of my family, my community and the world. I approach these themes using an ambiguous visual language that employs both figurative and surreal elements.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

For me, figurative work is the most powerful way to share stories of the human condition. The AXA Art Prize helps ensure that this way of working is recognized as a valid component of the contemporary art world.

What themes regularly resurface?

My work focuses on the themes of undertaking a journey, being an outsider, nostalgia, longing and alienation. I ask: Who has a place in this world and who does not? What is that place? What are the factors and conditions that determine the status of a person or a community?

www.alexgerasev.com



Blood and Black Slumber Party Massacre

2019

oil on wood | 22 x 48 inches



Georgia Hinaris

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

It features images from the films *Blood and Black Lace*, *Slumber Party Massacre* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I collage horror stills as a launching point to explorations of expressive surrealism in cinematic compositions.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

The AXA Art Prize is an opportunity for my work to be shown around the country.

How do you approach a new work?

I have no set approach. In the beginning, I work very fast and loose; after that, I fluctuate between fast and slow movements or whatever I feel will best suit the composition. Everything happens in the moment and it's all improvised and experimental.

www.georgiahinaris.com

Instagram | @georgiahinaris



Adam

2019

oil on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Lanise Howard

Otis College of Art and Design

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

The work is part of a series of works on censorship and assimilation. In the work, his hair is pixelated using a type of digital codification; “censoring” his hair in order to spark a conversation about the censorship of African-American hair in society

How do you describe your work and practice?

I see myself as a figurative artist whose work often focuses on different narratives. Often these narratives are first found in my dreams, while at other times they are influenced by our world and its histories. My practice is mostly concerned with deciphering these nuances and conveying them in an honest and layered way.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

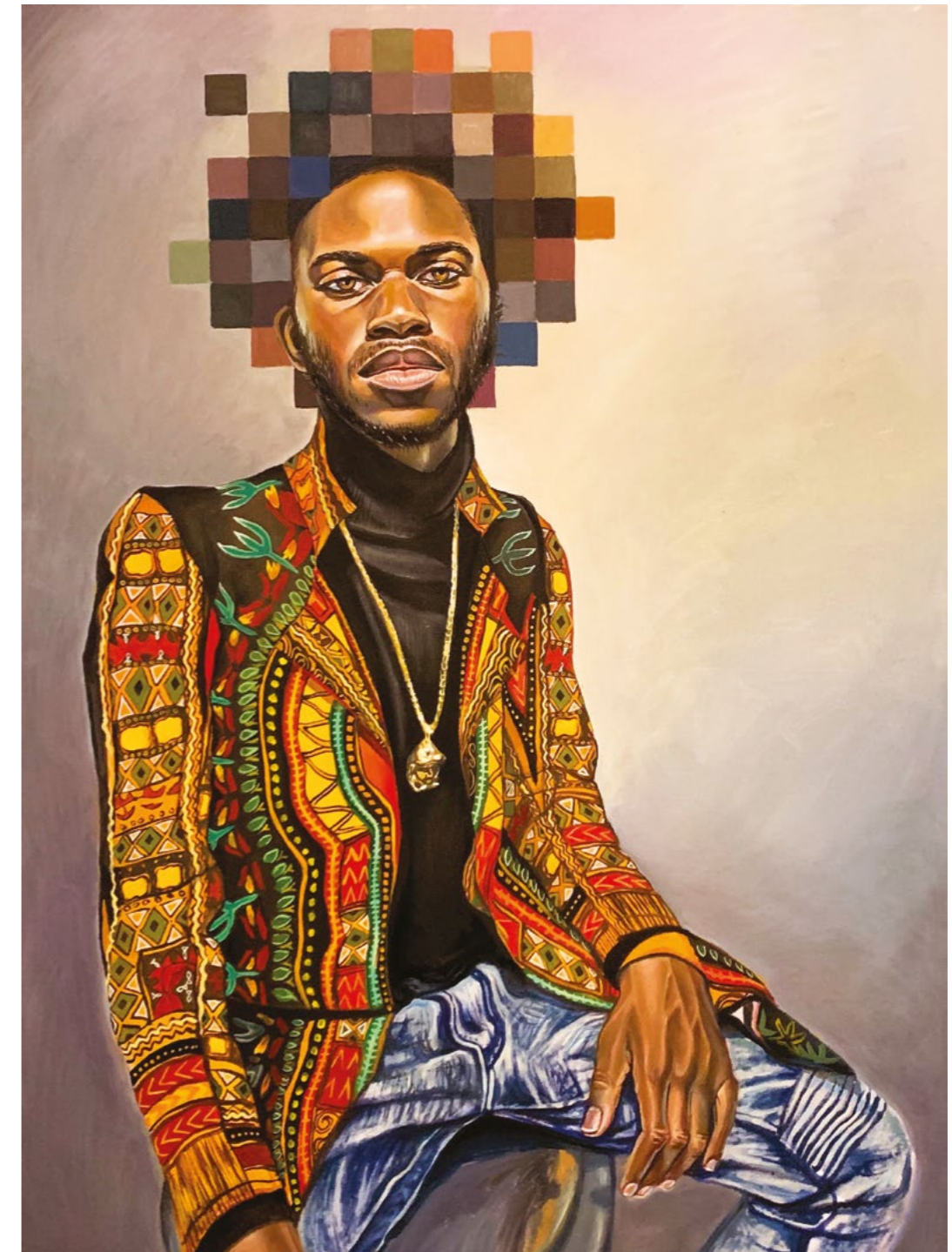
I thought the work from last year was great and that it would be an amazing opportunity, if selected, to show my work in a space which welcomes artists like myself.

How do you approach a new work?

Recently I’ve been working on works that have to do with the human race assimilating with one another and with technology. I think that we are approaching the singularity, where the idea of what makes a person human will be put into question. I think about how we as humans will approach this reality.

www.lanisehoward.com

Instagram | [@lanise_howard_art](https://www.instagram.com/lanise_howard_art)



Carolyn Bryant Donham

2018

ink on canvas | 31 x 23 inches



Maggie Hubbard

University of Illinois at Chicago

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Her face goes widely unrecognized, despite being the white woman whose word led to the brutal lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till. This is Carolyn Bryant Donham in 1955, sitting in the courtroom where her husband and his half-brother were acquitted of their crimes against Till by an all-white jury.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I utilize painting and drawing as a way of questioning and knowing. Starting from a point of personal narrative, I then depict objects and spaces that contain political and social connections. My illustrative renderings aim to capture the psychological residue of whiteness in middle-class America.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was forwarded the opportunity by my advisor, Dianna Frid.

What themes regularly resurface?

Grief is a driving force for me; I see it as admitting powerlessness. Grief is seeing forces that are too daunting or impossible to change; seeing those forces for what they are and positioning oneself accordingly. It's an acknowledgment and a practice of being present to reality.

www.maggiehubbard.net

Instagram | @maggie_hubbard



How Do You Spell My Name?

2018

oil on linen | 36 x 32 inches



Ericka Jeffries

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

How Do You Spell My Name? is a love letter to my mother. The realistic aspects of the painting are grounded in a bathroom from the 90s, while identifiable forms transition into different colors and patterns to describe our emotional and spiritual bond.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My art practice typically depicts girlhood and the confusing nature of nostalgia coupled with emotional traumas.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

Seeing how beautiful the show was last year when it toured to New York Academy of Art, made me want to apply this year in hopes of being part of it. The show was filled with so much talent and voice. I was in awe of what other artists are accomplishing in the realm of contemporary figurative painting.

What themes regularly resurface?

The most common themes you can find in my paintings are girlhood, childhood, agriculture, domestic objects, aspects of rainstorms and acidic colors.

www.erickajeffries.com

Instagram | [@ericka_jeffries_art](https://www.instagram.com/ericka_jeffries_art)



When Sugar was Queen #2

2018

oil, spray paint, gold leaf, vinyl, and gesso
on paper | 44 x 30 inches

courtesy of the artist and Susanne Fredrix



Leasho Johnson

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

The piece alludes to the idea of European colonial ventures capturing and archiving the “wildness” of the New World, and colonists’ simultaneous obsession with separating themselves from nature, deeming anything outside of Europe as uncivilized and primitive.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I describe my work as social commentary but also as an exercise in humor. My practice takes a character I call an avatar that is part invention, part ministerial illustration, and part pop culture. I use the character as an index through which to explore contemporary and historical notions around race and gender.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I’m usually afraid of validation through competition, as I’m fully aware of what it might do to my confidence and my audience. I believe this opportunity may provide my work with a valuable stepping stone to the next frontier in my artistic journey.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

The body is an import site for discourse as it relates to me both as a person of color and as a male navigating history, sexuality, beliefs, gender, identity and a post-colonial space.

www.leashojohnson.com

Instagram | @leasho_johnson



Our Roots

2018

pen and marker on paper | 23 x 18 inches



Jocelyn Khosla

California College of the Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

While sitting in the woods last summer, I felt as though I was part of the Earth for a moment. We are all part of the land and will always be connected to it in a vital way.

How do you describe your work and practice?

By creating art, I look for visual answers to understand the world around me and myself.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

It seemed to be a good opportunity to further my practice, and I appreciate the care and thoughtfulness that went into how it was organized.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

To me, figurative work often acts as a mirror. While we may not fully understand or empathize with the figure in the picture, the conclusions we draw from trying to make a connection give us insight into who we are as individuals.

Instagram | @jocelynkhosla

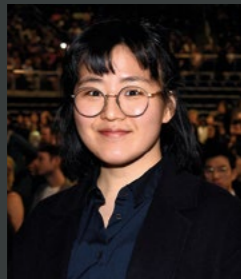


Profile

2017

lithograph on Rives BFK paper | 22 x 22 inches

edition 5 of 15



Jin Lee

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This print is a self-portrait of a female artist who has always been curious about her “unfeminine” face. This image brings up the problem of the rampant stereotypes about sexual and gender roles in society.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My art is the result of questioning the existence of my life and living in the society of this era.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I found it fascinating that one of the best insurance companies supports emerging artists. The artists who have just hatched from their schools are supported by the passion of insurance customers who want to protect their family, loved ones and themselves. Also, it is a nice opportunity to get critiques by art experts.

What inspires your work?

I am inspired by the time, space and circumstances in which I am situated and the materiality of the tools that I use. I create objects which project my struggles at that point in my life.

www.jinleeart.com

Instagram | @jin_eee



School Girls No. 1

2017

oil on canvas | 29.5 x 31.5 inches



Kathryn Mecca

Tyler School of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

School Girls No. 1 was created in Santa Barbara, California, where I began to focus on the use of color and surface texture as reductive tools. This shift of focus began with this painting and continues in my current work.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My up-close yet simplified portrayals of the human figure are both alienating and intimate. Currently, my work is expanding beyond painting and into a series of figurative sculptures that use the same language to achieve a similar effect.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

To participate in the conversation that is happening in figurative art today.

What is your background in art?

I have always been interested in people and am fascinated by the process of breaking down social interaction. I studied both visual art and sociology at Rutgers, ultimately focusing on painting. I found painting as a way of exploring more nuanced elements of social exchange that might go unnoticed. As a medium, it allows me to engage in the more quiet or hidden elements.

www.kathrynmecca.com

Instagram | [@katmecca](https://www.instagram.com/katmecca)



Self-Portrait after Jaw Surgery in Leipzig

2018

charcoal on paper | 48 x 36 inches



Luisiana Mera

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This drawing is a self-portrait depicting myself in my most vulnerable moment. I had a bad bicycle accident. It was my first surgery and my first hospitalization, and I happened to be away from family and loved ones. Plus, it all happened in Leipzig, Germany, while in an artist residency.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I describe my work as sincere and pure. At the moment, I draw only what means the most to me in my life, which is why I only draw loved ones. I draw them always in their quotidian life, drawing who they are as they are naturally. I do not stage or arrange or choose their clothing; everything I draw is what was already happening.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I participated last year and saw the curators and judges from this year, and I really wanted to have the opportunity for them to see my work.

What is your background in art?

Working with the figure is absolutely my favorite because what matters most to me in life is people. Nothing else in my life can bring me more joy than being with people. Without loved ones nothing really matters, so I am always inspired to portray figures and bring their presence to life in my drawings. I also believe that the human body is the most complex and beautiful subject there is.

www.luisimera.com

Instagram | @luisimera



Girl

2018

oil on board | 24 x 24 inches



Naomi Nevo Ben Ari

University of Hartford

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

The light from the window changed her ear color to a luminous orange. That is how it started. I realize there is a narrative that may come to mind because of the subject matter, the composition, the clay art or her expression, but I think an artist should leave that to the viewer's imagination and interpretation.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I like to touch the surface and explore paint consistency, color and brush motion as I apply the paint in layers in order to create vibration and mood.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

Last year Hirokazu Fukawa, a professor at my school, and Ying Ye, a fellow student, told me about it and encouraged me to apply, and I also decided to try again this year.

How do you approach a new work?

I am always trying new surfaces, materials and ways of working. Sometimes, like with this painting, I combine methods of working and paint partly from life, partly using photos, and also from sketches and memory.

Instagram | @naominba



Woman Holding A Goat

2018

oil and acrylic on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Uzo Njoku

University of Virginia

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Woman Holding A Goat is an example of the Women's Liberation Movement. It embodies my style of work, which is to push women to the forefront of their narratives by using shadow to add depth and by juxtaposing the women's skin with bright background colors.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I would describe it as more socially based. I paint in hopes of making an impact in the community.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I felt it would be an amazing opportunity to connect with other artists and administrators.

What is your background in art?

I switched majors from Statistics to Studio Art during my second year in college. It was a huge challenge, especially coming from a heavily STEM-influenced family, but it made me work harder. If I was not sleeping, eating or in class, I was painting.

www.uzoart.com

Instagram | [@uzo.art](https://www.instagram.com/uzo.art)



All of Our Daughters

2019

charcoal and newspaper on hand-toned paper |
50 x 38 inches

collection of Derick Brown and Ron Temple



Headshot image courtesy
of Freddie Rankin II

Prinston Nnanna

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

The work that I've submitted, *All of Our Daughters*, is a charcoal drawing on hand-toned paper. Its focus is on the connection and relationship that mothers and daughters share.

How do you describe your work and practice?

A single work communicates with its audience. Collectively my works communicate with themselves. These works are to depict the elegance of the Black figure and reconstruct the image in which society has painted people of color. Through the eye of my ancestors I create what was and will be.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

What motivated me to apply for the AXA Art Prize was knowing that art has its own frequency. Being part of a traveling exhibition, the work can connect with a wider audience.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

The best thing about creating figurative works is that it's timeless. I create and recreate moments, pulling from my childhood and uplifting future generations.

Instagram | @itaddy



Grim Pedagogy

2018

oil on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Jackson O'Brasky

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Grim Pedagogy was my attempt to describe the mechanisms through which the military-industrial complex pervades our lives and indoctrinates our students, resulting in mass violence both abroad and at home.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I am painting after the end of the world. Using representational techniques in the surrealist mode, my work crafts allegorical narratives to reveal the ghosts of civilization and its discontents.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I think of my work as figurative, and I was interested in securing my work's inclusion in a conversation about figurative art.

What inspires your work?

My work is inspired by the relationship between climate change and capitalism, and the loss of social cohesion that has arisen as a result of that relationship.

www.jacksonobrasky.com

Instagram | @jackson_obrasky



E-Money

2019

linocut on paper | 12 x 9 inches

edition 1 of 6



Zoë Papini

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This is a portrait of my dear friend Erika. She has consistently motivated me throughout my artistic journey. I sought to encapsulate the genuine nature of her personality and transmit it into this print, in the hopes that the viewer may experience it for themselves.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I am a portrait painter. My work is strongly rooted in my social relationships. Each piece is inspired by the individual who is being depicted. I capture the essence of my subjects while taking liberties with my color choices to incite a more intense psychological reaction from the viewer.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

This is my second time applying for the AXA Art Prize. I believe this is a great platform for an emerging artist, fresh out of grad school, to showcase their art and reach a wider audience.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

I am inspired by the way figurative art transcends the picture plane and enters into our world. We are social creatures and I believe there is something special about the way we connect with depictions of the human figure. We see ourselves. Each viewer creates their own psychological interpretation.

Instagram | @zowedaartist



Parent Teacher Conference

2019

charcoal and graphite on paper | 43 x 29 inches

private collection



Anna Park

New York Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Presenting (left to right): Veronica, Gus, Carol, and Jack. Carol is a recent divorcee and wants to just have fun. Her best friend Veronica looks longingly past her husband, Gus, because she has been madly in love with Carol for the past three years. Jack came with the intention of getting some action from Carol, but we see how that's going for him.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I rarely plan out my pieces, but rather allow the instinctual response to take over when the charcoal hits the paper. To have the end result be unknown is what keeps me excited to go into the studio every day. The sets of problems that are waiting to be resolved and the constant dialogue I have with the piece is something that I find to be the most rewarding.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I felt that applying to the AXA Art Prize would be a wonderful opportunity to present this continuing dialogue of what contemporary figurative drawing can be. I hope to share and generate the same excitement about the medium of drawing through my work.

What inspires your work?

I want to present the side of ourselves that emerges when we remove the curated facade of what is deemed "acceptable" by societal standards, capturing a moment of getting rid of our inhibitions and letting our natural tendencies take over.

www.annaparkart.com

Instagram | @annaparkart



See Me

2019

oil and ink on canvas | 60 x 50 inches



Laurel Richardson

Parsons School of Design

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

See Me addresses the persecution of black and brown men and youth in today's current political climate. It prompts viewers to have a different vantage point into the way we view a black body as a subject. Perhaps through the eyes of a child, we can recognize one's innocence and divinity.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I have an interdisciplinary practice in painting, installation and performance. My work covers social issues concerning those who are marginalized. I explore personal identity and the racial history of African-American communities and the diaspora while seeking to empower the subjects of my work and to create change.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

The AXA Art Prize has been a great platform for an emerging artist working with the figure. Given the current political and social climate in America, I felt an urgency to address the way society treats certain individuals. I wanted to share this image with as many viewers as possible.

What inspires your work?

I am inspired by people I encounter in my community, as well as by the knowledge of history and the chance to have a positive impact. I believe the subject or concept in art can have a powerful voice, and as artists we have the tools to activate change.

www.laurelrichardson.com
Instagram | @laurelarichardson



Metamorphosis

2019

acrylic on canvas | 48 x 48 inches



Destiny Ryan

Columbus College of Art and Design

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

I created this painting during a prolonged bipolar mania. For me, it is an honest representation of untreated mental illness. I see the figures as a humorous metaphor for a kind of brutal emergence from a chrysalis: the upright figure taking over and leaving behind a shell.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I make vibrant paintings and sculptures, featuring cartoonish, anatomical figures, to articulate my experience with being inside of a human body. By combining cheerful colors and child-like aspects with morbid psychological themes, I aim to elicit conflicting feelings of amusement and discomfort.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was motivated by the idea of having my painting displayed at distinguished galleries in three influential art communities. I am also interested in seeing how a wider public, outside of my college, will respond to my piece.

What themes regularly resurface?

Trauma and mental illness are recurring themes in my work, in addition to existentialism and the human condition. I intend for my work to spread awareness of the reality of mental illness while being relatable and comforting to those who suffer from mental illness.

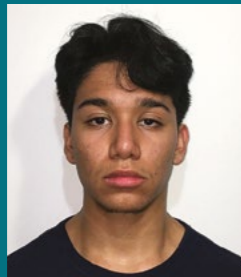
Instagram | @destiny.ryan.art



La Familia Rodriguez

2018

acrylic on canvas | 34 x 44 inches



Victor Manuel Salinas

Fashion Institute of Technology

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

La Familia Rodriguez is a representation of a Mexican-American family. There are many different attitudes people have towards Hispanics and Latinos, but I wanted to reflect my point of view.

How do you describe your work and practice?

The paintings and drawings I produce often reflect the state of mind I was in during the making of the artwork. For instance, one painting may have a more sophisticated/traditional appeal due to a formulaic approach, whereas another work may be composed of wild brush strokes due to an abstract emotion. Nonetheless, I believe every artist takes an intuitive approach as it may reflect their intentions. For example, I may paint with the intent to practice, relieve or impress, or to simply paint for the sake of painting.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

Coming across this opportunity was a blessing. I was attracted by the opportunity for my artwork to be exhibited, like (last year's winner) Monica Ikegwu.

What inspires your work?

When you're young, you're naive and dream of hopefully achieving wealth, strength or happiness. However, as you live you learn from various experiences with friends, family, strangers and yourself. Those lessons learned may be good or bad, but they're essential to building your character. Life is what inspires me to create because I want to share what I've learned and what I believe ethically, spiritually and artistically. I don't create to boast but prefer to compose my ideas and make them a reality in order to hopefully communicate with viewers.

Instagram | @vickblicks



Father at Age 53

2018

woodcut relief print on Rives BFK paper |
19.5 x 25.5 inches

edition 3 of 9



Jusun Seo

San Francisco Art Institute

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This woodcut piece is a scene of my father working at his office. He is an immigrant, head of household, father, husband and brave person.

How do you describe your work and practice?

In my works, I mostly capture people whom I know, love and admire. Recreating the visual image by painting and also carving my memories is my way of capturing them and exposing their lives to the surface.

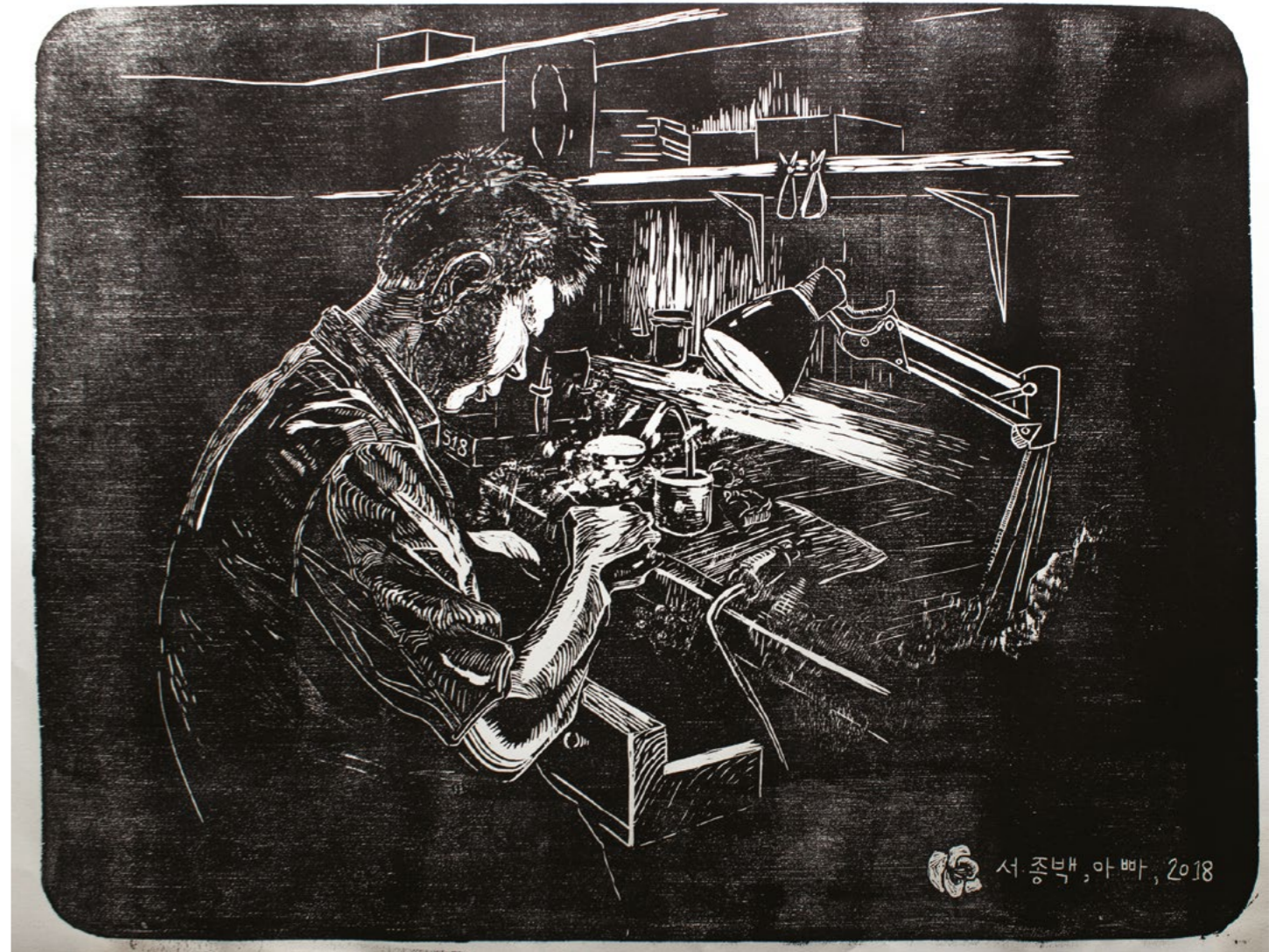
What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

The AXA Art Prize exhibition was held at my school last year and viewing the exhibition motivated me to apply this year.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

Figurative artwork reflects when, what and how we live in society and on earth right now. Finding this society and its thinking in figurative work is the most inspiring to me.

Instagram | @jessie9524



Sam

2019

oil and acrylic on canvas | 54.5 x 60 inches



Lauren Sitarchuk

University of the Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

The piece is a portrait I did of a fellow classmate and artist in his studio. I was interested in capturing the artist in his intimate and private work environment.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My work is constantly attempting to capture the essence of people and the essence of contemporary culture. My practice is informed primarily by cultural theory, philosophy and psychology.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

My professor told me about the AXA Art Prize. I thought my work would fit perfectly with the requirements, and I was interested in making a big leap into getting my artwork out into the world.

What inspires your work?

Human psychology and psychoanalytic theory. Pretty much all of the literature and theorists I'm interested in can be traced back to Freud. I am also constantly inspired by the people I know and use their quirks as a springboard for my paintings.

www.laurensitarchuk.com

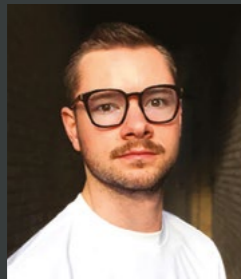
Instagram | @laurensitarchukart



Erickson and Gabe

2017

acrylic on canvas | 48 x 48 inches



Andrew Snow

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

It is the simple, subdued moments in relationships that I love to capture; those moments your friends and loved ones do not notice you are there. *Erickson and Gabe* is about capturing a moment I never want to forget and is my way of memorializing the two of them.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My work is about my relationship to and with others. Exploring and expressing all facets of relationships with partners, lovers, friends and fleeting experiences with strangers; I want my work to be timeless and to exist and be connected with long after I am gone.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

Applying for the AXA Art Prize seemed to be a big marker in my current studio art career. It was also a way to get a point of view on how my paintings are perceived outside of my program, as well as a stepping stone to future exhibitions.

How has your school environment nurtured your practice?

My new school environment made me contemplate why I felt what I was creating needed to be a painting. I started to rethink how I could express my intimate and confessional subject matter in a more streamlined manner. Now I am exploring and creating pieces I consider self-portraits in other media.

www.andrewsnowart.com

Instagram | [@andrew.snow](https://www.instagram.com/andrew.snow)



Clementine Hunter

2019

oil and acrylic on canvas | 48 x 36 inches



Valerie Suter

Mason Gross School of the Arts

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

I made this painting after encountering the work of Clementine Hunter while visiting New Orleans. I was responding to and exploring a connection I felt to the artist through her work and thinking about how a portrait could be used to critique the conventions of portraiture within an art historical context.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I explore and seek to bring to life subjects that have been historically underrepresented in visual culture. Mining wide-ranging histories and drawing from portraiture, iconography, literature, WPA-era murals and other sources, I make paintings as a way to interrogate conventions and the status quo and to shine a light on under-represented subjects.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

I was excited about the opportunity for my work to be seen by the distinguished jurors and potentially by a national audience. I was particularly excited about the potential for this painting to be seen by a broader audience so that many more people might know and appreciate Clementine Hunter and her work.

What themes regularly resurface?

My interest in making the invisible visible continually emerges thematically in my paintings, as they call attention to unseen or under-recognized people and the gravity of their stories. In all of my work, I try to get inside my subjects, to probe their inner lives and amplify their voices, and ultimately offer a connection with that elusive, invisible thing that some might call a soul.

www.valeriesuter.com

Instagram | [@valeriesuter](https://www.instagram.com/valeriesuter)



Blue Dream

2018

oil on canvas | 36 x 36 inches



Adam Wever-Glen

University of California, Davis

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

Blue Dream articulates moments of awareness to the present. The portrait of Dagney Hollmann connects to the viewer through the direct, piercing eye contact. This interaction creates an intense moment of quiet presence, which is emphasized by the undisturbed blue gradient background.

How do you describe your work and practice?

My process involves researching a variety of contemporary and historical visual media. I create with the intention of communicating the ineffable; finding those quiet, present moments that can only be known and not spoken.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

As a painter, I have spent years honing my craft and seeking out possibilities for growth. The AXA Art Prize is an opportunity for me to compare my work with that of my contemporaries.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

The image of the figure has an incredible ability to communicate human experience, particularly our experiences with other people, which makes for great storytelling. Figurative painting's visual language has the ability to teach us about ourselves.

www.adamweverglen.com
Instagram | @adamweverglen



Sparky

2018

oil on masonite | 36 x 24 inches



Rhealin Wlos

American Academy of Art

Tell us about the work that you have submitted.

This piece is about work versus passion. Working allows people to exist and survive. There's a pride in it, but there's also the need for expression. In this painting, I juxtaposed a construction worker with a memory of what comes after work – a celebration of freedom and having a steady job.

How do you describe your work and practice?

I describe my work as very detail-oriented. I try to incorporate a story behind every piece to engage the viewer, showing the work as not only a painting but as an experience or emotion to which viewers can relate.

What motivated you to apply to the AXA Art Prize?

What motivated me to apply to the AXA Art Prize was the encouragement of one of my professors at the American Academy of Art. Only figurative work was being accepted in the AXA Art Prize. That interested me because one of my favorite subjects to paint is the figure.

What about figurative work do you find particularly inspiring?

What I find particularly inspiring about figurative work is that you can create a strong sense of drama. The figure is very expressive, with an intense amount of emotion behind the features. Varied layers of reality can be created within the work and can be compared to any given situation.

www.rhealin.com

Instagram | [@rhealin_wlos](https://www.instagram.com/rhealin_wlos)



Juries

Regional Jury

Gregory Amenoff
Ruth Bolduan

Charles Browning
Robert Campbell
Maia Chachava
Zoë Charlton
Jay Coogan
Lisa Corinne Davis
Maggie Denk-Leigh
Peter Drake
Fritz Drury
Robert Dunning
Christian Fagerlund
Anne Gaines
Maureen Garvin
Matthew Gaynor
Mira Gerard
Arthur Gonzalez
Robin Hill
Clint Jukkala
Arnold Kemp
Martin Kruck
Nancy Mladenoff
Margaret Morrison
David Pagel
Sara Pedigo
Shawn Powell
Howard Quednau
Hope Railey
Joe Santore
Dan Scott
Tony Shore
Joseph Smith
Taravat Talepasand

Columbia University
Virginia Commonwealth University
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Cornish College of the Arts
Central Washington University
American University
IYRS School of Technology and Trades
Hunter College
Cleveland Institute of Art
New York Academy of Art
Rhode Island School of Design
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University of North Texas
Parsons School of Design
Savannah College of Art and Design
Kansas State University
East Tennessee State University
California College of the Arts
University of California, Davis
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
New Jersey City University
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Lamar Dodd School of Art
Claremont Graduate University
Flagler College
Kent State University
Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Laguna College of Art and Design
Bard College
Boise State University
Maryland Institute College of Art
Pratt Institute
San Francisco Art Institute

Exhibition Jury

Ian Alteveer
Massimiliano Gioni
Jennie Goldstein
Cara Manes

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New Museum
Whitney Museum of American Art
The Museum of Modern Art

Prize Jury

Sanford Biggers
Will Cotton
John Currin
Tschabalala Self
Jennifer Schipf

Exhibitions

San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco
Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago IL
New York Academy of Art, New York

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Contributing essayist

David Ebony

David Ebony is a contributing editor of *Art in America* and previously was its managing editor, part of an association with the magazine that spans more than 25 years. He is also a featured columnist for Yale University Press online and artnet News, and is a senior editor at SNAP Editions, a firm specializing in fine-art publications.

David studied art history and media and communications at the University of Madrid, Spain and has an MA in art history from Hunter College, New York. An adjunct professor of art history and theory at the New York Academy of Art since 2014, David Ebony is a longtime member of AICA, the Association internationale des critiques d'art. The author of numerous artist monographs, he lives and works in New York.

Prize Jurors

Sanford Biggers

Sanford Biggers (b. 1970) was raised in Los Angeles and currently lives and works in New York City. He was awarded the 2017 Rome Prize in Visual Arts. He has had solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Missouri; the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Michigan (2016); the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams (2012); and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2011), among others. His work has been shown in several institutional group exhibitions including at the Menil Collection, Houston (2008) and the Tate Modern, London (2007), as well as in recent exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2017) and the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia (2017). Biggers' work is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.; the Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; and the Legacy Museum, Montgomery, among others.

Will Cotton

Will Cotton (b. 1965) was born in Melrose, Massachusetts and raised in New Paltz, New York. He has a BFA from Cooper Union in New York City. His work often explores themes of gluttony, beauty and desire. His paintings are in the permanent collections of the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Seattle Art Museum, Washington; the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; and the Orlando Museum of Art, Florida, as well as in many prominent private collections. Cotton served as the artistic director of the *California Gurls* music video for pop singer Katy Perry and his works are the subject of a monograph published by Rizzoli, USA. He has been represented by Mary Boone Gallery in New York since 1999.

John Currin

John Currin (b. 1962) was born in Boulder, Colorado, and lives and works in New York. He holds an MFA from Yale University, New Haven, and a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh. With inspirations as diverse as Old Master portraits, obscure stock photography, pornography and B movies, Currin paints perverse depictions of women and men, alone and in pairs and groups. A consistent thread throughout his work is the search for an equilibrium between the beautiful and the bizarre. His paintings are included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; Tate, London; and Centre Pompidou, Paris, among others. Exhibitions include *Works on Paper*, Des Moines Art Center, Iowa (2003, traveled to Aspen Art Museum, Colorado); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Illinois (2003, traveled to Serpentine Gallery, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, through 2004); DHC/ART, Montreal (2011); *John Currin meets Cornelis van Haarlem*, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands (2011–12); and *Paintings*, Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence, Italy (2016).

In September 2019, Dallas Contemporary, Texas will present a solo exhibition of Currin's work.





Tschabalala Self

Tschabalala Self (b. 1990) is a painter from Harlem, New York. She received her BA from Bard College in 2012 and her MFA from the Yale School of Art in 2015. Selected recent solo exhibitions include *Bodega Run*, Hammer Projects, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2019); *Tschabalala Self*, Frye Museum, Seattle (2019); *Bodega Run*, Yuz Museum, West Bund Shanghai (2018); *Bodega Run*, Pilar Corrias Gallery, London (2017); *Sour Patch*, Thierry Goldberg, Miami (2017); *Tschabalala Self*, Tramway, Glasgow (2017); *Tschabalala Self*, Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London (2017); *Desire*, Moore Building, Miami (2016); and *The Function*, T293, Naples, Italy (2016). Recent group exhibitions include *The Beyond: Georgia O’Keeffe and Contemporary Art*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville (2018); *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2017); *A Shape That Stands Up*, Art + Practice, Los Angeles (2016); *A Constellation*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015); and *MOOD*, MoMA PS1 in collaboration with the Studio Museum in Harlem, Queens (2019).

Jennifer Schipf

Jennifer is AXA XL’s Global Practice Leader for Art. She has a BA in art history and economics from Georgetown University and a BS in interior architecture from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. As AXA XL’s Global Practice Leader for Art, Jennifer is responsible for setting worldwide strategy for client solutions, Underwriting guidelines and ultimate profitability. She’s been dedicated to the highly specialized fine art underwriting market for nearly twenty years and recently helped establish the AXA Art Prize. She previously led the organization’s North American Fine Art & Specie team while also serving as leader of Broker and Client Management for North American Specialty.

Jennifer is actively engaged in various arts organizations, teaches fine art underwriting courses and regularly participates in industry educational conferences. She also pursues continuing education classes in painting at the New York Academy of Art and is an active patron of the Academy, Tandem Press and other art related organizations.



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