

Third Largest Art Prize for Women in the Country Unveiled; Recipients Named November 8, 2019

Two Wisconsin artists have amassed a treasure chest of nearly half a million dollars through their social practice piece, *Being Forward*, and created the third largest annual Art Prize in the country for female visual artists. Two \$10,000, unrestricted Forward Art Prizes have been awarded to outstanding female visual artists at the Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, WI as a result of their work.

What's rare about *Being Forward* and the Forward Art Prize is that artists Brenda Baker & Bird Ross playfully expose the continued gender inequities in the visual art world, while also fixing the problems they critique. Most contemporary social practice pieces address social ills, but very few both examine and radically uproot the underlying system to create lasting, permanent change. *Being Forward* does both in spades.

Ross and Baker created *Being Forward* and its spin-offs, the Women Artists Forward Fund and the Forward Art Prize when they unearthed the story of Jean Pond Miner, the 28-year-old Wisconsin artist who sculpted *Forward* at the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Her sculpture *Forward* stands prominently at the foot of the Wisconsin State Capitol and remains one of the only existing outdoor sculptures of a woman in the country, created by a woman, and funded almost entirely by women in 1893, twenty-six years before women had the right to vote.

Being Forward comes at a time when international cities including New York, Chicago and London are erecting statues of women, by women artists, to address the gross inequity in representation. While women have used their artistic talents, voices, and creativity for millennia, only .5% of all recorded history centers on women's ideas, expressions, or experiences, and just 4% of all artwork in museum collections worldwide was created by female artists. In 2019, 11% of all art acquired by the country's top museums in the past decade was made by women.

Artists Jennifer Angus and Dakota Mace received the prestigious inaugural Forward Art Prize, while five finalists were named, including Angelica Contreras, Hannah O'Hare Bennett, Emily Leach, Helen Lee, and Martha Glowacki.

Award winner Jennifer Angus creates highly provocative site-specific interior installations using hundreds of insects, painstakingly pinned to walls in patterned arrangements that suggest wallpaper and textiles. At a distance her designs resemble an interior domestic space. However, upon closer inspection, viewers discover that the ornate patterns are formed of insects, causing feelings that fluctuate between wonder, disbelief and awe. Angus' goal is to elevate the status of insects, all of which play a vital role in the food chain, pollination, decomposition, and all of life itself. Recently cited as 'one of the most important installation artists in the country,' her solo exhibition is currently on view at the Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, FL.

Dakota Mace is a Diné or Navajo artist who investigates cultural appropriation, identity, and her Native culture using photography and textiles. Mace re-contextualizes creation stories, cosmologies, and social structures, incorporating concepts of balance with nature in her work. Through her bold textural work, she creates complex pieces that comment on historical identities and lineage, create a bridge to understanding Native American traditional practices, and reinforce a positive representation for Indigenous peoples. Mace's work is currently on view at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art and at the Art + Literature Lab, in Madison, WI.

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For more information on the Forward Art Prize Recipients and their work, click the link below
<https://www.womenartistsforwardfund.org/2019-recipients>