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Wexner Center Announces Artist Residency Awards for 2017-18

November 14, 2017—Columbus, OH—The Wexner Center for the Arts at the Ohio State University announces its **Wexner Center Artist Residency Award** recipients for 2017–2018.

A total of \$200,000 is invested each year in the work of contemporary artists across the center’s three program areas—visual arts, performing arts, and film/video. Chosen by the center’s curators and director, the artists who receive this distinction propel the center’s mission as a laboratory for the exploration and advancement of contemporary art, complementing Ohio State’s work as a leading research institution.

In addition to a financial award, residency artists benefit from technical, professional, and creative support, as well as space on-site to develop new work and extraordinary freedom to determine the shape and timing of the residency. In turn, as a requirement of the residency, they work with Wexner Center staff to engage with faculty experts and students, sharing their experience and creative processes in an educational setting. A list of past Artist Residency Award recipients is available [here](#).

The recipients for 2017–18 are:

VISUAL ARTS: MICKALENE THOMAS

Acclaimed Brooklyn-based artist Mickalene Thomas creates arresting portraits in a variety of media, variously depicting her sitters through paintings, photographs, collages, tableaux installations, and videos meant to reveal how gender and identity are constructed, upheld, and mediated.

Culling from art history, media, and popular culture, she produces work that deconstructs and lays bare the highly charged connections among sitter, artist, and viewer. The sitters—almost exclusively women of color—who recur in Thomas’s compositions often convey a spirit of strength and self-confidence, whether depicted in the mode of classically composed 19th-century odalisques, assured Afro-adorned vixens of blaxploitation films, or a powerful maternal figure. Across this archetypal array, it is both the contradictions and the kinships that make the black female body such fertile terrain for Thomas’s ongoing investigations. By casting herself, her late mother, and other formidable women in her life—lovers, friends, and celebrities—as models, muses, and collaborators, she particularizes her distinctive oeuvre of portraiture. In Thomas’s own words, “The person who has that authority of the gaze is always the sitter. I think the sitter’s the most powerful person who resides in that space of how they’re going to deliver the gaze.”

Thomas's residency project at the Wex is still evolving. **It will culminate in fall 2018 with the presentation of a major exhibition of paintings and related works** being organized by Senior Curator of Exhibitions Michael Goodson.

PERFORMING ARTS: IMPROBABLE

British theater ensemble Improbable has a long and fertile history with the Wex, beginning with its first US tour in 1999 with the production *70 Hill Lane*. A previous Artist Residency Award recipient from 2002–4 and 2007–9, the thought-provoking, 21-year-old company presented the US premiere of *The Hanging Man* in 2003 and the world premiere of *Panic* in 2009 at the center.

The 2017–18 Artist Residency Award supports Improbable's work on ***Opening Skinner's Box***, which was co-commissioned by the Wexner Center and will be presented in its Performance Space **March 29–April 1, 2018**.

Inspired by the Lauren Slater book of the same name, the production, in the words of the company, is “a whistle-stop tour of the scientific quest to make sense of what we are and who we are, told through 10 great psychological experiments and the stories of the people who created them.”

PERFORMING ARTS: FAYE DRISCOLL

The Wexner Center continues its relationship with the Bessie Award–winning choreographer and 2016–17 Artist Residency Award winner Faye Driscoll through the completion of her captivating trilogy, ***Thank You for Coming***. The final work, the Wex-commissioned ***Thank You for Coming: Space***, brings her vital experiment in exploring new, interactive modes of personal storytelling full circle. Driscoll will present a work-in-progress performance and the completed piece at the Wexner Center on dates to be announced.

FILM/VIDEO: BARBARA HAMMER

A two-year Artist Residency Award from the Wexner Center is just one part of a string of remarkable career achievements for Barbara Hammer over the past year.

The influential visual artist and queer cinema pioneer presented the multichannel installation *Evidentiary Bodies* at the Whitney Museum in November 2016. It's now on view at New York's Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art. She was recently the subject of a retrospective at the New York Film Festival. Her 1990 film, *Sanctus*, is being featured at the 2017 Venice Biennale; it's also on view at the Wexner Center through the month of November. A program of recently restored films from early in her career will be screened at the Wex in February 2018 during the annual restoration festival, [Cinema Revival](#).

Earlier this year, she announced the creation of the Barbara Hammer Lesbian Experimental Filmmaking Grant in conjunction with the New York City nonprofit Queer | Art, and her archive was acquired by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

In the first phase of her residency, Hammer will complete a project with the working title ***Empathy***. Created from footage shot in Hammer's New York studio over a year's time, in

which the artist captured projections of her body and on her body, the work will be edited by Paul Hill of the Wexner Center's Film/Video Studio, who'll be traveling to New York to collaborate with Hammer in her studio.

In the words of the artist, "In these horrific times when lies are blatantly exclaimed as truths, when fear makes us withdraw from each other, when difference is maligned as xenophobia and when atrocities are committed in the name of spectacle, we must find and practice a quiet way of compassion, sympathy, and generosity through empathy."

During the second phase of Hammer's residency in 2018–19, she'll revisit three unfinished works from earlier in her career: an as-yet untitled film begun in 1998 on the dunes of Provincetown, Massachusetts; a film begun in 1993 addressing AIDS and the deaf community; and a film from the 1970s exploring indigenous peoples in a Guatemalan market.

FILM/VIDEO: PENNY LANE

A growing force in the field of nonfiction filmmaking, Penny Lane has won accolades at film festivals around the US including the Best Documentary prize at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival for her feature, *Nuts!*

With Artist Residency Award assistance, Lane returns with her latest project to the issue of reproductive rights, the focus of her 2005 documentary short *Abortion Stories*. Currently titled ***Norma***, the feature-length work will explore the life of Norma McCorvey, the woman chosen by chance to be the most famous plaintiff in American history. As "Jane Roe" in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, McCorvey was cast as the lead in an epic and deeply divisive historical drama. Then, after becoming an icon of the pro-choice movement, McCorvey switched sides and became an outspoken opponent of abortion rights. Relying on archival material as in her 2013 feature debut, *Our Nixon*, and including excerpts from McCorvey's two published memoirs, Lane traces McCorvey's struggle to reveal the real-life story behind a legal fiction.

Lane will also utilize the Film/Video Studio for the sound design and mix of her new experimental short, ***Normal Appearances***, which explores the strange ritualistic structure of the reality dating show *The Bachelor*.

FILM/VIDEO: KEVIN JEROME EVERSON

Ohio-born filmmaker Kevin Jerome Everson has entered the second phase of his two-year residency with the Wexner Center, having completed a number of films including ***Rhino*** (2018), an experimental enactment of the last days of the 16th-century Duke of Florence, Alessandro de' Medici. He's now creating an ambitious new body of films focused on specific people, places, and histories of his hometown of Mansfield.

The first films in this series are ***IFO*** (2017), ***Round Seven*** (2018), and ***A Good Fight*** (2018). They cover subjects as varied as Mansfield boxer Art McKnight and his 1978 fight against Sugar Ray Leonard at the Hara Arena in Dayton, the closing of Mansfield Tire, and a famous alleged UFO sighting in the area. Everson is also working on a related, multichannel gallery installation, ***Richland Blue***, featuring elements of each of the films as well as related objects and photographs.

FILM/VIDEO: JENNIFER REEDER

A Columbus native, Chicago-based filmmaker Jennifer Reeder is a frequent guest of the Wexner Center, with postproduction residencies in the Film/Video Studio and appearances coinciding with the presentation of her work, including the area premiere of her award-winning first feature, *Signature Move*, in April 2017.

The Artist Residency Award will support the creation of Reeder's next feature, ***As With Knives and Skin***. It follows the investigation of a young girl's disappearance in the rural Midwest, led by an inexperienced local sheriff. Unusual coping techniques develop among the traumatized small-town residents with each new secret revealed. In the words of the artist, "This mystical teen noir presents coming of age as a lifelong process and examines the profound impact of grief."

ABOUT THE WEXNER CENTER

The Wexner Center for the Arts is The Ohio State University's multidisciplinary, international laboratory for the exploration and advancement for contemporary art.

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