

Anonymous Was a Woman Names 2021 Winners, Expands Award Program

BY **TESSA SOLOMON**

November 9, 2021 7:31am

The New York–based organization **Anonymous Was a Woman** has revealed the winners of its 2021 awards, each of which carries a \$25,000 purse. For two decades, the awards have been given annually to women-identifying artists over the age of 40.

Now, for the first time, Anonymous Was a Woman is dramatically growing its program. Thanks to two anonymous donors, the organization will give out an additional \$300,000 in funding to 12 artists. Through the donors' gifts—one of which was made through the Meraki Artist Award, a new initiative from an anonymous Boston-based philanthropist—the awards program will be able to recognize four more artists annually for the next three years, bringing the total amount of people recognized to 14 instead of the typical 10.

The 2021 awardees range in age from 41 to 81, and include Nanette Carter, a New York–based educator and mixed media artist known for her abstract paintings on sheaths of frosted Mylar; Anita Fields, a ceramic and textile artist of Osage heritage; and **Suzanne Jackson**, a visual artist and poet, and director of the now-defunct Gallery 32, one of the first commercial spaces to promote emerging African American artists in Los Angeles in the late 1960s. Also awarded is performance artist, dancer, and activist **Julie Tolentino**, who last year received Queer|Art's annual \$10,000 award for Sustained Achievement.

“It is an unexpected honor to finally receive recognition for my work as a painter and sculptor,” Jackson told *ARTnews*. “I have known about the Anonymous Was A Woman award for years, though I never thought that I would be a recipient. I plan to use the award funds to continue my work exploring new aspects of integrating drawing, painting, and

sculptured forms as related to various American relationships to our natural and urban environments.”

Anonymous Was a Woman was launched by artist **Susan Unterberg** in 1996, when the National Endowment for the Arts ceased grants for individual artists, though she didn't reveal herself as the founder and sole patron of the program until 2018. Named after a line from Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own," the award program was established in part to support mid-career women artists at critical points in their practices.

To date, the program has given out over \$6 million to around 300 artists, many of whom later achieved wider success. Past recipients include Carrie Mae Weems, Laura Aguilar, Cecilia Vicuña, Howardena Pindell, Lynn Hershman Leeson, and Diana Simpson, who appeared in the 2019 Whitney Biennial and had two solo museum shows last year.

In 2020, Anonymous Was a Woman created an emergency fund to support artists who lost income as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Some \$250,000 in unrestricted grants was distributed by the New York Foundation for the Arts on a first-come, first-serve basis to any practicing artist.

“When I started Anonymous Was A Woman, I did so to address a need that I felt personally as a woman artist in the middle of her career,” Unterberg said in a statement. “I never dreamed that it could inspire other individuals to join us in advancing our mission, although the need for direct support to artists remains as significant as ever.”

The full list of 2021 awardees follows below:

Nanette Carter
Oletha DeVane
Adama Delphine Fawundu
Anita Fields
Coco Fusco
Renée Green
Judithe Hernández
Suzanne Jackson
Autumn Knight
Adia Millett
Anna Sew Hoy
Julie Tolentino
Dyani White Hawk
Marian Zazeela