Anonymous Was A Woman awards $250,000 to women artists over the age of 40

Ten artists receive unrestricted grants of $25,000 apiece in recognition of their work

November 20, 2019—Anonymous Was a Woman today announced the ten recipients of its 2019 awards, which recognize women artists over 40 years of age who have made significant contributions in their fields to date, while continuing to create new work. Each recipient receives an unrestricted grant of $25,000.

The 2019 award recipients are:

Elia Alba, 57
Marsha Cottrell, 55
Torkwase Dyson, 46
Heide Fasnacht, 68
Nona Faustine, 50
Rhodessa Jones, 70
Jennifer Wen Ma, 46
Amie Siegel, 45
Diane Simpson, 84
Karina Aguilera Skvirsky, 52

Winners were chosen from among a competitive pool of applicants recommended by a group of distinguished art historians, curators, writers, and artists who serve as anonymous nominators. The 2018 award recipients range in age from 45 to 84 and work in mediums including painting, installation, performance, photography, and film. The “no strings-attached” grant is intended to provide them freedom to continue development of their creative vision. Bios of each recipient follow on next page.

Anonymous Was a Woman was founded by artist Susan Unterberg and has awarded over $6 million in grants to 240 women artists to date. In July 2018, after more than two decades of anonymity, Unterberg revealed her identity as the founder and sole patron of the grant program. The 2019 award cycle is the first since this news, which elevated the profile of the award and led to a significant increase in nominations, as well as an expanded group of nominators (distinguished women curators, writers, critics, and artists). Over the past year, Anonymous Was A Woman has also initiated public programs celebrating past award recipients and emphasizing the vitality of women’s voices, including a panel discussion at the 92nd Street Y, New York.
“I am delighted to congratulate this year’s award recipients—a group of extraordinary artists working in diverse mediums and exploring some of the most pressing issues of contemporary life,” said Unterberg. “I founded Anonymous Was a Woman to fill a void that I witnessed personally: support for women artists in the middle stages of their careers. More than twenty years later, we continue to see data that reveals the delta between how both museums and the market regard male and female artists—which only galvanizes our mission and our commitment to celebrating the voices of women.”

While it is not need-based, the award has often had a transformative impact on the lives and work of the recipients, many of whom received the grant at critical junctions in their careers or before they had received wider recognition. Award winners have gone on to present solo exhibitions at institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Venice Biennale, among many others; to create important public art projects, performances, and installations; and to receive significant critical acclaim.

Anonymous Was A Woman
Anonymous Was A Woman is an unrestricted grant of $25,000 that enables women artists over 40 years of age and at a significant junction in their lives or careers, to continue to grow and pursue their work. The Award is given to ten artists a year in recognition of an artist's accomplishments, artistic growth, originality, and potential. It is not need-based. The Award is by nomination only. The name of the grant program, Anonymous Was A Woman, refers to a line in Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own”. As the name implies, nominators and those associated with the program have, until this point, been unnamed. Artist Susan Unterberg created the Award in 1996, partly in response to the decision of the National Endowment for the Arts to cease support of individual artists. Each year, an outstanding group of distinguished women—art historians, curators, writers, and previous winners from across the country—serve as nominators. To date, over [600] notable women have participated as nominators and panelists, and the Award has been given to 240 artists.

Anonymous Was a Woman is a program of FJC.

For more information on Anonymous Was A Woman, please visit anonymouswasawoman.org.

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2019 Anonymous Was A Woman Award Recipients

**Elia Alba** (b. 1962, Brooklyn) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Queens. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Hunter College in 1994 and completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 2001. She has exhibited throughout the United States and abroad, at institutions including the Rhode Island School of Design Museum; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Science Museum, London; ITAU Cultural Institute, Sao Paolo; National Museum of Art, Reina Sofia, Madrid; and the 10th Havana Biennial. She is a recipient of numerous awards and residencies, including the Studio Museum in Harlem Artist-in-Residence Program (1999); New York Foundation for the Arts Grant, Crafts (2002) and Photography (2008); Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2002); and Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2002 and 2008); Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) Workspace Program (2009); and Recess Analog (2012). Her work is in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, and Lowe Art Museum, among others. Her recent project, *The Supper Club*, brings together artists, scholars, and performers of diasporic cultures, through photography, food and dialogue to examine race and culture in the United States. A book on *The Supper Club* (2019), produced by The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation and published by Hirmer, was critically acclaimed by The New York Times. She is currently Artist-in-Residence at The Andrew Freeman Home in the Bronx.

**Marsha Cottrell** (b. 1964) expands the definition of drawing by repurposing the functionality of an electrostatic office laser printer, computer and screen unplugged from online space. Based in Brooklyn, she received a BFA from the Tyler School of Art, Temple University and an MFA from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Cottrell is a recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, Biennial Award; the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Fellowship Grant in Drawing; the Harvestworks Digital Media Arts Center, Educational Grant; the New York Foundation for the Arts, Fellowship Grant in Drawing and Digital Arts; the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Fellowship; and the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation, Space Program. She has had a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum of Raleigh and has recently been included in group exhibitions at the Morgan Library, SFMOMA, and the University of Western Michigan. Selected public and corporate collections include The Art Institute of Chicago; The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; Grafische Sammlung, Museum Kunstpalast, Dusseldorf, Germany; The Museum of Modern Art; The Morgan Library and Museum; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Nhe North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; Philadelphia Museum of Art; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others.

**Torkwase Dyson** (b. 1969, Chicago) works in many mediums but described herself as a painter who uses distilled geometric abstraction to create an idiosyncratic language that is both diagrammatic and expressive. She spent her developmental years between North Carolina and Mississippi, which helped her develop a fundamental sensitivity towards urban development, southern landscape and black spatial justice. She studied Sociology, Social Work, and Fine Art at Tougaloo College, where she began to examine the spatial dynamics of black history and how these histories where connected geographically. Over the next decade, Dyson traveled to Africa and South and Central America to strategize with communities of color on ways to attain resource equality. During this time she earned her BFA in Painting from Virginia Commonwealth University and her MFA in Painting from Yale School of Art. In 2016, Dyson designed and built *Studio South Zero (SSZ)* a solar-powered mobile studio where the context of nomadicty became the framework for learning and making art about the environment. It was traveling with SSZ that inspired her experimental project *The Wynter-Wells Drawing School for Environmental Liberation*, where she explores contemporary theorizations of space, architecture and the infrastructure of
extraction economies. The works are deconstructions of natural and built environments that consider how individuals negotiate and negate various types of systems and spatial order. Dyson’s work has been exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Drawing Center, the Corcoran College of Art and Design, the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. Shen has been awarded the Graham Nancy Graves Grant for Visual Artists, the Visiting Artist grant to the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, and the Culture Push Fellowship for Utopian Practices. Fellowships include the Graham Foundation, Eyebeam Art, Technology Center Fellowship, and the FSP/Jerome Fellowship. Dyson’s work has also been supported by, Lower Manhattan Cultural Center, The Laundromat Projects, the Green Festival of New York, the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, the Mural Arts Program of Philadelphia, The Kitchen, and the Rebuild Foundation. In 2016 Dyson was elected to the board of the Architecture League of New York as Vice President of Visual Arts. She is based in New York.

Heide Fasnacht (b. 1951) is a multimedia artist who has worked in painting, collage, and sculpture. Fasnacht has been featured in exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, Socrates Sculpture Park, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Documenta 6, the Worcester Art Museum, MoMA PS1 (where she had her first solo exhibition in 1979), and many others. Her work is held by institutions including the MFA Boston, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard, the Brooklyn Museum, the High Museum of Art, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center, and the Yale University Art Gallery. Fasnacht is also the recipient of awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship, several National Endowment for the Arts grants, New York Foundation for the Arts, The Gottlieb Foundation grant, and two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Fellowships. She has taught at Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, UCLA, Parsons, and others, and has been a visiting lecturer at Yale, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Nona Faustine (b. 1969) is a photographer, visual artist and Brooklyn native, who works inside a photographic tradition while questioning the culture that bred that tradition. Her practice walks the fine line between past and present, beginning where intersecting identities meet history. Exploring her family album in relationship to collective belonging, and self-portraiture in relationship to empowerment, Faustine examines the legacy of trauma, lineage, and history; her body becomes a channel for the known and unknown individuals who make up our past, present, and future. Reconstructing a narrative of race, memory, and time that delves into stereotypes, folklore, and anthropology, Faustines works are, in her words, meditative reflections of history Americans have not come to terms with, challenging the duality of what is both visible and invisible. She is a graduate of The School of Visual Arts, and The International Center of Photography at Bard College MFA program. Faustine's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally from the Ford Foundation, Harvard University, to the Tomie Ohtake Institute in Brazil. Faustine’s images are in the collection of the Studio Museum of Harlem, David C. Driskell Center at Maryland State University, Brooklyn Museum, and the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburg. In 2020 she will exhibit at the Andy Warhol Museum. Faustine is a Finalist in the 2019 Outwin Boochever Competition at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery, on view fall of 2019.

Rhodessa Jones (b. 1948) is an actress, teacher, director, and writer. She is Co-Artistic Director of the acclaimed San Francisco performance company Cultural Odyssey and is also the Director of the award-winning Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women and HIV Circle, which is a performance workshop designed to achieve personal and social transformation with incarcerated women and women living with HIV. She has been a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College. She has received the Theater
Bay Area Legacy Award, the Sui Generis Foundation Achievement Award, the Theatre Practitioner Award presented by Theater Communications Group; in 2014 Rhodessa was the Keynote Speaker for Graduation Commencement, Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies University of California, Berkeley. She has been a visiting artist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and St. Mary’s College in Moraga, California. Her published works include A Beginner’s Guide to Community-Based Arts, New Village Press; Imagining Medea: Rhodessa Jones and Theater for Incarcerated Women, The University of North Carolina Press; and Colored Contradictions An Anthology of Contemporary African – American Plays (“Big Butt Girls, Hard-Headed Women”), Penguin Group. Jones’s groundbreaking method for working with disenfranchised populations has just been published in the book Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches (Routledge).

Jennifer Wen Ma (b. 1973, Beijing) is a visual artist whose interdisciplinary practice bridges installation, drawing, video, public art, design, performance, and theatre, often bringing together unlikely elements in a single piece, creating sensitive, poetic and poignant works. Projects with international institutions include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain; National Art Museum of China, Ullens Center For Contemporary Art, Beijing; Vancouver Art Gallery; Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, Charleston; Seattle Art Museum; The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.; Qatar Museums, Doha; Cass Sculpture Foundation, United Kingdom; and Sydney Opera House, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, among others. She conceived, visually designed and directed the installation opera Paradise Interrupted, performed at venues around the world including the MGM Cotai Theatre (2019); National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, Taipei National Theatre and Concert Hall (2018); Singapore International Festival of Arts and Lincoln Center Festival (2016); and Spoleto Festival (2015). In 2008, Ma was on the core creative team for the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, and received an Emmy for its U.S. broadcast. Ma works and lives between New York and Beijing.

Amie Siegel (b. 1974, Chicago) works between film, video, photography, performance and installation. She is known for layered, meticulously constructed works that trace and perform the undercurrents of systems of value, cultural ownership and image-making. Siegel’s has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at institutions including the Blaffer Art Museum, Houston (2019); Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2017); South London Gallery (2017); Museum Villa Stuck, Munich; Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin (2016); MAK-Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna (2015); and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2014). Siegel has participated in group exhibitions including the 2018 Gwangju Biennial and Dhaka Art Summit and at institutions including CAPC Bordeaux; Witte de With, Rotterdam; Vancouver Art Gallery; MuMA, Melbourne; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; MAXXI Museum, Rome; Hayward Gallery, London; CCA Wattis, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, among others. Her work is in public and private collections including The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tate Modern, Carnegie Museum of Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Her works have screened at the Cannes, Berlin, Toronto and New York Film Festivals. She has been a fellow of the DAAD Berliner-Künstlerprogramm and the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fulton Fellow at The Film Study Center at Harvard University, a recipient of the ICA Boston's Foster Prize, and Sundance Institute and Creative Capital Awards. She lives and works in Brooklyn.

Diane Simpson (b. 1935, Joliet, Illinois) is a Chicago-based artist who for the past forty years has created sculptures and preparatory drawings that evolve from a wide range of sources, including clothing,
utilitarian objects, and architecture. The structures of clothing forms have continuously informed her work, serving as a vehicle for exploring their visually formal qualities, while also revealing their connections to the design and architecture of various cultures and periods in history. Her wide selection of materials (wood, perforated metals, linoleum, fabrics) reflects her interest in the coexistence of the industrial/architectonic and domestic worlds. She has exhibited widely in the U.S. and abroad, most recently in the 2019 Whitney Biennial. In 2010, a thirty-year retrospective was held at the Chicago Cultural Center, and she has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Simpson's work is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art; Art Institute of Chicago; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Illinois State Museum, Springfield; Perez Museum, Miami; and the Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco and Paris. She received a BFA in 1971 and an MFA in 1978 from the Art Institute of Chicago. Simpson is represented by Corbett vs Dempsey Gallery, Chicago; JTT Gallery, New York; and Herald St Gallery, London.

Karina Aguilera Skvirsky (b. Providence, Rhode Island, 1967) is a multidisciplinary artist who works mainly with photographs, video, and performance. She has exhibited widely in the United States and internationally. She participated in the Cuenca Biennial (2016), curated by Dan Cameron, and the São Paulo Biennial (2010). She has participated in numerous residencies and received grants including LMCC Workspace (2003), NALAC, (National Association of Latino Arts and Culture 2018), and Jerome Foundation (2015), among others. Currently, she is in the production phase of a new project, “How to build a wall and other ruin”, that is being funded by a 2019 Creative Capital grant. Her work is in the collections of the Urbes Mutantes, The Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and numerous private collections. Skvirsky is an Associate Professor in the Department of Art at Lafayette College. She lives and works in New York and Ecuador.