



FEATURES JULY 25, 2017

Introducing | 2017 Murray Reich Distinguished Artist Award Recipients

BY NYFA EDITORIAL



Mario Martinez, *In Conversation*, 2004

The New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) is proud to announce the 2017 recipients of the Murray Reich Distinguished Artist Award, which was established in 2015 to recognize artistic excellence and provide resources to visual artists with a long history of creative practice. This year's winners, Merion Estes and Mario Martinez, will each receive an unrestricted cash award of \$10,000. Estes will create a catalogue raisonné to accompany an exhibition of her work to be held at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles in September 2018, which coincides with her 80th birthday. Martinez will use the funds to begin making his work on a larger scale.

Estes and Martinez were selected by a panel comprised of artists Cynthia Carlson, Alan Michelson, and Sanford Wurmfield; visual arts specialist, editor, and educator Marcia E. Vetrocq; and poet, art critic, and curator John Yau from nominees submitted by an anonymous group of art world professionals from across the country. The nominees were then invited to submit proposals which were reviewed by the panel.

With the support of an anonymous donor, NYFA created this annual award to enable artists with a long history of creative practice to pursue deeper investigations or new explorations that can inform and enrich their work. It has been developed in memory of the artist Murray Reich, a New York-based painter who also had a highly regarded career as a professor of art at Bard College.

On receiving the award, Estes said: "This is only the second grant I have received in my long career, and I am most grateful. It will allow me some leeway in preparing for my three upcoming shows and in particular for the 10-year survey at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles."

Mario Martinez echoed Estes' sentiments saying: "Receiving this award is so cool because it is the first award of its kind that I've received from a mainstream arts organization. I've painted and drawn since grade school six decades ago, so this award is confirmation of better professional and artistic developments to come."

Michael L. Royce, NYFA's Executive Director, said: "It's our honor to recognize the achievements of Merion and Mario through the generosity of our donor, and to know that they represent a significant and growing community of artists over 50. Merion and Mario are testaments to Murray Reich's legacy in that they continue to innovate in their work and show a creative vitality that is inspiring to all artists."

Recipient Bios

Merion Estes

Estes is known for her use of varied depictions of natural "scenes" using found fabrics coupled with mixed paint applications and photo transfers. Her works address the beauty and fragility of life and the tragedy of man's intervention in nature. She has shown regularly in Los Angeles since arriving there in 1972. An active participant in the Women's Movement since its inception, Estes was part of the only women's co-op in the first "Woman's Building" in Los Angeles. Her work was exhibited in two shows there, and she continued as a member of a Feminist service group called "XX" for several years after the gallery closed. The group's mission was to expose other artist's work and their work through mounting shows in alternative spaces and sponsored lectures. In 1979, she was given a five-year survey at the Municipal Gallery at Barnsdall Art Park. Her work continued to evolve and be seen throughout the 80's and 90's, and in 2006 she was given a 35-year retrospective at the Pomona College Art Museum, curated by Rebecca McGrew. Her artistic evolution continues today as she works towards a third show at CBI Gallery, "The Feminine Sublime" at Pasadena Museum of California Art, and the Craft and Folk Art Museum show.

Mario Martinez

Martinez is a Yaqui Indian and a member of The Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona who is based in New York City. Known as one of the foremost Native American abstract painters, Martinez's densely-layered surfaces and rich palettes connect cosmic images, abstractions of animal and plant life, and Yaqui tradition. This October, he will be filmed and interviewed by Voices in Contemporary Art (VoCA) in collaboration with the Joan Mitchell Foundation's Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) program. He was recently included in the book *No Reservation: New York Contemporary Native American Art Movement* (AMERINDA Inc., 2017). In 2015, Martinez received a Robert Rauschenberg residency in Captiva, Florida, and in 2013, he was recognized with a Joan Mitchell Foundation CALL artist award. In 2005, he was celebrated with a solo retrospective exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. That same year, he completed a 22-foot mural called *Sonoran Desert: Yaqui Home* for the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona as part of the museum's *Home: Desert Peoples in the Southwest* exhibition. He received his BFA degree from Arizona State University and an MFA from The San Francisco Art Institute.