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ARTISTS ON SITE LAUNCHES TODAY!

New Initiative Provides Space and Financial Support to Houston-Based BIPOC Artists



HOUSTON, December 17, 2020 — Asia Society Texas Center (ASTC) is launching [Artists on Site](#), a new initiative supporting Houston-based BIPOC artists with funding and working studio spaces while shining a light on the artistic process. Designed in response to the mounting needs of artists due to the pandemic, the project provides direct support to four featured artists — **Ahra Cho**, **Laura Drey**, **Brandon Tho Harris**, and **Royal Sumikat** — who will transform the Louisa Stude Sarofim Gallery into public-facing studio spaces allowing visitors a unique opportunity to see the artists' ideas, research, and works take shape as the project unfolds.

Artists on Site opens Thursday, December 17 and runs through Sunday, January 24, 2021. In addition to onsite opportunities to witness the artistic process, the project includes virtual webcast conversations with the artists. All the activities and programs in the initiative are **FREE** and open to the public.

As pandemic related closings began in March, Nancy C. Allen Curator and Director of



Exhibitions, **Bridget Bray** engaged in specific conversations with artists, both in Houston and throughout the country, to develop ways that ASTC could support artists and their practices. Because the most critical needs expressed were for time, space, financial resources, and outreach, the *Artists on Site* initiative provides each artist a \$1,500 artist stipend, \$500 for materials, dedicated space for six weeks, and professional documentation of their work, as well as a platform for public programming and connectivity with patrons, curators, and other arts professionals.

Bray consulted with nominators **Matt Manalo**, **Mari Omori**, and **Ashley DeHoyos**, to develop a short list of 27 Houston-based artists considered to participate in the project. The cohort spans different phases of career and overlapping interest in subject matter and medium such as painting, photography, video, sculpture, performance, and installation.

“I’m so grateful to have time, space, and the ability to explore ideas that have been dormant due to limited resources,” says **Laura Drey**. “I’m looking forward to the deep dive of artmaking and thinking and engaging with Houston’s diverse community and creative artists. I am most excited about the idea of public-facing studio spaces and sharing my methodology with others. The efforts, support, and meaningful relations provided to me through Asia Society Texas Center will undoubtedly impact my art practice in ways that continue to evolve long after my visit.”

Artists on Site Fast Facts

- Dates: Thursday, December 17, 2020–Sunday, January 24, 2021
- Admission: FREE
- Hours: Thursday–Friday, 11am – 4pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10am – 4pm; Closed December 25th and January 1st.
- Location: Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore Blvd, Houston, TX, 77004 (in the Museum District)
- More info: <https://asiasociety.org/texas/exhibitions/artists-site>

Artist Talk Webcast Fast Facts:

- January 13 at 7pm: Artist talk featuring Laura Drey and Brandon Tho Harris in conversation with Ashley DeHoyos and Bridget Bray
- January 20 at 7pm: Artist talk featuring Royal Sumikat and Ahra Cho in conversation with Matt Manalo and Bridget Bray
- Admission: Free
- Where to watch: Live on [You Tube](#) and [Facebook](#)

About the Artists



Ahra Cho

“A lot of the time, my words lose their form and scatter into the air. But when I paint, I feel I can face that unknown. Maybe painting is the only way I can make something poetic permanent. Everything made by humanity is in a finite moment and our existing is also the sequence of moments. Making art is the path of realizing my weakness and insufficiency. I see and feel the great breath in everything. Our



emotion is silence (physically). Seeing silence always fills my eyes with so many conflicts. I wait to see what happens in the creative process. Waiting for the moment is also part of the work. I wait for the creation and then stop. I try not to finish the work. My completion point is just as the senses awaken. I trace my senses and memories and look for the source of light somewhere in life.” – Ahra Cho

Born in 1990, and after study in Houston, the Netherlands, and New York, Ahra Cho received her BFA at the School of Visual Arts, New York, and has established her studio practice in Houston. She has exhibited her work in both New York and Houston.



Laura Drey

“My work explores themes of labor and movement, geography, government, race, class, and economics. The influences and experiences of family members who worked on Texas land as migrant farmers and longshoremen are the abstract narratives that inform my material choices. I weave textiles in use in the farming industry—polypropylene sacking, burlap, and twist ties—into the strands of an expansive, personal narrative. My use of these materials pays tribute to those who came before me. My Mexican and American experiences and intergenerational conversations, along with my familial bonds, home, poetry, and motherhood deepen this expression.” – Laura Drey

Laura Drey is a visual artist, writer, and educator, who lives in Houston, Texas, where she was born and raised. She graduated with her MFA, in Studio, from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2018, and she holds an (Honors) BA, in Studio Arts, from the University of St. Thomas, Houston in 2015. She has exhibited and performed her art nationally and internationally. Awards include a grant from The Warhol Foundation’s Idea Fund through Diverseworks for her project, *Unsettled Space* — by way of crops. In 2019, she was an artist in residence at Arquetopia Foundation and International Residency in Oaxaca, Mexico. She was also a 2020 Residency Scholarship Award Recipient for Arquetopia Foundation and International Residency in Cusco, Peru. Drey is a founding member of the collective MotherArt: Revisited.



Brandon Tho Harris

“This family history was never discussed growing up. A part of my identity that is unknown to me, yet my curiosity desires to understand this hidden aspect of my history. The project has been a proactive way of addressing these traumas. My artistic practice is foundationally a collaboration between my family and I. By navigating this history, it allows my family to finally heal from years of repression. My grandmother has expressed to me how important it is to allow others to hear her story yet does not have the language or way to do so. With this project, it has opened dialogue about this unspoken history between my family and me created an even closer bond between us.” – Brandon Tho Harris*



Brandon Tho Harris is an interdisciplinary artist based in Houston, Texas. His creative practice explores his identity as a child of war refugees. By examining the Vietnamese diaspora in relation to his own family history, he is able to understand and process intergenerational trauma. Harris' work incorporates self-portraiture, his family archives, and historical images portraying the Vietnam War. Through the use of photography, video, performance, and installation, he allows viewers a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding migration. He has received his Bachelor of Fine Arts with the concentration of photography and digital media from the University of Houston. His work has been featured in exhibitions at Houston Center for Photography and the Blaffer Art Museum. Harris' projects have also been funded by grants from The Idea Fund and Houston Art Alliance.



Royal Sumikat

“In the days of our ancestors, storytelling was a form of community building – sharing space through oral tales and creation myths from our elders, building worlds from gestures and symbolism, and breathing life into each other by the fire. And now, as a modern-day ancestor, I am building up from that foundation. I make ancestral offerings through my art. My workspace is my altar. My tools are my talismans.

These have provided me with protection, solace, and magic in times of uncertainty. My work symbolizes the divine warriors, healers, tricksters, and children that live within us. The children who play effortlessly without names. The neon indigenous-futuristic archetypes. What you experience from me is celebration through my work.” – Royal Sumikat

Born in the Philippines and currently residing in Houston, Texas, multi-city muralist and painter, Royal Sumikat is a dynamic human and a futuristic artist. She works with spray paint, gouache, acrylic paints, markers, and most recently – the app Procreate. The images in her works come off as if they're contradicting each other but are intentionally done to highlight the contrast in colors, ideas, and textures. Sumikat's work is informed by her experiences as an immigrant, community organizer, and priestess – taking inspiration from the spaces afforded by these different identities. Storytelling and mythology are prevalent in her work as she aims to strengthen the connection she has with her ancestors.

About Asia Society Texas Center

With 14 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the rest of the world. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education, and community outreach.

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