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## 2021 Real Art Awards Announced; Six Artists Receive Cash Prize and Solo Exhibition

Six artists have been selected for the 2021 Real Art Awards, presented by Real Art Ways of Hartford, Connecticut. The six will each receive \$2,500 and a solo exhibition.

The Real Art Awardees are:

**Kate Bae** • New York, NY  
**Heather Heckel** • Massapequa, NY  
**Merik Goma** • New Haven, CT  
**Joe Bun Keo** • Hartford, CT  
**Elizabeth Flood** • Hamilton, NY  
**Deep Pool** • Queens, NY

"We are especially intrigued by the range of work these artists are creating," said Real Art Ways' longtime Executive Director Will K. Wilkins. "We're looking forward to what comes next!"

The Real Art Awards support artists at a critical career juncture. Along with the cash prize and solo exhibition, each artists will receive a publication with a critical essay.

Founded by artists in 1975, Real Art Ways has a record of supporting artists early in their careers. An example: Real Art Ways has presented a remarkable total of 42 MacArthur "Genius" grantees.

The Real Art Awards competition was open to artists in the six New England states, New York and New Jersey. Recipients were chosen from a competitive field of 350 entrants. Reflecting Real Art Ways' mission to support artists, there was no charge to apply. The jury for the 2021 Real Art Awards was artist and writer **Kameelah Janan Rasheed**; **Hasan Elahi**, artist and Director of the School of Art at George Mason University; and **Will K. Wilkins**.

The Real Art Awards are supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the New England Foundation for the Arts through the New England Arts Resilience Fund.

### About Real Art Ways

Real Art Ways has a record of linking artists, innovation and community. Programs include visual arts, with exhibitions, public art projects, and artist presentations; cinema, with independent and international films seven days a week; music; performance; literary events; community and educational programming.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

## ARTISTS SELECTED



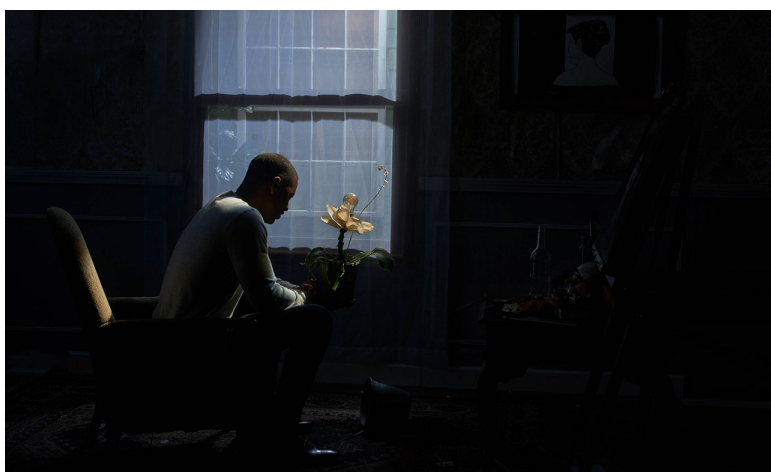
**Kate Bae's** expanded painting practice references transformation of stress and anxiety by updating the language of painting. What started as an excoriation disorder, with constant picking of her skin, became the peeling of acrylic paint, resulting in paintings that combine two- and three-dimensional planes.

Image: *Possible, Between and Together* (detail), 2019  
Acrylic, canvas, threads



**Heather Heckel's** intricately drawn and painted portraits of objects mimic a complication at birth which resulted in her vision being distorted. Colored pencils and oil paint are used to render porcelain objects that belonged to her grandmother, offering a sense of comfort and familiarity. The resulting kaleidoscopic image "causes [her] to question which version is real, and how the answer can be both since this is [her] reality."

Image: *Walrus* (detail), 2019  
Colored pencil on paper



**Merik Goma** creates photographs and installations that expand upon his background studying psychology and the human condition. The resulting images, objects, and installations mimic theatrical set design, exploring "how we consciously or subconsciously project ourselves onto others."

Image: *As I Wait, Untitled 11* (detail), 2019  
Digital C-print



**Joe Bun Keo** uses found and altered objects to create poetic installations and assemblages. His recent work is informed by personal experiences with mental health, debt, and identity. Mass-produced consumer products are treated as "vessels to represent these struggles, making complex issues a bit more accessible."

Image: *same difference (diplomats and ambassadors)*, 2020

Chain locks



**Elizabeth Flood** uses drawing and painting to survey the complex layers of violence and extraction within the American landscape. Recently her practice has led her to charged political sites, such as Civil War battlefields and the US Capitol. Speaking of these works, Flood says they "commune with and bear witness to the land: they look at past scars to forecast future impact and keep watch over a country and land in crisis."

Image: *The Ellipse (January 3)* (detail), 2021

Sumi-ink on paper



**Deep Pool** utilizes a multidisciplinary approach to photography and image making to explore alienation, personal history, and transition. Their work explores cliché, and incorporates images with sculptural elements, turning framed images into lightboxes, mirrors, and floating objects.

Image: *2good+2be=4gotten* (detail), 2020

Inkjet print, laser engraved plexiglass, faux marble frame, LED