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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THOMA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF ARTS WRITING AWARDS IN DIGITAL ART



McKenzie Wark and Legacy Russell, 2019 Arts Writing Award in Digital Art Recipients

CHICAGO, IL – The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2019 Arts Writing Awards in Digital Art. **McKenzie Wark** will receive \$40,000 in recognition of their sustained dedication to the field as an established arts writer, and **Legacy Russell** will receive \$20,000 for her exceptional promise as an emerging arts writer. Initiated in 2015, the Arts Writing Awards provide unrestricted, merit-based funding in support of writing that advances research, scholarship, and dialogue in digital art. A total of \$300,000 has been granted to date.

The 2019 Arts Writing Awards also offers its awardees a fully-funded **Robert Rauschenberg Residency** at the artist's former home and studio, as the Thoma Foundation Fellows. An early advocate of art and technology and a thought leader on the social issues of his time, Rauschenberg continues to provide a model for artistic and intellectual collaboration through this residency program.

The Arts Writing Awards are the first of their kind to devote substantial funding to writing about digital art, including scholarship, history, criticism, and theory. Each year, a pool of approximately 30 nominees are selected by experts in the field. The two awardees are chosen by a committee based on the merits of their writing, its rigor, their engagement with pressing issues, and their grasp of the history of the field.

SELECTION COMMITTEE

The 2019 selection committee was composed of three experts in the field: **Steve Dietz**, Co-Director of Northern Lights.mn; **Robyn Farrell**, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, Art Institute of Chicago; and **Dr. Pamela Lee**, Carnegie Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, Yale University.

ABOUT THE AWARDEES

MCKENZIE WARK

Established writer who challenges the value systems of internet culture

McKenzie Wark is an Australian-born media theorist who teaches at The New School in New York City. Among their books are *A Hacker Manifesto* (Harvard, 2004), *Gamer Theory* (Harvard, 2007), *The Beach Beneath the Street* (Verso, 2011) and *Capital is Dead*, forthcoming from Verso in Fall 2019.

The selection committee recognized McKenzie's essay "Digital Art, the Market, and the Collection" (*e-flux journal*, 2016/2017) as the writer's key statement on the economic quirks of networked art, calling the text "an innovative study on the impact of digital culture on art."

"Digital art can tell us about the hidden possibilities for what everyday life could be like outside of domination and control," says Wark, known for their ability to speak across fields and generations. Wark began writing about digital art in the 1990s, on early internet listservs that brought together new communities of artists, activists, and theorists. Wark says they hope this writing award "encourages others to imagine that writing doesn't have to be entirely dictated by the arbitrary rules of fields, genres, institutions and markets."

LEGACY RUSSELL

Emerging writer who advocates black excellence in digital art

Legacy Russell is a writer and curator. Born and raised in New York City, she is the Associate Curator of Exhibitions at The Studio Museum in Harlem. Russell holds a dual-major B.A. with Honors from Macalester College in Art History & Studio Art and English & Creative Writing with a focus in Gender Studies, and an MRes in Art History with Distinction from Goldsmiths, University of London with a focus in Visual Culture.

The selection committee recognized Russell's "Glitch Feminism" as a potentially field-defining category of digital art, calling the text "clear and radical in its approach" to cyberfeminism. Russell is completing a book on this topic, forthcoming from Verso Books.

Russell's academic, curatorial, and creative work focuses on gender, performance, digital selfdom, internet idolatry, and new media ritual. She says her work "brings to the forefront the contributions of queerness, blackness and black culture toward technological advancement," and she intends to "play a role in making visible a more intersectional, diverse representation of digital culture."

MISSION

The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation recognizes the power of the arts to challenge and shift perceptions, spark creativity and connect people across cultures. We lend and exhibit artworks from our collection and support innovative individuals and pivotal initiatives in the arts.

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