



ALH Announces Top Honors for 2023 Annual Awards



Wendy Watriss (left, photo: Casey Dunn), Vincent Valdez (center, photo: courtesy of the Artist)
Cecily E Horton (right, photo: Cecily E. Horton)

2023 Texas Artist of the Year Award: Vincent Valdez
2023 Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts Leadership: Wendy Watriss
2023 Texas Patron of the Year Award: Cecily E. Horton

(April 10, 2023) — For almost four decades, Art League Houston (ALH) has honored the brightest lights in the arts in Texas. This year, ALH proudly announces the selection of **Vincent Valdez** as the **2023 Texas Artist of the Year**, **Wendy Watriss** as the recipient of the biennial **2023 Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts Leadership**, and **Cecily E. Horton** as the **2023 Texas Patron of the Year**.

“ALH has a long history of supporting visionary artists and ground-breaking artistic leaders in our state” states Jennie Ash, Art League Houston Director. “As we celebrate ALH’s 75th anniversary, we are proud to honor the incredible Texas painter Vincent Valdez; internationally known photographer, curator, writer, and FotoFest co-founder Wendy Watriss, as well as beloved long-time arts advocate and philanthropic leader, Cecily E. Horton. All three honorees exemplify the highest level of artistic vision, leadership, and advocacy within the Texas region, and stand apart as leading figures and visionary talents.”

“I’m honored to have served on the selection panel for the 2023 Texas Artist of the Year,” says Anna Walker, Executive Director, Lawndale Art Center, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. “It’s an incredible award and Vincent Valdez is well deserving of this recognition. I still remember one of my first experiences of Valdez’s work, a charcoal drawing of a boxer laid out, lifeless on a table. His careful draftsmanship of each wrinkle in the cloth and the haunting





depths of charcoal around the figure stay with me. I'm so excited to see him receive an award that honors his artistic practice and the important contributions he has made to contemporary art in Texas."

"I've followed Vincent's work since his exhibition 'Without End' at the University of Texas at Arlington in 2008," says Christopher Blay, Writer and Chief Curator at the Houston Museum of African American Culture in Houston, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "I had the privilege of meeting him at a reception afterwards and shared my enthusiasm for the grit and nuances in his practice. That practice has developed over the years since and has become an important contribution to contemporary art in Texas. We are fortunate to have Vincent as part of the Texas art landscape and no one is more deserving of this honor at such a pivotal moment in their practice. I join my colleagues in expressing sincere congratulations to Vincent as the 2023 Texas Artist of the Year."

"Vincent Valdez is one of the most recognizable artists in the state, who continuously uses his work to activate audiences to think more critically and deeply," says Vivian Li, the Lupe Murchison Curator of Contemporary Art at the Dallas Museum of Art, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "His insistence to understand our collective history—and all its ghoulish pathos and beauty—seeks to replace it with humanity and dignity."

"In a city where the arts are supported by a strong group of patrons, professionals, and dedicated volunteers, Wendy Watriss remains at the forefront of all efforts to create a unique profile for the city of Houston as a place that truly celebrates our creative communities," says Dr. Alvia J. Wardlaw, Art Historian, Director, and Curator, Texas Southern University Museum, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "Her creation of and continuous development of FotoFest has made Houston a place of special support for those throughout the world for whom photography is a passion and a calling. As she continues her work without her partner Fred Baldwin, her heart, her ideas, and her vision continue to impact all of us."

"Through her work at FotoFest, Wendy Watriss, along with her husband Fred Baldwin, made Houston a center and a force for photography that is recognized the world over," says Jon Evans, Chief of Libraries and Archives, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "As the oldest photography festival of its kind in the United States, FotoFest set the standard for how these events could and should foster artists and impact a city's culture."





This was carried out through their rich exhibitions, programming, and educational offerings, not to mention the critical engagement with photographers as part of the portfolio review experience. We all owe Wendy a debt of gratitude for making FotoFest a vital part of our Houston DNA that helps to illuminate our city."

"As an award-winning photographer, through the vision of Wendy Watriss and Fred Baldwin and their efforts for FotoFest, my fine arts career found a worldwide stage," says Earlie Hudnall, Jr., Artist and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "Wendy has been a beacon of light not just for myself but for photographers everywhere."

Wendy Watriss is one of the most accomplished women I have ever known," says Betty Moody, Founder and Director, Moody Gallery, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "She is internationally known as an American photographer, teacher, curator, journalist, writer and FotoFest co-founder. Her achievements in and contributions to photography are stunning. She has enriched the world of photography in Houston and beyond, and certainly is most deserving of the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award. Congratulations Wendy!"

"For the past 30+ years, Cecily E. Horton has been a devoted supporter of artists and organizations in Houston; she has been generous with her time, intellect and funds," says Kerry Inman, Founder and Director, Inman Gallery, and 2023 Award Selection Committee Member. "Honestly, it is hard to imagine our ecosystem without her. She prefers to be 'behind the scenes', but it is time for her to step up and take a bow! The selection committee was thrilled to unanimously vote for Cecily as ALH's 2023 Patron of the Year and we look forward to celebrating with her."

"Cecily Horton has been a steadfast supporter of the arts in Houston over three decades," says Cindi Strauss, Sara and Bill Morgan Curator of Decorative Arts, Craft, and Design, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. "Non-profit art organizations large and small as well as an untold number of artists have benefited from her generosity. Her support, enthusiasm, dedication of time, and wise counsel have helped us all enormously and have resulted in lasting friendships across the community. Without Cecily, experiencing art in Houston would not be what it is today. I cannot think of a more deserving honoree."

"Cecily Horton's consistent impact on art and culture is unrivaled," says John Guess, Jr, Chief Executive Officer at the Houston Museum of African American





Culture in Houston, Texas, and recipient of the 2022 Texas Patron of the Year award. *"Her support for art and culture has always been inclusive and wide ranging. She makes Texas, and the country, a better place."*

"It is a joy to witness a longtime friend Cecily Horton be celebrated, especially as it is not something she would pursue," says Eleanor L Williams, Private Art Dealer and former Lawndale Executive Director (1994-2000). "She is an understated, intelligent, curious "thingest". For the record she is often an anonymous, behind the scenes community supporter."

The ALH Annual Award honorees are selected by a distinguished committee of artists and arts professionals. The selection committee for the 2023 Texas Artist of the Year consisted of the following: Christopher Blay, Writer and Chief Curator at the Houston Museum of African American Culture in Houston, Texas; Letitia Huckaby, Texas Artist of the Year Award recipient in 2022 (Fort Worth, TX); Vivian Li, the Lupe Murchison Curator of Contemporary Art at the Dallas Museum of Art (Dallas, TX); (Houston, TX) and Anna Walker, Executive Director, Lawndale Art Center (Houston, TX). The selection committee for the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts Leadership consisted of the following: Jon Evans, Chief of Libraries and Archives, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston, TX); Camilo Gonzalez, Education, and Technical Director, Aurora Picture Show (Houston, TX); Earlie Hudnall, Jr., Artist (Houston, TX); Betty Moody, Founder and Director, Moody Gallery, (Houston, TX); Dr. Alvia J. Wardlaw (Art Historian, Director, and Curator, Texas Southern University Museum). The selection committee for the 2023 Texas Patron of the Year consisted of the following: John Bradshaw, Non-Profit Consultant (Houston, TX); Kerry Inman, Founder and Director, Inman Gallery (Houston, TX); and Seba Raquel Suber, Deputy Director of the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (Houston, TX)

A solo exhibition celebrating the work of Vincent Valdez will be held from September 15 - December 2, 2023, accompanied by its own published, limited edition artist catalog. All three awardees will be celebrated at ALH's annual gala, which will be held in their honor on **Friday, October 13, 2023, at Hotel ZAZA**. For more information about sponsorship and tickets, contact Jennie Ash at jennie@artleaguehouston.org or 713-523-9530 ext.1006.





Artist Vincent Valdez, *Metanoia* (detail), 2017, oil on canvas, 84x134 inches

2023 Texas Artist of the Year Award Vincent Valdez

Vincent Valdez (b.1977, San Antonio, TX) began drawing at an early age. At age ten, he began painting murals alongside fellow artist/muralist and mentor, Alex Rubio (b.1968, San Antonio, TX). Valdez cites this early experience as his first true education. It deeply impacted his understanding about the relationship between people and images and further propelled him to commit to the longstanding tradition of image-making. To tell stories about people, for people.

Valdez is now recognized for his monumental portrayal of the contemporary figure. His drawn and painted subjects remark on a universal struggle within various socio-political arenas and eras. He states, "My aim is to incite public remembrance and to counter the distorted realities that I witness, like the social amnesia that fogs our collective American memory."

1953 Montrose Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77006
artleaguehouston.org





Vincent Valdez
Image courtesy of the Artist

Valdez received a full scholarship to study at the Rhode Island School of Design, where he earned his BFA in 2000. In 2004, he became the youngest artist to receive a solo exhibition at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio. His first museum exhibition, STATIONS, a suite of 17 monumental charcoal drawings depicting a fictional young boxer who makes his silent procession from locker room to ring to confront his own contemporary Goliath. The subject echoes familiar tales about similar rites of passage, trials and tribulations traced throughout human history.

His dedication to craft and skill along with his investment in presenting critical subjects, has earned him several accolades such as the Mellon Foundations' Latinx Artist Grant (2022), Artadia Artist Grant (2019), The Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors (2016), as well as residencies at Arion Press (2023), Skowhegan School of Painting (2005), The Vermont Studio Center (2011), and the Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin Residency (2014) among others.





Vincent Valdez, *Rise*, oil on canvas, 2019
Image Courtesy of the Artist

Valdez notes, *"It is safe to say that much of my work resonates like an alarm ringing nonstop in my head. I must depict what I witness. I create images as instruments to probe the past in order to reveal an immediacy to what is occurring today."*

"I am alarmed by the denial of history. Therefore, I create counter-images to defy the social amnesia which enables our fateful desire to repeat history. I offer this work as a report—my visual testimony about a struggle for transformation, hope, love and survival in twenty-first century America."

Valdez's work has been widely exhibited and collected by venues such as The Ford Foundation, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, MassMoca, The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, The Smithsonian Museum of American Art, The National Portrait Gallery, The Blanton Museum of Art, The Hammer Museum, among others.

Valdez's first monograph, *Vincent Valdez: In Memory*, published by Radius Books, will be released in April 2023. He is currently an inaugural artist-in-residence at Arion Press where he will be creating a series of drawings to illustrate Kurt Vonnegut's





Slaughterhouse-Five, set to release in September 2023. His upcoming exhibitions include: *2023 Texas Artist of the Year: Vincent Valdez*, Art League Houston (Sept 2023); *Vincent Valdez & Ry Cooder: El Chavez Ravine*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Nov 2023) and *Vincent Valdez, Just A Dream...*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (Fall 2024) and Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) (2025-26).

Valdez currently lives and works in Houston and Los Angeles and is represented by Matthew Brown Gallery in Los Angeles.



Vincent Valdez, *America's Finest*, 2012, graphite on paper, 40 x 26 inches
Image courtesy of the Artist





Vincent Valdez, *The City I*, 2015-16, oil on canvas, 74 x 360 inches
Image courtesy of the Artist



Vincent Valdez, *The Sea*, 2020, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
Image courtesy of the Artist





Vincent Valdez, *TWO THOUSAND SEVENTEEN*, oil pastel on paper, 2017
Image Courtesy of the Artist





Wendy Watriss (photo: Casey Dunn)

2022 Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts Leadership Wendy Watriss

Without a doubt, Wendy Watriss is one of the most internationally known representatives of engaged photojournalism in the USA. Her notable work as a journalist and photographer, includes the civil rights movement, the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, and the Texas German Hill Country. At the same time, her name is indivisibly linked to the FotoFest International, and it's Biennial, which she co-founded in 1983 in Houston, Texas, with her late husband, Fred Baldwin, and the German art historian, Petra Benteler. During its thirty-nine years of championing photography, FotoFest has established itself as one of the world's most important photo events and organizations.

Wendy Watriss' international career as a photographer, curator, journalist, writer and FotoFest co-founder, spans over seven decades. Born in San Francisco in 1943, she grew up in Greece, Spain, France, and the U.S. She studied English and Philosophy and





graduated with honors from New York University. She began her career in the mid-1960s as a journalist and political writer for the St. Petersburg Times and went on to be an associate producer for the new experiment in national television, the Public Broadcast Laboratory in New York - the predecessor for PBS and national public television. In the late 1960s, she began working as a freelance writer and photographer for Newsweek, the New York Times, and international magazines in Africa, East-Central Europe, and Latin America. In 1968-69 she worked across Eastern Europe, where she covered the Prague Spring and the evolution of socialism in Hungary and Romania.

In 1969 while living in Manhattan, Watriss met Fred Baldwin, her future husband and artistic collaborator, and forged a lifelong personal and professional partnership. Her first collaboration with Baldwin featured "*Backroads of America*" a multi-year Texas project documenting and interpreting two-hundred years of settlement, culture, and politics in Texas, looking at the state as an American (U.S.) microcosm. They started their journey in the southern U.S., across Alabama, Mississippi, and the Arkansas Delta into Texas in a camper being towed by a 1957 220S Mercedes Cabriolet. They spent the next fifteen years in Texas, capturing local life in compelling detail. They documented four distinct cultural frontiers in Texas, producing books and projects about each—black and white life in Grimes County, descendants of German settlers in Gillespie County, and Spanish-Mexican working families and ranchers in the Rio Grande Valley and Big Bend regions. During the 1980s and 90s, they also pursued individual projects, including Watriss' coverage of the effects of the herbicide Agent Orange on U.S. Vietnam veterans. Collectively and individually, Watriss and Baldwin worked as freelance photographers in Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador, West Africa, and the southern-southwestern United States. In 1982, Wendy won the World Press Feature Award and Leica's Oskar Barnack Award for the impact of the herbicide Agent Orange used by the U.S. during the Vietnam War.

In 1983, Watriss and Baldwin founded the Houston-based FotoFest International to create a new non-profit U.S. platform for photography to give visibility to conceptual and documentary photography from across the world and provide international opportunities for photographers beyond established museums and commercial galleries. The Biennial, first held in 1986, is now a world-renowned photography event. As Artistic Director for FotoFest, Wendy led its development until the mid-2010s curating and organizing over sixty international and U.S. exhibitions and producing three hardcovers books: the award-winning *IMAGE AND MEMORY*, Photography from Latin America 1866 to 1994 (University of Texas Press, 1998, Austin TX); *VIEW FROM WITHIN*, Photography, Multi-Media and Video from the Arab World (Schilt Publishing, 2014, Amsterdam NL); *CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES, Looking at the Future of the Planet* (with Steven Evans) (Schilt Publishing, 2016, Amsterdam NL). In 1990, FotoFest inaugurated its year-round education program, "*Literacy Through Photography*," in



collaboration with Wendy Ewald. In 1994, a program of traveling shows, exchange programs, and book publications was established for the Biennials and FotoFest's new public art programming between biennial events. The nineteenth FotoFest biennial was held in 2022. Focusing on photography and photo-based media work, it continued FotoFest's tradition of curating a platform where ideas and art can be discussed and discovered within the framework of exhibits, talks, films, and portfolio reviews.

In addition to her strong history of demonstrated impact through her visionary leadership and artistic practice, Wendy has also taught oral history and photography at the University of Texas, Austin, and served on many national and international photography panels and juries, including National Endowment for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts; and Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City. In 2009, she was the guest curator of international exhibitions for the Guangdong Museum, in Guangzhou, China. Wendy is the recipient of several grants for photography from the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts/Mid-Atlantic Arts Alliance, Rockefeller Foundation, Texas State Historical Foundation, Sid Richardson Foundation, and the Texas Committee for the Humanities among others.

Watriss has been widely published and received numerous awards from leading institutions, including the World Press Photo Foundation in the Netherlands (1982), Missouri School of Journalism 'Pictures of the Year', The XI International Interpress Photo, and the Women's International Democratic Federation (Germany). In 1982, Wendy was the first female photojournalist to win the Leica Oskar Barnack Award for her compelling photographic series titled "*The Implications of Agent Orange*," which depicted unflinching black and white pictures revealing the ruthless and devastating consequences to U.S. veterans, following the weaponized use of the herbicide called Agent Orange, during the Vietnam War. She went on to be the recipient of the 'Woman On The Move' Award from the Houston Post and Texas Executive Women (1990), Lifetime Achievement Award from the Houston Fine Arts Fair (2013), and the Icon of Photography Award from the National Society of Photographic Education (2020).

With Fred Baldwin, she has received the Vision Award from the Woodstock Center for Photography and recognition as Honorary Members of the American Society of Magazine Photographers among other. Furthermore, Watriss and Baldwin were the subjects of a PBS Nightly Newshour story in 2018. In addition, Watriss' photographs are part of the collections of the Menil Collection; Museum of Fine Arts Houston; Amon Carter Museum; Bibliothèque nationale de France; and Musée de la Photographie, Charleroi, Belgium. Wendy's photography, writing, and curatorial work have been shown and published throughout the world. Watriss and Baldwin's photography has been featured in several publications including *Looking at the U.S., 1957-1986* (Schilt Publishing, 2009, Amsterdam NL) and *COMING TO TERMS*, The German Hill Country of



Texas (Texas A&M Press, 1991, College Station TX). The archive of Baldwin and Watriss' collective photography, research, and writing, which represents intimate and diverse images of events and lives witnessed by the photographers is now available to the public at the Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



1953 Montrose Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77006
artleaguehouston.org



Cecily E. Horton (photo: Cecily E. Horton)

2023 Texas Patron of the Year Award Cecily E. Horton

Cecily E. Horton is a devoted and beloved arts professional and philanthropist who has made a sustained and transformational impact in the Texas community through her support of the arts. From her first days, at Hiram Butler Gallery, Cecily has promoted artists and their work for thirty-five years in Houston. Her patronage also extends to local arts and culture organizations, helping the city's arts eco-system flourish. Her dedicated pursuit of advancing the arts is evident in the many professional roles she has assumed throughout her career which include: Partner and Director (Appraisals), MKG Art Management, Houston; Print Specialist, Moody Gallery, Houston; Director, Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston; and Assistant to the Executive Director, Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, Boston. Cecily continues to be an active and valued member of the art community and currently sits on boards at the Menil Collection, participating on the Collections Committee (2020-present); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, serving as chair of the Decorative Arts Subcommittee, and current member of the Collections Committee, and Conservation, Library and Arts of Europe Subcommittees (1999-2022); and Glassell School of Art, serving as former chair and current member of the Core Committee (1990-present). Previously, she has served as a trustee at Artadia (2010-2022), and Lawndale Art Center (1989-1999), and participated on advisory boards at the Blaffer Museum, University of Houston; Davis Museum, Wellesley College; and Gulf Coast (Artlies).



ABOUT ALH AWARDS

Texas Artist of the Year Award

In 1983, ALH established the Texas Artist of the Year award as a dynamic project documenting Contemporary Texas art history. The award recognizes artists who have demonstrated exceptional creativity and outstanding achievement, and whose work has had a significant and positive impact on contemporary visual art in Texas. Those who have been recognized have already produced a significant body of work and stand apart as leading figures and visionary talents within the field of contemporary art in Texas. Artists are nominated by a panel of distinguished jurors from across Texas. Jurors determine the award winner and remain anonymous until the winner is announced. Since the inauguration of this award program, thirty-eight outstanding artists have received the distinction of Texas Artist of the Year. Past recipients include Letitia Huckaby, Vicki Meek, Rick Lowe, Margarita Cabrera, Francesca Fuchs, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Terrell James, Amy Blakemore, Havel Ruck Project, Rachel Hecker, Aaron Parazette, Mary McCleary, Joseph Havel, Melissa Miller, Al Souza, The Art Guys, Dick Wray, Luis Jiménez, Bert L. Long, Jr., Jesús Moroles, James Surls, and Dr. John Biggers, among others.

Texas Patron of the Year Award

In 1989, ALH expanded the award to include patrons with its Texas Patron of the Year award to honor extraordinary individuals whose efforts have helped advance the work of Texas artists. The award recognizes the essential role of those who have demonstrated remarkable patronage, and whose ongoing commitment to the arts through innovative, community, or sustained support of artistic activity has made a significant and positive impact on contemporary visual art in Texas. Honorees are nominated and selected by a panel of distinguished jurors who remain anonymous until the winner is announced. Since its inception, sixteen outstanding patrons have received the distinction of Texas Patron of the Year. Past honorees include Melanie Lawson & John Guess, Jr, Chinhui Juhn & Eddie Allen, Mary & Bernardino Arocha, Anita & Gerald Smith, Jereann Chaney, Lynn Goode, Poppi Georges Massey, Annise Parker (Mayor of Houston 2010-16), Stephanie Smither, Leigh & Reggie Smith, Judy & Scott Nyquist, Victoria & Marshal Lightman, Leslie & Brad Bucher, Karol Kreymer & Robert Card, M.D., Anne & James Harithas, Gus Kopriva, Clint Willour, Lester Marks, and Sue Rowan Pittman.



Lifetime Achievement Award in the Visual Arts

In 2013, ALH celebrated its 65th Anniversary as an arts organization and the 30th Anniversary of its Texas Artist of the Year award. In recognition of this occasion, Art League Houston established the Lifetime Achievement Award in the Visual Arts for artists whose career has spanned more than forty years, and who have made an outstanding contribution to the world of visual art in Texas and beyond. Past honorees include Earlie Hudnall, Jr, Celia Álvarez Muñoz, George Smith, Jesse Lott, Forrest Prince and Kermit Oliver.

Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts Leadership

In 2019, ALH expanded the Lifetime Achievement Award to biennially honor visionary and artistic leaders in the community whose creative work has had a positive and long-lasting impact on contemporary visual art in Texas. Past honorees include Dr. Alvia Wardlaw and Betty Moody.

Art League Houston acknowledges the following individuals, private foundations, public funders, and corporations for their support this season:



Catherine D. Anspson & John Mason Walker • Christian Barker & Dr. Grant Hopping • Filippo Castore • Arts Connect Houston • Amy Blakemore • The Harry S. and Isabel C. Cameron Foundation • Jereann H Chaney • Edaren Foundation Nima Farzaneh • Field of Study • Michael Golden • Zachary Gresham & Pablo Moreno • Gustin Law Firm, PLLC • Harris County Department of Education: CASE for Kids – County Connections • Heartmade Houston • HEB • Hooks Epstein Galleries • Jacques Louis Vidal Charitable Fund • Marlene Marker, The Marker Group • Kathrine G. McGovern John P. McGovern Foundation in the name of Kathrine G. McGovern • Jill Nepomnick • Crystal & Don Owens Platt Cheema Richmond PLLC • The Powell Foundation The Probus Law Firm • Joi Maria & Matt Probus • Gordon Shen • Rarity Solutions • Russell Reynolds Associates • Saint Arnold Brewing Company • SK Foundation • Leigh & Reggie Smith • Scott Sparvero • Talley Dunn Gallery • Texas Art Supply • The Texas Cultural Trust • Workhorse Printmakers • Wortham Foundation • Lauri & Robert Wray

