2026 BAKER ARTIST AWARDS FINALIST EXHIBITION

From over 1000 portfolios on the Baker Artist Portfolio site, 36 Baltimore-area artists were selected by a pool of 12 regional jurors for demonstrating excellence in three areas: mastery of craft, depth of artistic exploration, and unique vision.

In this exhibition, Current Space, the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, and the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance are proud to present 16 of the artists selected as finalists for the 2026 Baker Artist Awards in the Interdisciplinary Art, Film & Photography, and Visual Arts - 2D and 3D discipline categories.

Thea Canlas
Schroeder Cherry
Joan Cox
McCormack and Figg
Erin Fostel
David Friedheim
Stephanie Garmey
David Hess
Kei Ito
Alaina Lurry
Lusmerlin
Mary Deacon Opasik
Soledad Salamé
Tony Shore
Wickerham & Lomax
Lite Zhang

Opening Reception: Friday, April 17, 7-10pm

Exhibit Runs: April 17 - May 27, 2026

Gallery Hours: Saturdays 1-5pm, during public garden bar hours (Wed-Sat, 5-11pm), or by appointment

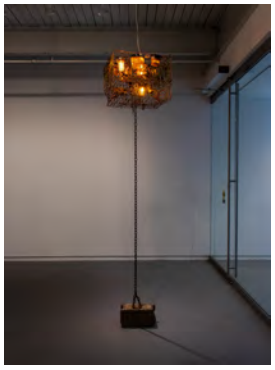
Closing Reception & Artist Talks: Sunday, May 17, 4-6pm

2026 BAKER ARTIST AWARDS FINALIST EXHIBITION Works List

Lite Zhang

Lite Zhang (b. 1998, China) is a New York and Baltimore based artist who is interested in space and audience interaction.

Key Bridge is my response to the Francis Scott Key Bridge accident. At the top is the iconic Maryland crab cage, and shut in the center is the amber strobe light representing the construction crew flashing in random bursts. The whole is crashed to the ground by the heavy masonry.



Key Bridge, 2024
crab cage, concrete sink, metal chain, strobe light
110” x 24” x 24”
$14,500

same roots 9, 2021
driftwood, brown paper
12.5" x 22" x 12"
$1,800
On View in the Front Window

David Friedheim

I am intrigued by grotesque imagery and its use in the decorative arts. Many of my images originate in wooden furniture, ceramic plates, illuminated manuscripts and various forms of wall coverings. I believe that creativity is often found in nooks and corners. I like building something large out of an accumulation of smaller parts. The smaller steel drawings are made individually. They are then arranged in various combinations to fit an available surface or to create narratives.

Winged Creature pair, 2026
Steel
79"1/2"H x 108"W x 50"D
$12,000

Lusmerlin

LUSMERLIN traces her lineage generations to one of the founding fathers of the Dominican Republic, to the Roman era Levant of 200 AD, to Native Tainos in the ceramic era of 800 BC, and, most influential in her upbringing, strong African heritage in her town of Villa Mella.

This piece is part of *Big Bang Baby*, which asks not what divinity is in the abstract, but how creation, belief, and cosmic origin are carried, embodied, and reimagined across generations.

Consecration of Stardust, 2025
Pastel and Acrylic on Wood
48 × 36 in
Price on request

Thea Canlas

Thea Canlas is a Filipina-American artist whose conceptual, research-driven work explores the entanglements of diasporic Philippine identity through sculptural objects, textiles, installations, and digital media. Flag Studies is a meditation on statecraft and how Philippine national identity is invented and imagined.This series also aims to critique the state-sanctioned "imaginings" of Philippine national identity, its ties to American imperial rule, and how its contemporary articulations evolve within the Philippine diaspora.

Flag Studies Installation #3, 2025
Machine embroidered piña cloth, traditional textiles from different parts of the Philippines, and digitally printed polyester satin
Size variable
Flags $800 - $1000 each

Erin Fostel

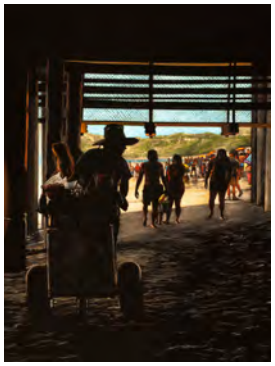
Erin Fostel (American, b.1981) is a visual artist who creates representational drawings with charcoal. Her work often depicts the everyday moments of life, from images of intimate home interiors to the shared public space. *Judith watches over* is part of a series a series of drawings of women's bedrooms. Fostel focused on the bedroom as a unique place where a sole woman occupant can be free of much of the objectification and expectation imposed upon her most anywhere else in her life, which is why her figure is explicitly not shown. We acknowledge her through representation of her space, rather than her body.

Judith watches over, 2021
Charcoal and graphite on Rives BFK
32 x 42 x 1 inches
$6,750

Tony Shore

Tony Shore is a Baltimore-based artist who paints on Black velvet mostly recognized for his autobiographical paintings of blue-collar life in Southwest Baltimore.

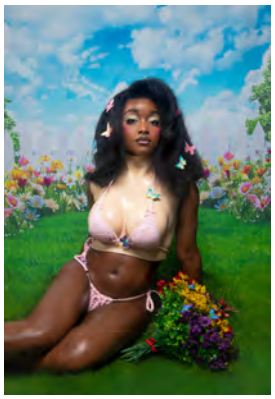
The people that I paint, mostly family, friends, and neighbors, are often referred to as inner city hillbillies, or even worse, white trash. The places that I paint are usually seen as deteriorating slums or white trash ghettos. I see once proud neighborhoods and buildings, occupied by real people with real stories. I choose to paint them with sincerity, dignity, and honesty. My subjects and my medium then, become intertwined, each with its own value and history. This mutual relationship is a driving force in my work.



Santa Monica Pier, 2023
acrylic on velvet on panel
40 x 30 x 2 inches
NFS

Alaina Lurry

Alaina Lurry (she/her) is an Atlanta-born, Baltimore-based image maker and creative director. Her work explores the intricacies of Black womanhood and self-identity. She creates spaces of comfort for her community while honoring Blackness with care and authenticity, all while critiquing societal perceptions of Blackness. Through research, set design, costuming, and image-making, Alaina stylistically investigates the intersections of Black womanhood through comparison, juxtaposition, and commentary. By imaging herself and her community, she pushes the boundaries of Black portraiture.



Since Why is Difficult to Handle, One Must Take Refuge In How (Hadiya), 2025
24x27
Inkjet Print
$650

Wickerham & Lomax

The Baltimore-based multidisciplinary artist duo Wickerham & Lomax, comprising Daniel Wickerham and Malcolm Lomax (both b. 1986), create works that coalesce varying idiosyncratic interests—pop culture, subculture, the body, identity, gender, the cultural history of Baltimore, and the influences of digital technologies and social spaces. The imagery, tropes, and motifs in their art may appear disparate, yet from these many parts emerges a synchronistic whole. Their maximalist aesthetic manifests the interconnectivity of these themes, producing work that is visually dense while conceptually cohesive.

Lovers Interfacing between Home and the Moon, 2020
Dye sublimation on canvas, wood, hardware, beads, artist frame
106 x 99 x 3¾ in.
$15,000

Joan Cox

For Joan Cox (born 1969) painting has always been about survival. Not the survival of ego, career, or canon—but of tenderness. Of love. Of memory. The Baltimore-based artist has spent more than two decades making the intimate lives of lesbian couples visible on canvas — with vivid color, energetic brushwork and nuanced symbolism. She layers deeply personal experiences with broader political and emotional truths.

By reimagining historical art compositions with personal narratives and lush, symbolic imagery, Joan challenges the historical absence of lesbian representation in Western art. Her paintings are a canvas of affirmation, celebrating the dynamic and complex intimacies between women, which have long been overlooked or taboo.

NIghtHunger, 2012
Oil on canvas
60" x 50"
NFS

Love in the Shade, 2023
Oil on canvas
40” x 54”
$7,500
On View in the Front Window

Stephanie Garmey

Animals have an instinctual flow within the balance of their particular ecosystems. Each has their own remarkable intelligence and skills, bound in the instinctual knowledge that is the book needed to teach future animal generations. All of these animals are impacted by human lack of deference to the delicate balance of nature. We know that the animal pathways, created over thousands of years and generations, are at risk globally. These portraits of animals in their environments are meant to remind us of our own ancient origins and the positive and fruitful acknowledgement of animal power and coexistence that is at the roots of human culture.

Keeper of The Woods (Black Bear), 2020
Fabric, embroidery, cut paper, wax, transfers, wood
54”Diameter x 72”H
NFS

McCormack and Figg

Jenn Figg and Matthew McCormack are collaborative, interdisciplinary artist-researchers investigating light energy and universal geometries. Our backgrounds are rooted in the material experiences and craft methodologies of textiles and glass. While we identify our creative heritage with the feminist fibers movement of the 1960’s and the American Studio Glass movement respectively, we draw directly from a myriad of inspirational sources beyond the arts field. Science and engineering are foundational.

performance relic, *Timber: Sonoran Flora*, 2024
Paper, ink, adhesive
22" x 9" x 24"
NFS

Soledad Salamé

Soledad Salamé, American, was born in Chile in 1954. The artist moved to Baltimore in 1987 before establishing – in 2009 – a vibrant print studio in Baltimore. Salamé is an active member of the Baltimore arts community, and a lifelong educator. As an interdisciplinary artist, she creates work that originates from extensive investigation into specific topics. In the pursuit of new ideas, she has conducted intensive field research in the Americas, Antarctica, and beyond.

Fast Fashion Atacama I & IV, 2025
Archival print on canvas with hand embroidery
2 panels, 59 x 38 in. each
NFS

Mary Deacon Opasik

Mary Deacon Opasik creates found object assemblage as a way to give new life and meaning to materials that have been discarded, overlooked or forgotten. She is drawn to quiet histories embedded in everyday objects--weathered wood, rusted metal, broken fragments--and sees in them a narrative that deserves to be continued. Opasik's art exists at the intersection of art and sustainability. She deliberately uses repurposed and reclaimed materials to challenge the culture of waste and overconsumption.

In *SELF PORTRAIT*, Opasik uses repurposed leather bridle parts donated from an Arabbers stable, connecting personal identity with Baltimore's urban agricultural traditions. The artwork honors the histories embedded in these materials while reimagining their form and meaning.

SELF PORTRAIT, 2024
Arabber horse bridle parts, brass, lambswool, wire, furniture fragment, cloth, miniature plastic figurines
53 x 14 x 10in
$2,800

Schroeder Cherry

Originally from Washington, DC, Schroeder Cherry is an award- winning , Maryland-based multimedia assemblage artist and puppeteer whose art for decades has captured everyday scenes of African diaspora life. Cherry's art works are open-ended narratives inspired by travel, music, literature, folklore, and everyday events. Mixed media assemblage paintings on wood often incorporate discarded objects. Keys, and locks represent tools of access. Watermelon images refute negative stereotypes by representing positive aspects of the African diaspora. Glass shards, metal, buttons, playing cards - all become part of the materials telling a story.

Salvador Series, Garcom, 2025
Acrylic with objects on wood
33 x 27.5 x 3 in
$2,400

Salvador Series, Dip, 2025
Acrylic with objects on wood
32.5 x 25 x 2 in
$2,000

David Hess

David Hess harvests contrasting forms and materials to create a collision between the man-made and natural worlds. Hess refers to these artifacts as “rescued objects,” suggesting that these materials are loaded with history and cultural narrative – making them not only worthy of salvage, but of incorporation and preservation. These works are part of the “Reconstruction” series, which investigates the materials and metaphors of labor through public art, private sculptural and object-painting works.

Winter, 2016
Steel, Plastic
40" x 40" x 8"
NFS

Boulder Truck, 2012
Stainless Steel
20" x 40" x 20"
NFS

Kei Ito

Kei Ito is an interdisciplinary conceptual artist whose practice bridges experimental photography, performance, sculpture, and large-scale installation. Working primarily with cameraless photographic processes, Ito uses light, breadth, and material experimentation to visualize invisible forces such as memory, trauma, and environmental impact. His work excavates hidden histories–particularly those connected to nuclear violence–through ritualistic image making and immersive environments that draw on the language of monuments and memorials.

Infertile American Dream, 2017
Unique C-print photograms (model house, first sunlight of November 9, 2016—the morning following the presidential election announcement, artist’s breath), Dibond
Triptych of 38 x 27 x 2 in.
NFS

About the Baker Artist Portfolios and Awards

Established and funded by the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund and managed by the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, the Baker Artist Portfolios and associated awards were launched in 2009 to recognize Baltimore's talented artists, engage the public in supporting their work, and promote Greater Baltimore as a strong creative community. Each year, one artist per discipline (Visual Arts - 2D, Visual Arts - 3D, Film & Photography, Interdisciplinary Art, Literary Arts, and Performing Arts) is awarded a $10,000 Mary Sawyers Baker Prize and one of those awardees is selected to receive the additional $30,000 Mary Sawyers Imboden Prize.

Explore all of the 2026 Finalists

Create Your Own Baker Artist Portfolio

Current Space is an artist-run gallery, studio, and outdoor performance space, nourishing an ongoing dialogue between artists, activists, performers, designers, curators, and thinkers. Operating since November 2004, we are committed to showcasing, developing, and broadening the reach of artists locally and internationally.

Contact us at: currentspace@gmail.com

Thank You

This exhibition is made possible in part with support from the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund and The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance.

Programs at Current Space are made possible in part by supporting members like you.

Become a sustaining member

Support the programs you value by becoming a member of Current Space. Membership comes with a range of perks, from artwork discounts to free event admission to invites to Members Only parties. Memberships truly have a big impact on what we're able to do. Thank you for your support!