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Multidisciplinary artist and Bemis alum Paula Wilson

New Mexico–Based Artist Paula Wilson Receives Bemis Center’s Ree Kaneko Award

OMAHA, Neb. (March 5, 2025) — [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#) is pleased to announce multidisciplinary artist [Paula Wilson](#) as the 2024 recipient of its annual Ree Kaneko Award. As part of Bemis Center’s Alumni Program, this prestigious award provides \$25,000 in financial support to increase the capacity of a Bemis alum’s practice. Wilson — known for her dynamic, layered, and often monumental works — presented her solo exhibition, [The Backward Glance](#), at Bemis Center in 2017, making her eligible for this honor.

Wilson will return to Omaha from Carrizozo, New Mexico to participate in a public artist talk on April 2. Reflecting on her time at Bemis nearly eight years ago, she shared, “My solo exhibition [there] was a pivotal moment in my practice, allowing me to weave together personal and collective stories through an expansive multimedia installation. The support and relationships I built at Bemis remain integral to my work, and this recognition reaffirms the meaningful connections and shared creativity that define our artistic community.”

In *The Backward Glance*, Wilson transported viewers into a mythological landscape through paintings, video, and prints on fabric. Exploring themes of race, identity, and the representation of the female body, she transformed Bemis’s galleries into a processional

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space where ancient symbolism met contemporary expression. The exhibition was widely recognized for its immersive storytelling and bold visual language, reinforcing Wilson's place as a leading voice in contemporary art.

"Paula Wilson's career trajectory exemplifies the impact of providing artists with time, space, and resources," said **Chris Cook, Bemis Center Executive Director**, who curated *The Backward Glance* in 2017. "Her exhibition at Bemis was a transformative moment — one that reflected her visionary approach to materials and storytelling. It's been inspiring to witness how her practice has expanded in the years since, reaching national and international audiences. We're thrilled to celebrate her achievements with this well-deserved award."

The 2024 Ree Kaneko Award recipient was selected from a pool of nominated Bemis alumni by a distinguished panel: **Hallie Ringle**, Interim Director and Daniel and Brett Sundheim Chief Curator, ICA Philadelphia; **DJ Hellerman**, Deputy Director and Senior Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art (moCa) Cleveland; **Taylor Renee Aldridge**, Executive Director, Modern Ancient Brown Foundation, Detroit; and **Rachel Adams**, Chief Curator and Director of Programs, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha.

SPECIAL EVENT

[In Conversation with Paula Wilson: 2024 Ree Kaneko Award Recipient](#)

Wednesday, April 2, 2025 | 6–7 p.m. CT

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts | 724 S 12th St, Omaha, Nebraska

Free admission

Wilson will discuss her artistic practice, past projects, and upcoming work.

A Meet + Greet with Wilson exclusively for current Bemis Center Members will take place at 5 p.m. before the public talk.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

[Paula Wilson](#) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Carrizozo, New Mexico. Her densely layered, colorful, and often monumental works incorporate painting, collage, film, installation, performance, and printmaking. Born in Chicago, Wilson received her BFA from Washington University in St. Louis in 1998 and her MFA from Columbia University in 2005.

Her work is held in the collections of The Studio Museum in Harlem, Yale University, Princeton University Art Museum, The Albuquerque Museum, and The New York Public Library, among others. Wilson has been featured in publications including *Hyperallergic*, *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *The New Yorker*. She is the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Artist Grant, the Bob and Happy Doran Fellowship at Yale University, Princeton University's Hodder Grant, and the Lunder Institute Ossorio Fellowship.

Wilson's practice blurs the boundaries between function and artistic expression, embodying a seamless synthesis of creativity and daily life. She lives and collaborates with her husband, woodworker Mike Lagg, together they co-founded MoMAZoZo in 2010 and the Carrizozo Artists-in-Residence program in 2015, which has welcomed over 90 artists to this high-desert town.

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ABOUT THE AWARD

Granted to artists who have participated in Bemis Center's residency program or had a solo exhibition at the organization, this \$25,000 unrestricted annual award supports alumni artists in expanding their practice. It is made possible through the generous contributions of Bemis Center donors.

As part of Bemis Center's 40th anniversary in 2021, the award was increased and renamed in honor of **Ree Kaneko**, Bemis Center co-founder, first Executive Director, and Board Member Emerita. Her vision and passion embody the spirit of this award, which provides transformative support to artists. Funds may be used for any purpose and do not need to be tied to a specific project or body of work. The award is by nomination only and selected by a panel of curators and art historians.

Recent awardees include **Tania Candiani** (2023), **Edra Soto** (2022), and **Raven Chacon** (2021).

Learn more at bemiscenter.org/alumni-program.

ABOUT BEMIS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts facilitates the creation, presentation, and understanding of contemporary art through an international residency program, exhibitions, and educational programs to inspire an open and diverse dialogue on the critical issues that give shape and meaning to the human condition. Visit bemiscenter.org for more information.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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Media kits, including high-resolution images of select works, are available at bemiscenter.org/press.



Paula Wilson, *The Backward Glance* (installation view), on view at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts February 2, 2017–April 29, 2017. Photo by Colin Conces.

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Paula Wilson, *Between Two*, 2010. In collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum. Acrylic, oil, oil-based ink, spray paint, watercolor, marker, colored pencil, felt, paper, canvas, thread. 126 x 174 inches. Photo: Mindy McDaniel. Courtesy of the artist and the Tang Teaching Museum & Art Gallery.



Paula Wilson, *Remodeled*, 2007. Relief woodcut, offset lithography and silkscreen with collaged elements and hand coloring. Produced and edited at Columbia University's Leroy Neiman Center for Print Studies, New York, NY. 19 1/2 x 25 3/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Paula Wilson in 2017 visiting Omaha's bygone live television morning program The Morning Blend on channel KMTV alongside hosts Mary Nelson and Mike DiGiacomo.