

# FORT GANSEVOORT

# ARTFORUM

**VANESSA GERMAN WINS \$200,000 DON TYSON PRIZE**

December 18, 2018



Vanessa German. Photo: The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas has named Vanessa German as the 2018 recipient of the Don Tyson Prize, a \$200,000 biennial award for outstanding achievement in American art. A Pittsburgh-based artist and activist, German uses her practice to explore the power of art in transforming communities.

Tyson Foods chairman John Tyson, Crystal Bridges founder and board chair Alice Walton, and Crystal Bridges curator of contemporary art Lauren Haynes presented the prize to German at her Art House, a living and work space that serves as a refuge for kids in the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh, on Monday, December 17. German was inspired to open Art House after children began hanging out on her porch to watch her make new work.

“Art has been transformational in my life, particularly in confronting and contending with the dimensional violence of racism,” German said in a statement. “I create artworks, experiences, and spaces of social healing, connection, and expression. This award not only allows me to deepen my studio practice and anchor the Art House, but it also provides an opportunity to pay it forward and continue the work of my mother, Sandra German, who affirmed the lives, activism, and creative power of those around her.”

German plans to use the funds to launch a new project at the Art House called the “Museum of Resilience.” The initiative will celebrate black women, trans women, single mothers, and their children, “while simultaneously resisting the violence of gentrification.”

# FORT GANSEVOORT

Crystal Bridges began taking nominations for the Don Tyson Prize in early 2018 for organizations and individual artists working in any medium anywhere in the US. The prize jury that selected German described her artwork “as pushing boundaries and taking risks in the field of American art, as well as positively impacting her community through art experiences.”

German also creates sculptures of African American “power figures,” crafted from found objects, that confront violence and systemic racism. Some of these sculptures were featured in the 2014 exhibition “State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now.” German will soon be featured in a documentary film on *State of the Art*, which will debut on PBS in April 2019. Her work can be found in the collections of the Everson Museum of Art, the Figge Art Museum, the Flint Institute of Arts, the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the David C. Driskell Center, and the Snite Museum of Art, among other institutions.

“Vanessa’s work is inspiring, socially relevant, and continues to have a great impact, not only on the Homewood community, but the contemporary art world as a whole,” said Haynes. Crystal Bridges has acquired German’s works *Souvenir of Our Trip*; *White Naptha Soap or, Contemporary Lessons in Shapeshifting*; and *Artist Considers the 21st Century Implications of Psychosis as Public Health Crisis or, Critical/Comedic Analysis into the Pathophysiology of Psychosis*. German will also give a talk at Crystal Bridges on April 24, 2019 as a part of the museum’s Distinguished Speaker Series.

Established in honor of the late Don Tyson, a former collector and chairman and CEO of Tyson Foods, Inc., the award is made possible by a \$5 million endowment from the Tyson family. German is only the second recipient of the honor. In 2016, the inaugural prize was given to the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, DC.