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ARTnews

Vanessa German Wins \$200,000 Don Tyson Prize

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Vanessa German in Avery Court at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut.
ALLEN PHILLIPS/COURTESY WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas has named Vanessa German as the 2018 winner of the biannual Don Tyson Prize, which has a \$200,000 purse. The museum began taking nominations for the prize early this year, and German was chosen by a jury of arts professionals for “pushing boundaries and taking risks in the field of American art” and “positively impacting her community through art experiences,” according to a release.

German is a Pittsburgh-based sculptor, painter, writer, activist, performer, and poet. She is the founder of Art House, a space in the city’s Homewood neighborhood where women, children, and families can create art. A selection of her sculptures of African-American “power figures,” which she builds with

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found objects, figured in the 2014 exhibition “*State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now*” at Crystal Bridges. German will appear in a PBS documentary called *State of the Art*, which premieres in April 2019.

German said in a statement, “Art has been transformational in my life, particularly in confronting and contending with the dimensional violence of racism. I create art works, 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.”

The Don Tyson Prize, named for former Tyson Foods CEO and chairman Don Tyson, was established in 2012 when Crystal Bridges received a \$5 million endowment from the Tyson family and Tyson Foods, Inc. The museum’s Tyson Scholars of American Art program was also launched that year. Since its inception, the prize has been endowed with an additional \$5 million from the family and company. The inaugural award was given to the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., in 2016.

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