

NEWS

## Artists Nicole Eisenman and LaToya Ruby Frazier Among 2015 MacArthur 'Genius Grant' Winners

by Hrag Vartanian on September 29, 2015

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Left, Nicole Eisenman, and, right, LaToya Ruby Frazier (all photos courtesy John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation)

Two prominent US artists, [Nicole Eisenman](#) and [LaToya Ruby Frazier](#), are among the 24 winners of this year's John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation fellowships, often referred to as "genius grants." The MacArthur Fellows Program awards \$625,000 annually to recipients over the course of five years. Eisenman and Frazier were the only contemporary visual artists selected for this year's honor. Among the other 2015 MacArthur winners are journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates, choreographer Michelle Dorrance, writer Ben Lerner, and poet Ellen Bryant Voigt. A complete list of fellows is available on the foundation [website](#).



LaToya Ruby Frazier

A teacher at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, LaToya Ruby Frazier uses the language of documentary filmmaking and photography to explore social inequality, race, and class.

In her best-known work, [The Notion of Family](#), Frazier photographs herself along with her mother and grandmother

in their hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania. The series depicts intergenerational relationships in the setting of a town facing neglect, high unemployment, and economic decline caused by the closure of a local steel mill. *The Notion of Family* was published as a book by Aperture in 2014, and it was awarded the [2015 Infinity Award for Best Publication](#) by the International Center of Photography.

In 2013, Hyperallergic Senior Editor Jillian Steinhauer called Frazier's *Haunted Capital* exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, which included *The Notion of Family*, "one of the most powerful exhibitions I saw all year." She explained that the exhibition was "so damn daring, gripping, and haunting, it's hard not to judge everything around it by its standard. With her deeply personal black-and-white photographs set against a quietly political backdrop, Frazier challenges us to actively see what's going on all around us. It's hard work, exhausting even, and we'd rather repress those emotions and move on. But Frazier demands that we look, and in looking, feel."

First awarded in 1981, MacArthur Fellowships are decided by an anonymous group that nominates potential awardees, who are then presented to an anonymous selection committee that decides the winners. While there are no restrictions placed on winners, recipients must be citizens or residents of the United States. The [awards are presented to](#) "talented individuals who have shown extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction."