

Maria Thereza Alves Wins Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics

Manhattan's the New School has announced that Brazilian artist Maria Thereza Alves was named the winner of the 2016–2018 Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, which honors artists “who have taken great risks to advance social justice in a profound and visionary way.”

Alves was recognized for her longterm project “Seeds of Change,” which she launched in 2002. By following the movement of seeds that have been distributed by cargo ships carrying people and goods around the globe, Alves explores notions of colonialism, commerce, ecology, and migration. She addresses various questions relating to identity and belonging such as: At what moment do seeds become ‘native’?



In a joint statement, the jury said, “By reimagining the historical geography of the contemporary world, she practices globalization from below to understand the planet as a holistic ecology.” Chaired by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the jury consisted of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Charif Kiwan, Carin Kuoni, and Radhika Subramaniam.

The five finalists for the prize included the London-based interdisciplinary research agency Forensic Architecture; the artists coalition Gulf Labor; House of Natural Fibers, a new media arts laboratory in Yogyakarta, Indonesia; IsumaTV, a collaborative multimedia platform for indigenous filmmakers and media organization in Canada; and MadeYouLook, an artist collective based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Established in 2012 in celebration of the Vera List Center's twentieth anniversary, the biennial prize awards projects for their longterm impact, boldness, and artistic excellence. Previous winners of the prize include Theaster Gates for “Dorchester Projects” (2012–2014) and Abounaddara, an anonymous collective of Syrian filmmakers, (2014–2016).