THE HEINZ AWARDS

HEINZ AWARDS 30th ANNIVERSARY

for the Arts, Economy and Environment

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Depicting Deep and Personal Commitments to Identity, Community and Storytelling: Heinz Family Foundation Names Jennifer Packer and Marie Watt Recipients of the 30th Heinz Awards for the Arts

PITTSBURGH, September 16, 2025 — The Heinz Family Foundation today named Jennifer M. Packer and Marie K. Watt recipients of the prestigious 30th Heinz Award for the Arts. As part of the accolade, Ms. Packer and Ms. Watt will each receive an unrestricted cash award of $250,000.

Jennifer Packer is a celebrated figurative artist whose fluid paintings and drawings merge expressive linework, luminous color and passages of dissolution to powerful effect. Working primarily in portraiture and still life, she portrays her subjects — often friends and family — with tenderness and depth. These figures appear to emerge from or recede into the picture plane, a deliberate act of providing her sitters with privacy and autonomy. The emotional and psychological complexity of her work unfolds gradually, inviting sustained contemplation.

"Storytelling is at the center of how we understand ourselves and everything else," said Ms. Packer. "Most stories, regardless of their significance, are held solely in the body or in language, and they disappear when that body is lost. I care very deeply about many things and am certain that few will try to contain them in the way I know they deserve to be held."

Deeply informed by art and social history, Ms. Packer explores the politics of visibility, identity and mourning. This stems from her early days of grappling with public fixation on representation of American identity and her desire to capture something knowable of the humans willing to sit in front of her. Her paintings possess a formal discipline refined through years of practice, yet remain open, intimate and alive with improvisation. Her still life botanical works, which are partially influenced by watching the events that gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement, often serve as objects of remembrance. Simultaneously lush and mournful, they speak to beauty shadowed by grief.

"There is a naturally powerful and confusing tension between the pain of grieving remembrance and the radiance of perseverant, living things," Ms. Packer added. "How lucky are we to survive? I hope it is clear that the work is fought for, not out of some fixation with making beautiful objects or mindlessly carrying a torch for the tradition of painting, but as a true existential and evidential practice."

Across her body of work, Ms. Packer constructs a language of softness and strength, weaving the personal with the political. Her paintings do not offer simple narratives; instead, they hold space for complexity, for quiet and for the dignity of life.

"My husband, John Heinz, viewed the arts as a medium through which a society examines its conscience and searches for its identity," said Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. "Jennifer's work is at once infused with beauty and grief. Her paintings bear witness to our unfolding history,

compelling us to move beyond mere reflection to a place of changed understanding and respectful connection to her subjects and their stories."

Ms. Packer's work has been the subject of acclaimed solo exhibitions, including at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, London's Serpentine Galleries, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Marie Watt is an interdisciplinary artist whose work weaves together printmaking, textiles and sculpture to explore cultural intersections and the rich tapestry of shared human stories. A citizen of the Seneca Nation (part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy) with German-Scot ancestry, Ms. Watt draws upon Haudenosaunee feminist teachings, Indigenous knowledge and her own family history to address themes relevant to contemporary life. Her work often centers on community — both as subject and collaborator — sparking multigenerational dialogue and a deeper sense of connection between people and place.

Blankets, which in many Indigenous communities are gifted to mark milestone events, play a central role in Ms. Watt's practice. Her "Blanket Stories" sculpture series comprises towering structures of folded blankets donated to the artist by local communities, each accompanied by stories marking the importance of these simple items to the individual or family. Ms. Watt transforms the humble objects into monolithic monuments of care and collective histories.

"I see blankets as living, storied objects," said Ms. Watt. "Many blankets, particularly wool blankets and quilts, are passed down through generations. We are received into this world in blankets and in many ways depart in a blanket, and in between we are constantly imprinting on them — worn areas, stained bits and mended parts are like beauty marks and part of the object's history."

Ms. Watt's deep commitment to community engagement was powerfully embodied in her 2023 installation, "Sky Dances Light." Suspended from the ceiling, cloud-shaped forms shimmered with thousands of tin jingles, evoking the ceremonial regalia used in Native American jingle dances — traditionally performed as a healing offering. In a thoughtful break from conventional gallery norms, visitors were invited to touch the work, setting the jingles into motion and activating a soundscape of collective resonance and shared restoration.

"I approach this dance between community, conceptually storied materials and my studio with openness," said Ms. Watt. "I am drawn to the relationship between part and whole, call and response, individual and group. Working with the community resonates with me as it connects art and life in a tangible way."

More recently, in her 2024 installation "Land Stitches Water Sky" at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Ms. Watt reflected on Pittsburgh's industrial legacy while honoring the contributions of Indigenous steelworkers, particularly Haudenosaunee "Skywalkers" who helped shape the modern urban skyline. In 2025, her work has also been on view at the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, The Gund at Kenyon College and the Shelburne Museum in Vermont.

"We honor Marie for her thought-provoking work that graciously allows us entry to Indigenous traditions, culture and histories and to the application of that collective wisdom to contemporary life," said Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. "Marie's art brings us joy, and her welcoming practice of engaging the community is a model and inspiration for creating lasting intergenerational connections."

Created to honor the memory of the late U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrate excellence and achievement in areas of great importance to Senator Heinz. The 30th Awards bring the total number of recipients to 186 and reflect more than $32 million in awards since the program was launched in 1993.

Additional recipients by category are:

Economy: Byron Auguste, Ph.D., President and Co-Founder, Opportunity@Work, Washington, D.C., is leading a national movement to remove degree requirements from hiring practices and expand access to good jobs for STARs — workers Skilled Through Alternative Routes. His work has helped shift hiring norms among major employers and policymakers, unlocking opportunities for millions.

Economy: Sara Bronin, J.D., Founder, National Zoning Atlas, and Professor of Law at The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., is an architect, attorney and policymaker whose work demystifies zoning laws and their impact on equity, sustainability and housing access. By creating tools like the National Zoning Atlas and the National Preservation Atlas, she empowers communities to advocate for just, well-designed spaces.

Environment: Dana Gunders, President, ReFED, Truckee, California, is a national leader in the movement to reduce food waste. Her work has catalyzed public awareness, shifted consumer behavior and influenced policy to reduce the 73.9 million tons of food wasted annually in the U.S., mitigating climate impacts and promoting sustainable food systems.

Environment: Sacoby Wilson, Ph.D., Professor, University of Maryland, and Founder, T.H.E. EJ Lab and CEEJH INC, College Park, Maryland, is an environmental health scientist and justice advocate whose research and community partnerships address environmental racism and pollution in frontline communities. His hyperlocal data tools and engagement efforts empower communities to demand cleaner, healthier environments.

Recipients of the 30th Heinz Awards will be honored in October in Pittsburgh. For more information on the awardees, visit www.heinzawards.org.

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of the recipients, please contact Abby Manishor at AManishor@burness.com or 917-539-3308.

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About the Heinz Awards

Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrate the accomplishments and spirit of the Senator by recognizing the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the areas of greatest importance to him. The Awards, administered by the Heinz Family Foundation, currently recognize individuals for their contributions in the areas of the Arts, the Environment and the Economy. Nominations are submitted by invited experts, who serve anonymously, and are reviewed by jurors appointed by the Heinz Family Foundation. The jurors make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which subsequently selects the Award recipients. For more information on the Heinz Awards, visit www.heinzawards.org.

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