

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Davis Museum at Wellesley College Announces Maria Molteni as Winner of the 2022 Prilla Smith Brackett Award**



WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Davis Museum at Wellesley College is delighted to announce that Maria Molteni is the recipient of the 2022 Prilla Smith Brackett Award. Molteni will receive \$15,000 to support their art practice and will be featured in a virtual exhibition that will go live on the Davis Museum website in November 2022. The biennial Prilla Smith Brackett Award honors an

outstanding female-identified visual artist based in the Greater Boston area.

Maria Molteni (they/she) enjoys tactile and tactical problem solving, giving shape to the unseen. From fiber to found-object sculpture, textile to video, performance to publication, they choose media that combine conceptual rigor, formal satisfaction and spiritual depth. Their intuitive practice spans movement-based and diagrammatic ritual alchemy, astrology, tarot, dreamwork and color magic. Molteni pictures themselves as a Phys Ed coach for visionary communities like the Shakers, Bauhaus or Black Mountain College.

Molteni’s painting practice has long darted back and forth between a traditional lineage and a more innovative practice of creating site-specific ground works. This practice has largely occupied (and pioneered) vibrant athletic spaces, a marriage of the artist’s personal history as an athlete/dancer combined with their desire to make painting more embodied and accessible to the public.

“Of course, the 2022 jury’s decision was a difficult one, given the great strength of the three finalists,” says Dr. Lisa Fischman, the Ruth Gordon Shapiro ’37 Director of the Davis Museum, referring to Lynne Allen, Alison Maria Rodriguez, and Maria Molteni. “We are unanimous in our appreciation of Molteni’s innovative practice, for their

distinctive conceptual obsessions and unique approaches to making, and are thrilled to honor them with the Prilla Smith Brackett Award.”

The Davis Museum will host a celebratory reception and hybrid presentation of the artist’s work on Tuesday, October 18 at 6:30 p.m. in person, in the Davis Lobby. The artist’s talk will be live-streamed over zoom beginning at 7 p.m, and registration is available at [www.thedavis.org](http://www.thedavis.org). Artist Maria Molteni, along with the award sponsor, Prilla Smith Brackett, and the award jurors will be in attendance to discuss the artist’s work. The event is free and open to the public, and the Davis galleries will remain open until 7 p.m. for event attendees.

“This support will allow me space to breathe, dream, and focus on my research and more experimental practices – on the back of many years of near burnout,” said Maria Molteni. “I’m a tactical, hustling artist who relies on my body and limited resources to complete physically ambitious works. Financial support lifts some of this pressure, so that I can seek balance between productivity and inspiration. As I’m allowed to center and expand, the content of my work will deepen and my practice will become more sustainable. I am deeply grateful for this gift which all artists deserve to have.”

### **About the Artist**

Maria Molteni (they/she, b. 1983, Nashville) is a queer transdisciplinary artist, educator and mystic. They are the grandchild of Tennessee square dancers, stunt motorcyclists, quilters, beekeepers, and opera singers of various European backgrounds. Their practice has grown from formal studies in painting, printmaking, and dance to incorporate research, ritual, and play-based collaboration.

### **About the Prilla Smith Brackett Award**

[Prilla Smith Brackett](#) is an artist known for working conceptually with landscape, depicting more than a description of a place. She has exhibited throughout the eastern US, including a solo show traveling to eight venues in New England and the mid-Atlantic States. Other solo exhibitions have been held at the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, MA; National Academy of Sciences, DC; and The Art Complex Museum, MA.

The biennial Prilla Smith Brackett Award supports a female-identified artist whose work and exhibition record demonstrate extraordinary artistic vision, talent, and skill. Recipients will receive a \$15,000 cash award to be used for travel, research, project development, or any other expenses related to career advancement. The inaugural award was given in 2019, and the second iteration was delayed a year due to the global pandemic.

## **ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM**

A vital resource for communities on the Wellesley College campus and beyond, the Davis Museum is one of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine art museums in the United States. Its signature Rafael Moneo building houses collections that span the history of art worldwide, from antiquity to the present. Guided by commitments to diversity and inclusion, excellence and innovation, and access for all, the Davis is at the core of Wellesley's liberal arts mission of educating women to make a difference in the world. With exceptional encyclopedic holdings, rotating special exhibitions, and enriching public programs, the Davis warmly welcomes all visitors, including scholars and students of all ages.

## **ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS**

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming—classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been the preeminent liberal arts college for women. Known for its intellectual rigor and its remarkable track record for the cultivation of women leaders in every arena, Wellesley—only 12 miles from Boston—is home to some 2,400 undergraduates from 49 states and 58 countries.

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### **Image:**

Maria Molteni, *A Sea Bird* (video detail) (2021)

Medium: Industrial concrete/ground paint, colors mixed by hand, hand painted with brushes by Molteni

Dimensions: 2,000 sq ft.

Courtesy of the artist.

**Media Contact:** Mary Agnew

617-512-7489, [Magnew@wellesley.edu](mailto:Magnew@wellesley.edu)

*High-resolution images and interviews available upon request*