

Visual Arts – Lana S. Meador

It was an honor to serve as the visual arts juror for the 2025 Utah Artist Fellowship. The submissions reflected an incredibly rich artistic community, making the selection process no easy feat. The chosen artists displayed a clear vision and commitment to their practice in works that push the boundaries of their chosen media in new and exciting ways. Additionally, each artist expressed a strong conceptual framework, often examining specific histories while speaking to broader themes and the pressing issues of our times. Their statements demonstrated that their established practices were at a critical juncture and indicated the potential for further growth and lasting impact.

Christopher Lynn's interdisciplinary practice creates sensory experiences where the aural, visual, and physical commingle. His work is deeply researched and brings forward local histories, while also connecting to broader concerns of humanity. Projects such as *The New Songs* (2025) employ video and sound in a complex layering of archival materials that reveal the intersections of industry, social history, and the landscape. Additionally, Lynn is an accomplished writer, educator, and curator who currently serves as associate professor of historical, critical, and cultural studies in art at Brigham Young University.

Nancy Rivera explores memory, migration, and identity in works that traverse photography, fiber, and sculpture. Her innovative approach to process and materials at once looks to craft traditions and new forms. Informed by her experience as an immigrant and the protracted path to citizenship, the *Family Portrait* series employs the labor-intensive process of cross-stitching to translate stark government-issued ID photos into handsewn images. Another recent series manifests family photos from Rivera's early years in Mexico onto broadcloth sculptures laced with salt from the Great Salt Lake and Bonneville Salt Flats, inextricably intertwining personal memories with place and deep geological time.

Eugene Tapahe draws upon his Diné (Navajo) heritage as a multidisciplinary artist who works across media, including photography, performance, installation, and land art. Central to his practice is the interconnectivity between past and present evident in humanity's relationship with the land. Bringing soil, sand, and other natural materials into the gallery space, Tapahe's work pays homage to the land and his ancestral traditions, while remaining firmly rooted in the present. His engagement with themes of unity, beauty, and healing are conveyed through simple geometric forms and symmetry, which imbue his materials with monumentality.

Ariel C. Wilson's lens-based practice questions the indexicality of photography in works that examine the medium's inherent limitations. Wilson's recent body of work focuses on the natural world. In images of sunsets, the expansive landscape of the American West, and self-proclaimed "bad moon photos," she reflects on the complexity of visual culture today. In contrast to the sharp focus historically valued in landscape photography, Wilson embraces the low-resolution imagery of cell phones and webcams to consider our mediated experiences with the environment.

Xi Zhang creates distinct visual worlds in his vibrant paintings. His bold palette, fluid application of paint, and light-filled spaces evoke the Post-Impressionism of Henri Matisse and engage with traditional Chinese painting practices. Born in Kaifeng, China, Zhang studied painting at the Beijing Institute of Art and Design before moving to the U.S. in the early 2000s. His work explores the immigrant experience and offers social commentary as figures are caught in moments of reflection, interiority, solitude, or disconnectedness. Zhang is currently an associate professor at the University of Utah.