



Smithsonian  
***Donald W. Reynolds Center for  
American Art and Portraiture***  
***Smithsonian American Art Museum***

April 27, 2006

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**Media Web site:** [www.americanart.si.edu/press](http://www.americanart.si.edu/press)

## **Matthew Coolidge, Director of the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Wins the 2006 Lucelia Artist Award**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum announced today (April 27) that Matthew Coolidge, director of the Center for Land Use Interpretation, is the sixth annual winner of the Lucelia Artist Award, established by the museum in 2001 to encourage leading contemporary American artists. This award is part of the museum's commitment to contemporary art and artists through awards and acquisitions.

An independent panel of jurors chose Coolidge and the Center for Land Use Interpretation for the award in recognition of a "leadership role in forging new creative strategies and focusing attention on the state of land use in contemporary America."

"I am honored to accept the Lucelia Artist Award on behalf of all of us at the Center for Land Use Interpretation," said Coolidge. "It is especially meaningful for us to be recognized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum, one of the great museums in and about America."

"Matthew Coolidge represents the qualities that the Lucelia Artist Award seeks to reward—creative innovation and work that dares to address issues relevant in contemporary society," said Elizabeth Broun, the museum's Margaret and Terry Stent Director. "His commitment to art centered on subjects of deep meaning throughout America—what land means, how it is used, how it is owned and how it reflects subtle changes in our world—makes his work especially significant."

The jurors wrote in their statement, "while offering tangible evidence of what is happening to the land as it is modified to accommodate the increasingly complex needs of our culture, Coolidge and CLUI do not polemicize the issues. Rather, the focus is on making information available through documentation (provocative imagery, humor, factual matter) and direct experience. Its approach is decidedly fresh and the issues it addresses have compelling significance in the present era. Viewed historically, Coolidge and the Center continue a long tradition of attention to the American landscape that encompasses the great Hudson River school painters, Ansel Adams's photographs and Robert Smithson's earthwork projects."

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The five jurors who selected the winner are Pamela Lee, professor in the department of art history at Stanford University; Christian Marclay, artist; James Rondeau, curator of contemporary art at the Art Institute of Chicago; Linda Shearer, director of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati; and Nancy Spector, curator of contemporary art and director of curatorial affairs at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Sidra Stich is the Lucelia Artist Award executive director and director of “art·SITES,” a series of contemporary art, architecture and design handbooks.

The Center for Land Use Interpretation is a research and educational organization that seeks meaning in the landscapes people inhabit and alter. Coolidge founded the Center as a way to engage in intensive research about the built landscape of the United States. The Center disseminates its findings through exhibitions, tours, lectures, kiosks, an online “Land Use Database” publication and a national network of on-site interpretative facilities known as the American Land Museum. The Center’s aim is to raise awareness about the uses and misuses of the environment by revealing human interventions that have significantly altered the landscape or created oddities in the midst of urban settings.

Coolidge and the Center produce exhibitions with photographs, video, text and interactive new media that are on display in the Center’s facilities. The Center’s main exhibition space and offices are in Culver City, Calif. In addition, the Center presents exhibitions and programs at its Desert Research Station, located in the Mojave desert, and in Wendover, Utah. A location in upstate New York is scheduled to open this year. Exhibitions also are presented in museums, galleries and other exhibition spaces throughout North America and Europe.

During the past 10 years, Coolidge has been involved in all the exhibitions created by the Center, including “Hinterland: A Voyage into Exurban Southern California” (1997) at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, “Commonwealth of Technology” (1999) at the List Center for Visual Arts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, “The Nellis Range Complex: Landscape of Conjecture” (1999) and “Emergency State: First Responder & Law Enforcement Training Architecture” (2004) at the Center for Land Use Interpretation in Los Angeles. Coolidge has authored several books, most recently “Overlook: Exploring the Internal Fringes of America with the Center for Land Use Interpretation.”

Coolidge earned a bachelor’s degree in environmental studies, contemporary art and film studies from Boston University in 1991. In 1994, Coolidge founded the Center for Land Use Interpretation and continues to serve as its director today. Under his leadership, the Center has received numerous grants, including support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual

Arts, the Annenberg Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Coolidge was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in 2004 and a media arts fellowship in 2005 from the Rockefeller Foundation and National Video Resources. Since 2003, he has been an adjunct professor in the master's program in curatorial practice at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco.

The Lucelia Artist Award annually recognizes an American artist under the age of 50 who demonstrates exceptional creativity and has produced a significant body of artwork that is considered emblematic of this period in contemporary art. Jurors nominate artists who will be recognized as one of the most important artists of his or her time. The \$25,000 award is intended to encourage the artist's future development and experimentation. Previous winners include Andrea Zittel (2005), Kara Walker (2004), Rirkrit Tiravanija (2003), Liz Larner (2002) and Jorge Pardo (2001).

Five distinguished jurors, each with an extensive knowledge of contemporary American art, are selected from across the United States. Jurors nominate artists to be considered for the award; there is no application. The 2006 nominees were Laylah Ali, Janine Antoni, Spencer Finch, Tom Friedman, Maureen Gallace, Ellen Gallagher, Jon Kessler, Byron Kim, Glenn Ligon, Julie Mehretu, Tony Oursler, Raymond Pettibon and Catherine Sullivan.

The New York-based Lucelia Foundation, which funds the award, supports the visual arts, specifically 19th-century American and contemporary art.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum collection began with gifts of art donated to the federal government in 1829 and has evolved into one of the world's most important American art holdings, with approximately 41,000 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. The museum is located at Eighth and F streets N.W. in the heart of a revitalized downtown arts district. When its building opens July 1, the museum will be a dazzling showcase for American art and portraiture that celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans.

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**Note to Editors:** A [juror statement](#), the winner's [curriculum vitae](#) and images are available in the museum's online press room; information on past winners is available at <http://americanart.si.edu/press/news/pr-awards.cfm#lucelia>. Selected high-resolution images for publicity only may be downloaded from <ftp://saam-press@ftp.si.edu>. Call (202) 275-1594 for the password.