

The New York Times

September 19, 2017

Theaster Gates Wins \$100,000 Nasher Prize for Sculpture

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/19/arts/theaster-gates-nasher-prize-sculpture.html>

By Andrew R. Chow



Theaster Gates at the National Gallery of Art in 2017. Credit Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times

Theaster Gates's work [spans many disciplines](#), from sculpture to pottery to performance art to urban development. So it's unsurprising that when given a \$100,000 award for his achievement in one field, he would use it to jump right into another.

Mr. Gates has been named the recipient of the 2018 Nasher Prize, awarded by the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas to celebrate "a living artist who elevates the understanding of sculpture and its possibilities." Mr. Gates says he will use part of the prize to develop literature.

"I couldn't be more excited about the prize," Mr. Gates said in an interview. "For a long time, I felt I was fighting for the right to have a transdisciplinary practice. I want other artists to feel like there are no limits."

Mr. Gates is acclaimed for creating sculptures and other works of art with [discarded materials](#), particularly from shuttered African-American businesses on the South Side of Chicago. His work has

been displayed worldwide, from the Whitney to the National Gallery of Art to Documenta to the new Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. And he was also part of the [design panel](#) for Barack Obama's presidential library in Chicago.

With the prize money, Mr. Gates plans to develop a new writing venture, centered on the acquisition of a Heidelberg windmill printing press from Boswell, Ind. He hopes to bring it to Chicago, establish his own imprint, and develop and publish what he terms "language-based work," written by himself and other poets. "The equipment itself is a kind of beautiful, mechanical, kinetic sculpture," Mr. Gates said. "I'm basically purchasing sculpture with the hope it will help me produce new, beautiful forms."

But this doesn't mean that Mr. Gates is leaving sculpture behind. "What I have to do is keep living," he said. "A byproduct of living is going to produce three-dimensional forms. Sculpture arises out of songs and out of poetry and out of grief."

This is the third year of the prize; the previous recipients are [Pierre Huyghe](#) and [Doris Salcedo](#). The winner is determined by a jury of influential artists and curators, including Nicholas Serota, the longtime director of the Tate museums in Britain. Mr. Gates will receive the award at a ceremony at the Nasher Sculpture Center on April 7.

Correction: September 20, 2017

An earlier version of a picture caption with this article misstated the name of the museum where Theaster Gates was photographed. It is the National Gallery of Art, not the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art.

A version of this article appears in print on September 20, 2017, on Page C3 of the New York edition with the headline: Nasher Prize Goes To Theaster Gates.