

RISD MUSEUM

Dorner Prize 2020, November 21, 2020–June 6, 2021

One of two 2020 Dorner Prize winners, *Lost in Translation* celebrates linguistic diversity. To be installed on the Benefit Street exterior facade of the RISD Museum, this interactive public installation will consist of a series of five bilingual, augmented-reality (AR) posters, each displaying a word whose meaning cannot be easily translated across languages. Through typographic abstractions, the posters will progress between each word's native script and its Latin characters, expressing what we often lose in translation: emotions, ways of seeing the world, colors, and memories. *Lost in Translation* is created by Vaishnavi Mahendran (RISD MFA 2020, Graphic Design), Alba Lara Granero (Brown PhD 2024, Hispanic Studies), Maria Victoria Taborelli (Brown PhD 2025, Hispanic Studies), and Sophia Petros (Brown BA 2020, Global Politics & Art).

The second Dorner Prize winner focuses on an object in the RISD Museum collection. In 1945, the director of the museum acquired an odd piece—the 1864 bill of sale for Sam, an enslaved person who lived in Georgia. This document has since troubled the museum's archive. Is it art? Does it belong in an art museum? What's the best way to steward painful historical documents for future generations? The performance piece *Evidence of Slave Sale* will resituate this document in the museum's Grand Gallery, amidst lavish paintings of European landscapes and nobility. The bill of sale, rum bottles filled with water from the Atlantic Ocean, a garment made from replica slave cloth, and the performer's brown body recall the violent and inhumane methods of wealth production that made Providence, RISD, and the museum's collection possible. The artists creating *Evidence of Slave Sale* are Bobby Joe Smith III (RISD MFA 2020, Graphic Design), Sharanya Aggarwal (RISD MFA 2020, Textiles), Jarret Key (RISD MFA 2020, Painting), Kim Nguyen (RISD MFA 2020, Glass), Will Miannecki (RISD MFA 2021, Graphic Design), Aryana Polat (RISD BFA 2021, Sculpture), and Sadia Quddus (RISD MFA 2022, Graphic Design).

The Dorner Prize, a juried competition for Rhode Island School of Design degree candidates, was first established in 1995 as the Sitings exhibition. Two Dorner Prize winners receive cash prizes of \$500 each and implementation funds up to \$1000. The winning artists work with Museum staff during each phase of the development process and are celebrated with online promotion and public events. The Dorner Prize, named for distinguished RISD Museum director Alexander Dorner (tenure 1938–1941), is made possible by a generous anonymous gift.

The Dorner Prize is an annual juried competition that invites RISD student artists and designers to create new installations, performances, programs, or digital encounters that engage the public by using the RISD Museum's object collections, public spaces, and digital platforms. The Dorner Prize, named for distinguished early 20th-century RISD Museum director Alexander Dorner, is made possible by a generous anonymous gift.

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CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Bobby Joe Smith III, American, b. 1987, (RISD MFA 2020, Graphic Design)

Sharanya Aggarwal, Indian, b. 1994, (RISD MFA 2020, Textiles)

Jarret Key, American, b. 1990, (RISD MFA 2020, Painting)

Kim Nguyen, American, b. 1995, (RISD MFA 2020, Glass)

Will Miannecki, b. 1993, (RISD MFA 2021, Graphic Design)

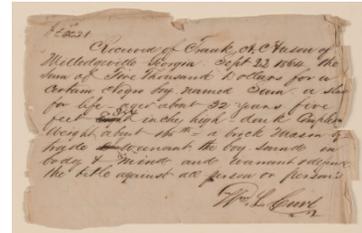
Aryana Polat, American, b. 1995, (RISD BFA 2021, Sculpture)

Sadia Quddus, American, b. 1992, (RISD MFA 2022, Graphic Design)

Evidence of Slave Sale, 2020

Performance incorporating a garment woven from cotton and wool, amber glass jugs, ocean water; duration approximately 7 hours

Courtesy of the artists EXL51.20202.2



In 1945, the director of the RISD Art Museum acquired an odd piece for its collections—the *Bill of Sale for an Enslaved Person Named Sam*. This document has since troubled the museum’s archive. Is it art? Does it belong at RISD? What should institutions do when confronted with such objects in their history or archives?

Evidence of Slave Sale is a performance piece that extricates this evidence from the Museum’s storage and resituates it in the Grand Gallery amidst the lavish paintings of European landscapes and nobility. The bill of sale, the rum bottles filled with water from the Atlantic ocean, the garment made of “slave cloth,” and the performer’s brown body dredge up Rhode Island’s complicity in slavery, the flesh behind the fragments of evidence troubling archives, and the utterances these fragments emit reminding us of the violent and inhumane methods of wealth production that made Providence, RISD, and the Museum’s collection possible.

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Vaishnavi Mahendran, Indian, b. 1986, RISD 2020 MFA, Graphic Design)

Alba Lara Granero, Spanish, b. 1988, (Brown PhD 2024, Hispanic Studies)

María Victoria Tadorelli, Argentine, b. 1988, (Brown PhD 2025, Hispanic Studies)

Sophia Petros, American, b. 1998, (Brown BA 2020, Global Politics & Art)

Lost in Translation, 2020

Vinyl panels, digital content; Courtesy of the artists EXL51.20202.1

Language frames our experience of the world. We might assume all words are translatable, but they are embedded with information about the cultures and people who created them. Meaning, emotion, and nuance are most often lost in the process of translation. This installation celebrates those losses. For the immersive experience of *Lost in Translation*, download and open the Artvive app on your phone, then point it at each poster.

We are a multicultural, multidisciplinary RISD-Brown collective that believes in the transformative power of public art in creating communities through shared experiences.

