

CIFO x Ars Electronica Awards 2025

## 45,000 US Dollars in Prize Money for Natalia Rivera and Jerónimo Reyes-Retana

(Linz/Miami, March 11, 2025) The Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) x Ars Electronica Awards recognize emerging artists who demonstrate pioneering work in digital art with innovative approaches and shed light on how local challenges and universal issues correspond. In 2025, the coveted awards go to Natalia Rivera (CO) and Jerónimo Reyes-Retana (MX), who prevailed over more than 120 submissions from 15 Latin American countries. The artists will now receive prize money totaling 45,000 US dollars to realize their submitted concepts. The works will be presented for the first time at the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz from September 3 to 7, 2025, after which both installations will become part of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) Collection, which brings together outstanding works of contemporary Latin American art.

### Bacteria Cloud of Clouds & Void in Resonance

In the art-science project *Bacteria Cloud of Clouds*, Natalia Rivera (CO) will explore what the microbiome of clouds tells us about our relationship with nature, for which the artist will receive \$30,000. Jerónimo Reyes-Retana (MX) will develop a mixed-media film installation entitled *Void in Resonance*, which uses the example of the fishing village of Playa Bagdad in Mexico to show how industrial progress threatens marginalized communities. The artist will receive \$15,000 to realize the project.

Alongside the award recipients, the selection committee also acknowledged three remarkable proposals that reached the final stage of consideration: one by FIBRA Colectivo (PE), consisting of Gianine Tabja, Lucia Monge, and Gabriela Flores del Pozo, another by Claudia Valente (AR) this time collaborating with Hernán Borisonik and Gonzalo Silva, and a third by Fernanda López Quilodran (CL).

“Once again, CIFO and Ars Electronica join forces to amplify the visibility of artistic projects from Latin America that explore global challenges at the intersection of culture and contemporary society. The projects selected for this edition offer two unique perspectives on the singular beauty and fragility of endangered ecosystems and communities in the face of power and geopolitical imperatives“, says Sergio Fontanella, Director of Operations & Collections of CIFO.

“The 128 projects submitted for the CIFO x Ars Electronica Awards 2025 push for new approaches, critical analysis and technological solutions to meet current challenges in a sustainable way. In Natalia Rivera and Jerónimo Reyes-Retana, the jury has selected two prizewinners who are impressively addressing ecological and social issues in Colombia and Mexico while at the same time dealing with global phenomena,” says Christl Baur, Head of Ars Electronica Festival.

## Winning Projects 2025

Bacteria Cloud of Clouds  
Natalia Rivera (CO)  
30.000 US-Dollar

Scientific research shows that bacteria exist in clouds – and not only that, they might also influence weather patterns, thus forming a connection between life and climate. This is the starting point of *Bacteria Cloud of Clouds*. The art and science project explores the microbiodiversity in the clouds of three of the rainiest places on earth, namely Lloró, Quibdó and Tadó in the Chocó region of Colombia. These areas are not only known for their extreme rainfall, but also for their abundance of microbial life.

The installation brings together fog generated from rainwater and a digital visualization of the genetic information from cloud microbiomes, which was analyzed as part of the project. The data will be open-sourced afterwards. In contrast to seed banks, which preserve plants for the future, *Bacteria Cloud of Clouds* envisions a digital seed of life from clouds, inviting us to rethink our relationship with nature, acknowledging that alternative ways of engaging with life and the environment already exist.

Void in Resonance

Jerónimo Reyes-Retana (MX)

15.000 US-Dollar

The mixed-media film installation *Void in Resonance* focuses on the marginalized fishing community of Playa Bagdad on the easternmost border between Mexico and the United States. A vital economic resource for the community is an oyster field that is imperiled by the SpaceX spaceport, just four kilometers away. The reason is the powerful sonic shock waves generated by rocket launches on the U.S. side. These waves spread across national borders and have serious impacts on the people, ecosystems, and vernacular architecture of the Playa Bagdad region. These developments are largely ignored by regulatory agencies.

Based on three years of fieldwork and close collaboration with the local community, *Void in Resonance* documents the personal and collective impacts of a SpaceX launch from the perspective of the people who work in the oyster fields. The work explores the concept of colonial voids and challenges the narrative of a "new era of space exploration," revealing it instead as an expansion of corporate-driven outer space industrialization—one that mirrors historical patterns of colonial displacement and environmental degradation.

## About the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO)

Ella Fontanals-Cisneros established the non-profit Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) in 2002. The foundation's mission is to support and foster cultural understanding and educational dialogue among Latin American artists and global audiences. CIFO serves as a platform for emerging, mid-career and established Latin American artists through the Grants & Commissions Program, including the CIFO x Ars Electronica Awards; the CIFO Collection; and other related art and cultural projects in the United States of America and internationally.

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