

# **2021 Mandelbaum Fellowship Award**

Citation for Laura Paolini

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance as if they are floating above the text below.

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## Citation for Laura Paolini

This year's Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship for Excellence in Social Sciences, Humanities, or Arts for the master's level of study is awarded to Laura Paolini, currently studying at the University of Ottawa in the Visual Arts program.

Laura has a long history of volunteer work, ranging from teaching newcomers to Helsinki how to navigate and cycle safely on the streets, to serving on various university committees, to galvanizing friends and followers on social media to donate goods and services to support the most vulnerable in her community.

Her work focuses on art and its ability to transmit new ideas and create new relationships and understandings. She has worked in her field internationally and within Canada since she completed her undergraduate degree at OCAD in 2007, before returning to the University of Ottawa to pursue her MFA. She expressed commitment to understanding how her social location and history influences her art and a desire to always orient her art towards reconciliatory and reparative activism.

Laura has been active in presenting her work and has been recognized for her scholarship through various awards and arts council fellowships. In addition to her art activism, she is a community leader and volunteer. She sits on multiple university/department committees, and is also committed to grassroots community work, including fundraising and gathering donations for local homeless shelters, the Miinwaashin Lodge, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa, and Interval House Ottawa.

Her application maps her understanding of feminism through time and geography; her work interrogates how feminism has changed and how the western feminist tradition often upholds implicit and explicit gender essentialism and white privilege. A theme throughout Laura's application and her referee's letters was her commitment to and interest in theory ranging from Deleuze to Guattari to Marshall McLuhan and beyond.

One of Laura's referees states that, "The studio work Ms. Paolini has produced during her time in the MFA has been among the most exceptional I have had the pleasure to observe in over thirty years of teaching in MFA programs." The referee goes on to explain how Laura uses her art to make sophisticated political and social commentary, "...for example...a spoken-word voice-over in a video projection is addressed to what may be a past lover, and this narrative is juxtaposed to one



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detailing the history of the banana trade, in a way which plays evocatively with notions of intimacy and social/economic distance...”

The Mandelbaum selection committee is excited by the work Laura is doing and OCUFA is pleased to add the Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Masters Fellowship Award to Laura Paolini’s impressive list of accomplishments.