# PAULA CASTILLO

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## ARTIST STATEMENT

I create art that is not only site-responsive but also honors the unique identity and aspirations of the community. My public art serves as a bridge, enhancing awareness of place while grounding my designs in authentic, lived experiences. My works poignantly illustrate the intimate relationships between people and our environments. With my experience as a K-12 educator, I recognize the critical importance of developing joyful and stimulating public spaces. I specialize in crafting public projects that inspire engagement and foster connections, encouraging individuals of all ages to step outside, interact, and deepen their ties with one another and the world around them. Each project is a call to reflect, engage, and celebrate our shared humanity and the beauty of our environments.

## BIOGRAPHY

Paula Castillo is a sculptor based in New Mexico, celebrated for her dynamic and community-driven large-scale public art installations. With a rich educational background, including her studies at Yale University and practical experience as a machinist in an electronic factory in East Haven, Connecticut, Castillo has forged a distinctive path in contemporary sculpture. In 2013, she earned her MFA in 3D Studio from the University of New Mexico, further establishing her artistic prowess. Castillo's innovative work has garnered prestigious grants from influential organizations such as UNESCO, SITE Santa Fe, and Los Alamos National Labs, enabling her to create art that powerfully engages with themes of place-making and human geography. Her impactful creations have been showcased in prominent exhibitions, including a celebrated feature at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Among her notable public art commissions is her recent project for the Denver Art Museum Campus, which thoughtfully investigates the historical influences that have shaped contemporary Denver. In recognition of her significant contributions to the arts, Castillo was recently honored with the esteemed New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

## SELECT PUBLIC PROJECTS

### URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP — 2025

Environmental Protection Agency with the National Endowment for the Arts

Award to design a community-based, interactive public artwork to inspire thoughtful reflection on the Middle Rio Grande corridor, one of 21 designated Urban Waters locations.

### NOCTURNAL — 2024 - 2026

World Biodiversity Forum, Lead Artist, Davos, Switzerland

Lead Artist award in partnership with Dr. Manuel Montoya, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of New Mexico, to create a multimedia installation bringing attention to the critical issue of biodiversity in urban Albuquerque. This project will culminate in a performative/sculptural installation at the 2026 World Biodiversity Forum, aimed of inspiring greater awareness and encouraging action for the richness of our planet's ecological diversity.

### GLENDALE PARK — 2024

Salt Lake City Public Art

Fnalist for national community-engaged public art project. Proposal fostered connection and creativity within the Jordan River/West Side Salt Lake community.

### GLYPH, EQUIS AND TRESTLE — 2023 - 2025

Denver Art Museum Campus, Denver, Colorado

$750,000 award for community engaged field research and design to fabricate and install three permanent monumental public sculptures: Glyph, Equis, and Trestle, for the Denver Art Museum Campus. Commission led by Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the Denver Art Museum.

### REVERSE THE CURSE — 2023 - ongoing

SITE Santa Fe, Roswell Museum of Art, New Mexico and Colección INELCOM Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid, Spain

Reverse the Curse uses natural healing practices to provide an allegory for a participatory and embodied tithing to the Rio Grande from Taos to Juarez, an entitlement to a body of water who is not allowed to have any share of her own water. This piece contributed to a larger conversation regarding the rights of the Rio Grande in context of the Rio Grande's long-term human water security. Curated by Art Critic Lucy Lippard, and former Tate Museum curator, Vicente Todoli.

ABOUT JETTY JACK 2023 - 2024

SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico

About Jetty Jack inspires reflection on how socially unjust ecological conditions have been produced and sustained in the Middle Rio Grande Corridor through harmful engineering practices and how that might be made otherwise. Curated by Brandee Caoba and Lucy Lippard.

A HARVEST FOR MILLY FRANCIS 2023

Jule Collins Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama
Award to design, fabricate and install permanent public sculpture to honor community contributions to the North American Southeast. Nomination by American Scholar Estèvan Rael-Gàlvez, Executive Director of Mellon FoundationNative Bound-Unbound, and curated by Cynthia Malinick, director and chief curator for Auburn University's Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

BOSQUE REDONDO 2021

Internment Site of Diné, NM / New Mexico Arts in Public Places, Ft. Sumner, New Mexico

Award to design and execute a regionwide community-engaged project that considered the historical Diné diaspora in the context of contemporary Diné culture.

IN PRAISE OF A DIFFICULT WORLD 2020

Steve Schiff District Attorney Building, New Mexico Arts in Public Places, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Award to design a public memorial for victims of gun violence in New Mexico. This design, for the Steve Schiff District Attorney Building, honored the work that New Mexico mothers, whose work and efforts have created changes in gun laws through existing political and social structures.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE 2019-currrent

Belen Consolidated Public Schools, Belen, New Mexico

Organize a broad spectrum of community-engaged artistic programs involving a collaboration between student artists, their families, and anchor institutions such as the Belen Public Library and New Mexico Arts for communities in and around Belen to include the historical Middle Rio Grande agricultural settlements of Pueblitos, Jarales, Casa Colorado, Bosque, Veguita, Las Nutrias, and Abeytas.

MOTH FIELD, WIYA EH KODI ANI 2019 - 2020

IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Invitation from Dr. Estevan Rael-Gálvez of Estèvan Rael-Gàlvez, Executive Director of Mellon FoundationNative Bound-Unbound, and Manuela Well-Off-Man, Lead Curator at IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, to create a statewide community- engaged art project advancing the conversation on the fictional narrative of Spanish Colonialism and its impact on Indigenous and Mestizaje communities in the southwest as it relates to the now discontinued Entrada or "Reconquest" ritual in Santa Fe responding to the 1680 Pueblo Revolt.

CUESTA DEL SOL 2019

National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Award to design, fabricate, and install a permanent, site-specific public work to honor the progenitors of the National Hispanic Cultural Center. This piece has become a critical community identity marker for contemporary Latino communities living in the American Southwest and has received accolades for its innovative use of existing architecture. Curated by Tey Marianna Nunn, Associate Director of Content and Interpretation, National Museum of the American Latino of Smithsonian Institution.

HEAVY METAL 2018

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.

A NMWA showcase of 10 invited contemporary international artists working with metal to examine the masculine narrative surrounding metalworking and demonstrate that contemporary women artists carry a vibrant legacy in the field. Curated by Virginia Treanor. Reviewed by the New York Times, Washington Post, and Hyperallergic.

## SELECT SOLO EXHIBITIONS

MY COLLECTION OF WINGS — Scheduled 2025

Kouri + Corrao Gallery Santa Fe, New Mexico

This exhibition presents eight small adobe sculptures by Paula Castillo accompanied by twelve poems by Terry Mulert in folio and framed form all created in Belén, New Mexico over the course of the last few years —that showcase the power and complexity of poetry and sculpture. The artists drew on established relationships and the mutual environment of the Rio Grande Bosque to create this work Curated by Takeo Royer.

GEÑIOSOS, MANITOS Y MONOS — 2023

Kouri + Corrao Gallery Santa Fe, New Mexico

Geniosos, Manitos y Monos (dirty lookers, little brothers and sisters, and monkeys), includes seven small and peculiar sculptures. These errant pieces are an ad libitum account of our funny little humanness: heart to heart, face to face, where most of us live our daily lives. Curated by Justin Kouri.

CLEMENTINA — 2022

Kouri + Corrao Gallery Santa Fe, New Mexico

This body of work is Castillo's creative responses to fragile protrusions and remnants of New Mexico and reflect on intersectional experiences with language, power, identity, the natural and built environment, and their subsequent diasporas and erosions. Curated by Justin Kouri.

PIGGYBACK — 2022

University of New Mexico, Valencia Campus

"Piggyback" is a community memoir and an ode to how the small and humble origins of our first places carry all spectral life movements. Castillo developed the work in this exhibit upon returning to her home community in Valencia County, NM, to care for elderly family. Curated by Sarah Heyward, MFA, Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at the University of New Mexico.

THAT MOUNTAIN OVER THERE — 2019

Gallery Fritz, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Castillo returned to her family home in Belén, New Mexico, in the summer of 2017 to care for her elderly mother. After her mother's death, she stayed to care for her father and uncle and helped them run a small sand and gravel quarry located south of Belén on the east side of the Rio Grande in Veguita, New Mexico. This body of work was produced during this two-year time. These sculptures and installations continue Castillo's previous explorations of systems with a focus on a re-examination of home. Curated by George Brugnone.

## SELECT RESEARCH AWARDS

CHANGE LAB RESEARCH FELLOW — 2024-2025

Forecast Public Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota

During this six-month research fellowship, Castillo examined the connections between climate resilience and community-engaged public art. The research focused on the arid lands of the North American Southwest, an area facing significant challenges due to rapid population growth and development, which has severely impacted its water resources. The resulting 84-page policy paper demonstrates how community-engaged art can enhance a community's resilience by highlighting narratives that promote mutual aid, adaptation, and transformation.

P'OSOGE (RIO GRANDE) — 2023

Santa Fe Art Institute, Changing Climate Residency, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Residency and grant to conduct research in both literal and symbolic aspects of P'osoge (Rio Grande) examining the human-induced environmental complications surrounding New Mexico arroyos and their historical impact on the ecology and subsequent engineering of the Rio Grande.

CORN IS PEOPLE — 2021-2022

Denver Botanic Gardens, Land Line Residency, Denver, Colorado

Residency and grant to conduct primary and secondary research on curanderisma (traditional healing practices) to highlight the relationship between corn and humans.

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