

# BLACKSTAR

**Media Contact:**

Ally Wengel

Cashman & Associates

[wengel@cashmanandassociates.com](mailto:wengel@cashmanandassociates.com)

908.914.5052

## **BLACKSTAR PROJECTS ANNOUNCES HONOREES FOR THE 2023 LUMINARY AWARDS, INCLUDING RENOWNED FILMMAKERS, ARTISTS, CREATIVES AND ACTIVISTS**

*The annual ceremony will bring each acclaimed recipient to Philadelphia for the inaugural BlackStar Luminary Gala on December 4, 2023*

**Philadelphia, PA** (October 4, 2023) -- [BlackStar Projects](#), the premier organization celebrating visionary Black, Brown, and Indigenous film and media artists, announced today the recipients of the [2023 BlackStar Luminary Awards](#), an annual program honoring individuals and collectives for their contributions as artists and cultural workers in the fields of art, film, and visual culture. This year's honorees include Shannon Maldonado, Founder & Creative Director of YOWIE, June Givanni, Curator & Director of the June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive, and COUSIN, a collective supporting Indigenous artists expanding the form of film.

The honors will be presented at the inaugural BlackStar Luminary Gala, BlackStar's signature fundraising event, supporting a suite of year-round cultural programming that provides artists with the resources, support, and shine they need to thrive. The gala, hosted by *South Side* stars Bashir Salahuddin and Chandra Russell, will take place at the W Philadelphia hotel on December 4, 2023, and will feature a cocktail hour followed by a seated dinner and award ceremony.

"The Luminary Gala stands as a testament to the power of ingenuity, intelligence, and innovation, and we are thrilled to honor and spotlight this year's trailblazing luminaries," said Maori Karmael Holmes, Founder and Chief Executive & Artistic Officer of BlackStar Projects. "Each recipient has not only excelled in their respective fields but has also paved the way for future generations of artists and creatives, all leaving an indelible mark on our cultural landscape."

**2023 honorees include:****Shannon Maldonado, Founder & Creative Director of YOWIE**

After working in Fashion Design for over 12 years (Ralph Lauren, American Eagle Outfitters, and Urban Outfitters), Shannon launched her inspiring storefront via a series of experimental pop-ups and a small but charming web shop of just 12 objects. Named "The Coolest Shop in Philadelphia" by Bon Appétit in 2019, the [YOWIE](#) brand has extended its outreach to include interactive design workshops, creative/art direction, and interior design consulting for hospitality clients that include Ethel's Club, The Deacon, Dye House, and more. Summer of 2023, Shannon put YOWIE's signature spin on hospitality by co-founding an all-suite boutique hotel set above an expanded retail space and new cafe, Wim, created in partnership with local proprietors ReAnimator Coffee Roasters and Eeva. The space comes on the anniversary of YOWIE's seventh year in business and is its most ambitious project to date: nearly 10,000 sq ft

of space, all designed by Shannon. Past collaborators include Nordstrom, CB2, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gantri, and a number of emerging designers. She constantly looks to create an intersection between design and community in her work and to develop spaces that invite discovery and have unexpected references and details.

### **June Givanni, Curator & Director of the June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive**

[June Givanni](#) is a leading film curator in Pan African Cinema, with a career of more than 40 years. Born in British Guiana, South America, she grew up and was educated in the UK and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. The June Givanni Pan-African Cinema Archive (JGPACA), a living archive, amassed by June, in the process of her work on 5 continents contains a unique collection of artefacts and archival material which at its core seeks to foreground African and diasporic cinema. This contribution was recognised by The British Independent Film Awards which awarded the Special Jury Prize - an award to honour unsung heroes of the film industry who have “left an indelible mark on the landscape of British film.” June's work to protect and promote black culture across the globe is a testament to cultural activism, whether in advisory work, writing, or programming. She has worked with a range of organizations to support the golden age of black film collectives in the UK and has worked to identify young writing and directing talent with ambitions both in UK projects but working also with a team of co-advisors on ‘Africa First’, a short film support scheme developed by Kisha Cameron at Focus Features, New York to support emerging African directors from 2008 to 2013.

### **COUSIN Collective, a collective supporting Indigenous artists expanding the form of film**

[COUSIN](#) creates and supports work that is personal, proudly provocative, and driven by strong, artistic voices. Founded in 2018 by Sky Hopinka, Adam Khalil, Alexandra Lazarowich, and Adam Piron, COUSIN was created to provide support for Indigenous artists expanding traditional definitions and understandings of the moving image by experimenting with form and genre. Works supported by COUSIN have since been screened at the Berlin International Film Festival, Visions du Réel, New York Film Festival, Jeonju International Film Festival, the Criterion Channel, and the Whitney Biennial, among many other festivals, platforms, and screening venues.

**Tickets and sponsorships** for the inaugural BlackStar Luminary Gala are available now and more information can be found [here](https://www.blackstarfest.org/events/gala/2023-luminary-gala/):

Past recipients of the Luminary Awards, announced in previous years during the annual BlackStar Film Festival, have included Mira Nair, Menelik Shabazz, Marcia Smith, Ava DuVernay, Julie Dash, RZA, and Howard University Film Program. Following the twelfth edition of the festival this past August—which included 97 films representing 33 countries—BlackStar will soon release new episodes of their signature podcast, *Many Lumens with Maori Karmael Holmes*, featuring BlackStar's Founder and Chief Executive & Artistic Officer in conversation with today's leading artists, cultural workers, and change makers. Later this month, the next issue of *Seen*, BlackStar's journal of film, art, and visual culture, will also be available digitally and in print, spotlighting actor Colman Domingo as its cover star.

The host committee for the Gala includes co-chairs Anjali Kumar, Founder of Slightly Reserved, Errin Haines, Founding Mother and Editor at Large for The 19th, and Jason Ray, CEO of Zenith Wealth Partners. Additional committee members are: Alexis Rosenzweig, Entertainment Manager, Anne Ishii, Executive Director of Asian Arts Initiative, Deesha Philyaw, Author, Isaac

Ewell, Founder & Creative Director at Onehunted, James Claiborne, SVP of Exhibitions and Programs at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Lauren Jane Holland, Agent at Creative Artists Agency, Lindsey Scannapieco, Managing Partner of Scout, Michelle Trotter, Noura Erakat, American activist, and Tarana Burke, Founder of 'me too' International.

For more information on BlackStar's mission, visit [www.blackstarfest.org](http://www.blackstarfest.org).

### **About BlackStar Projects**

BlackStar creates the spaces and resources needed to uplift the work of Black, Brown and Indigenous artists working outside of the confines of genre. We do this by producing year-round programs including film screenings, exhibitions, an annual film festival, a filmmaker seminar, a film production lab, and a journal of visual culture. These programs provide artists opportunities for viable strategies for collaborations with other artists, audiences, funders, and distributors. We prioritize visionary work that is experimental in its aesthetics, content, and form and builds on the work of elders and ancestors to imagine a new world. We elevate artists who are overlooked, invisibilized or misunderstood and celebrate the wide spectrum of aesthetics, storytelling and experiences that they bring.

BlackStar Projects and its year-round programs are generously supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Ford Foundation/JustFilms, Independence Public Media Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Mighty Arrow Family Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Perspective Fund, The Philadelphia Foundation, PopCulture Collaborative, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Samuel S. Fels Fund, Surdna Foundation, Wallace Foundation, William Penn Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation, in addition to its [board of directors](#), community partners, and a host of generous [individual donors and organizations](#).

###