

Influential Women Profiles: Laureen Andalib, Award-Winning Director, Artist, and Studio Somatics Founder

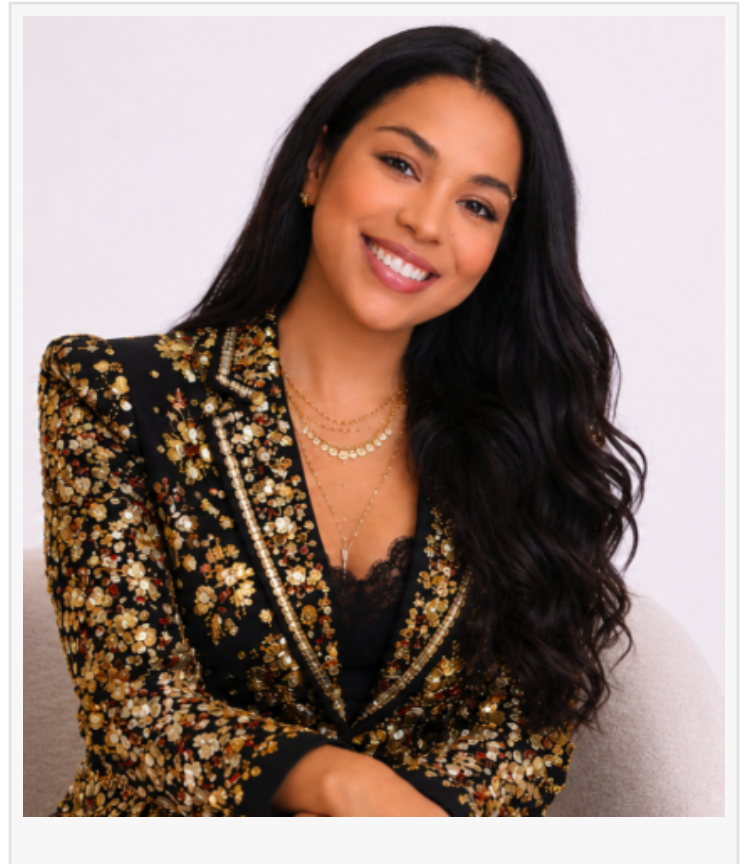
OAKLAND, CA, UNITED STATES, June 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Advancing Cultural Preservation and Collective Healing Through Art, Storytelling, Education, and Community-Centered Practice

Oakland, California — Laureen Andalib is a Bangladeshi-American artist and award-winning director whose work begins with a simple yet profound question: What becomes possible when people, cultures, and communities are given the conditions to remember, heal, and thrive?

Across her artistic, civic, and cultural practice, Laureen explores the relationships between memory, migration, identity, land, and belonging. Her work is rooted in the belief that storytelling is more than representation—it is a form of cultural infrastructure capable of preserving histories, strengthening communities, and imagining new futures.

Born in San Francisco's Mission District, Laureen was shaped by a neighborhood long defined by activism, artistic expression, immigrant resilience, and cultural richness. Witnessing the displacement of longstanding communities, public spaces, and cultural landmarks during the height of the Bay Area and Silicon Valley dot-com era profoundly influenced her understanding of place, loss, and stewardship. Those experiences continue to inform her commitment to preserving the stories, traditions, and institutions that help communities endure across generations.

Her family's journey equally informs Laureen's perspective. Raised in a first- and second-generation Bangladeshi household, she grew up surrounded by stories of migration, diplomacy,



survival, and cultural exchange. Drawing from these histories, she approaches creativity as both an act of remembrance and a tool for collective renewal.

Working across film, photography, design research, facilitation, education, performance, hospitality, and community engagement, Laureen's projects often exist at the intersection of arts and culture, civic innovation, and social impact. Whether documenting diasporic histories, designing participatory learning experiences, convening communities around food and storytelling, or supporting organizations pursuing systems change, her work seeks to bridge personal experience with broader social transformation.

Today, her creative and organizational efforts span Studio Somatics, a nonprofit dedicated to storytelling, education, and collective care, and ANDAAZ, an emerging cultural initiative exploring Bangladeshi-American heritage through hospitality, archives, art, and community gathering. Together, these initiatives reflect Laureen's broader vision: to build spaces, experiences, and institutions that honor memory, foster belonging, and expand possibilities for future generations.

A pivotal influence on Laureen's professional and intellectual journey came more than a decade ago during an encounter with Dr. Senka Ibrisimbegovic in Sarajevo. Standing atop a hill overlooking the city at Kovači Memorial Cemetery, surrounded by the graves of those lost during the Bosnian War, Laureen encountered a way of thinking about architecture and design that would profoundly shape the course of her life.

Through Dr. Ibrisimbegovic's mentorship, Laureen began to understand that architecture is not simply about constructing buildings—it can serve as a vessel for memory, dignity, healing, and collective restoration. Dr. Ibrisimbegovic demonstrated how places can help communities remember, mourn, rebuild, and move forward while honoring the histories that shaped them.

As the daughter of genocide survivors, these lessons resonated deeply. For the first time, Laureen began connecting her family's experiences with broader questions of place, identity, displacement, and belonging. Just weeks later, while working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Serbia during the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, she found herself returning to many of the ideas Dr. Ibrisimbegovic had introduced.

Observing thousands of refugees move through transit camps and border crossings, Laureen came to understand how space, memory, and human dignity are deeply interconnected—and how design can support communities navigating displacement, loss, and renewal.

Reflecting on those experiences, Laureen recognized why she had fallen in love with architecture and design in the first place. The built environment, she realized, is not only about physical space but also about people—their stories, their histories, and their capacity to heal.

Dr. Ibrisimbegovic's mentorship fundamentally shaped Laureen's intellectual and professional

path. Her encouragement played an important role in Laureen's decision to pursue graduate studies, and Laureen credits her guidance and belief in her potential as instrumental in helping her find her way to Harvard University.

The values that continue to guide Laureen's work today—memory, dignity, belonging, cultural preservation, and collective healing—owe much to the lessons she learned through that mentorship. She remains deeply grateful for Dr. Ibrisimbegovic's generosity, wisdom, and example.

Equally influential has been the best career advice Laureen has ever received: "Don't build the career you think you're supposed to have—build the one only you can create."

Early in her career, Laureen often worried that her path looked unconventional. She moved between art, design, research, community engagement, education, marketing, and nonprofit work. At times, it seemed as though she did not fit neatly within a single professional category.

Over time, however, she realized that what made her path appear unusual was, in fact, her greatest strength. The ability to connect ideas, disciplines, and communities has become central to everything she does. That advice gave Laureen permission to stop chasing a predefined career ladder and instead focus on building a body of work aligned with her values, curiosity, and sense of purpose.

At the heart of Laureen's practice is a steadfast commitment to human dignity, cultural preservation, and the belief that healing and imagination are essential ingredients for building more just, connected, and life-affirming worlds. Through her multidisciplinary work, she continues to create opportunities for individuals and communities to remember their histories, celebrate their identities, and envision new possibilities for the future.

As an artist, director, educator, and cultural leader, Laureen Andalib demonstrates how creativity can extend beyond expression to become a catalyst for belonging, restoration, and collective transformation.

Learn More about Laureen Andalib:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Laureen-Andalib>, or through her profile on Studio Somatics, <https://www.studiosomatics.com/partners>

Influential Women

Influential Women provides a platform where women from all backgrounds can connect, share their perspectives, and create content that empowers themselves and others. Through storytelling, thought leadership, and creative expression, Influential Women amplifies voices that inspire change.

Editorial Team
Influential Women
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/919936480>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.