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Arizona
Commission
on the Arts

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17 ARIZONA ARTISTS AWARDED PROJECTS GRANTS BY ARTS COMMISSION TO CREATE NEW WORKS

The Arizona Commission on the Arts awarded Artist Projects grants to 17 Arizona artists: **Julie Anand, Jose Benavides, Christopher Colville, James A. Cook, Eliza N. Gregory, Hilary Harp, Jason Hess, Cynthia Hogue, Zachary C. Jones, Susan Lang, Jeff McMahon, Dominic Miller, Patricia Murphy, Chris Pexa, Beverly Seckinger, Susan Southard, and Denise Uyehara.** Offered yearly, each Artist Projects grant awards up to \$5,000 to artists to help them build their careers through artistic projects. The Commission received 134 applications in many artistic disciplines from around the state for the 2008 Artist Projects grants.

Artist Projects panelists included **Erin Boberg Doughton**, Performing Arts Program Director, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, Oregon; **Gaspar Enriquez**, visual artist and high school teacher from El Paso, Texas; **Todd Petersen**, fiction writer and Assistant Professor of English at Southern Utah University, Cedar, Utah; and **Cynde Randall**, artist, artistic director of Bird x Bird, and senior program associate for the Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program, Minneapolis, Minnesota. **Stella Pope Duarte**, a board member of the Arizona Commission on the Arts from Phoenix, chaired the panel.

Artist Projects Grant Descriptions:

Julie Anand – *Between*. The artist, along with her collaborator, photographer Damon Sauer, will create composite pictures by weaving together strips from two large, original photographs. The weaving will be done by hand, creating a series of thousands of tiny intersections that echo the larger intersection of the images seen at a distance. The weavings will reveal two things at once by showing half of each image as the shreds weave over and under one another, thereby blurring conventional boundaries. Anand is an assistant professor of photography at Arizona State University, and Sauer is an adjunct professor of photography at Glendale Community College. Both artists live in Phoenix.

Panel Comments: Anand's collaborative project with Sauer will manifest as interwoven photographs, where a pair of complementary images will simultaneously emerge. The

softness embedded in the concept is lovely and accessible. This is a good time in her career to receive funding to explore this process.

Jose A. Benavides – *Lupita*. The artist will build a 17-foot-long statue-automobile called The Lupita Car. The statue will be in the image of a cultural icon, Virjen De Guadalupe and formed from automotive license plates—mostly from the United States and Mexico. The car will be able to rotate electrically from its base upward, separating the car body to a vertical position. Benavides lives in Chandler.

Panel Comments: Benavides’ vehicular transformations are an instant engagement and pull people into appreciating art. He will transform a vehicle into a statue of a cultural icon called “The Lupita Car” using automotive license plates as the medium. Extremely well conceived and crafted, we believe this project is transcendent in concept. His work is a sublime cross of high- and low-brow art, offering the viewer an engaging experience.

Christopher Colville – *Sonoran Project*. The artist will explore through photographs the impact of development on the Sonoran desert. The series will include investigations of: lifecycles, focusing particularly on the cause of death of native species; recording the markings left by humans on the landscape; and, the spaces between human development and the natural landscape. Colville lives in Phoenix.

Panel Comments: Colville’s work goes beyond traditional interpretations of a romanticized landscape. He introduces the intersection of the human element into the environment. Strongly noir, the photograms explore the “remains of the day” impressed upon the Sonoran Desert, where life is both miraculous and tenuous.

James A. Cook – *Noh Time Like the Present*. The artist will be exploring several facets of classical noh theatre that emanate from the psychological and spiritual principles unique to the form—nuanced strategies employed to express the human condition: spare poetic text, the manipulation of time (reversed, non-sequential), and space, as well as the use of masks as archetypes and persona. Cook will create two video installation pieces exploiting these strategies. Cook lives in Tucson.

Panel Comments: Cook’s mastery over his media draws the viewer into his work. “Noh Time Like the Present” includes an installation of six film projectors modulated to share a single loop of film, casting the image onto different surfaces. The narrative is very strong and its production unique. We would visit Arizona just to see the final project.

Eliza N. Gregory – *Fuse: Portraits of Refugee Households in Metropolitan Phoenix*. The photographer will be making portraits of resettled refugees in Phoenix using a large format camera. Gregory’s project examines the subjective element, or fine art aspect, of documentary photography, thereby revealing another layer of truth that is inherent in portraiture—the emotional truth. The project will document 3 Liberian refugee families that have been resettled in the Phoenix area. Gregory lives in Tempe.

Panel Comments: Gregory's ambitious documentary will address the convergence of cultures and universal human experiences. Here is an artist looking at the project with an outcome. Her partnerships with refugee organizations will enable her to disseminate the photographs in ways that will be meaningful for the families she is collaborating with.

Hilary Harp – *Eldorado*. The artist, with collaborator Suzie Silver, will create a 20-minute non-narrative video about a space station where aliens meet in a nightclub. Funding will go toward producing a series of 5 one-minute stop-motion sequences. This project is an extension of feminist science fiction, in which criticism of gendered subjectivity leads to the invention of more plural and heterogeneous social relations. Harp is an assistant professor of sculpture at Arizona State University, and Silver is an associate professor in the School of Art at Carnegie Mellon University. Harp lives in Tempe.

Panel Comments: Harp is an international artist at the edge of innovation in video production. The theme of aliens and eroticism, the politics of this theme, are sophisticatedly integrated into the imagery. The work is very inventive, as a viewer, you can't disengage. We are really excited about this proposal. Harp and Silver are two very talented artists. We can't wait to see this project.

Jason Hess – *From Narrative to Allegorical Vessels*. The artist, whose works draw heavily upon eastern ceramic traditions synthesized with western aesthetics, will be creating large-scale slip cast vessels. The vessels will be adorned with brightly colored glaze, china painted imagery, and ceramic decals, creating a narrative that speaks to both eastern and western culture. Hess lives in Williams.

Panel Comments: In his work, Hess formally synthesizes eastern ceramic traditions with western ideas and aesthetics. The opportunity to go to China and experiment with large scale, advance ceramic technology will greatly move his already strong work forward.

Cynthia Hogue – *Voice-Prints: A Katrina Elegy*. The poet and her collaborator, photographer Rebecca Ross, will be an exploration in words and images of the journey from New Orleans to Phoenix of 12 Katrina evacuees, documenting their individual stories of grief and hope. Hogue is the Maxine and Jonathan Marshall Chair in Modern and Contemporary Poetry in the Department of English at Arizona State University. Ross is an award-winning photographer whose work has been exhibited nationally and abroad. Hogue lives in Phoenix and Ross lives in Tempe.

Panel Comments: Hogue's project will be meaningful because of her connection to New Orleans. She intimately knows its culture and people, which come through so movingly in her poems. We feel that this body of work, once completed and exhibited with the documentary photographs of her collaborator Rebecca Ross, will be important—documenting the lives of those affected by Katrina, people that already are in jeopardy of becoming invisible.

Zachary C. Jones – *The Inner Nature of Water: rendering the pulse of the environment*. The artist and collaborator, Jeannine Davies, will produce sculptural forms, evocative of whirlpools and hurricanes, with electronically mediated controls to guide flows of water. Drawing upon scientific and original research, the artists will also develop a computer simulation and 3D animation of the characteristic water flow presented in the sculptures. Both artists live in Tempe.

Panel Comments: This proposal is so intriguing that we can't wait for the final project exhibition. There is a natural blending of science and art in this project that it seems almost effortless. There is a spiritual aspect to this work that comes through, even in the slides. The purity of the project idea expresses something profound.

Susan Lang – *The Sawtooth Complex*. The writer will be conducting research toward completing a novel entitled, *The Sawtooth Complex*. The novel will take place in the San Bernardino Mountains and trace the story of a woman who must cope with the encroachment of developments in the canyon that she settled in and raised her family. Lang will be exploring the tricky relationships of homesteading versus development, preservation versus exploitation, among other themes. Lang lives in Prescott.

Panel Comments: Lang's project is to write a novel about the fiercely independent women who settled in the rugged mountains of the Southwest—present day Southwest. What is astonishing about this project is how she refuses working within the formula of the trilogy. In fact, in this new book she is working with a new language—simultaneously accepting and rejecting environmental language—in writing about place.

Jeff McMahan – *Counter-Indications*. The artist with collaborator Jacob Pinholster, a media designer, will create an installation-based performance using live and virtual actors to explore the nature of interrogation and disorientation. Through a “fake” intervention/exploration, the artists will investigate how a person can be guided, even coerced, into saying things he/she does not believe, seeing things he/she has not actually seen, and confessing when no confession is justified. This project will be a work of visceral theatre, placing live art into the center of social discourse. McMahan is an assistant professor in the School of Theatre and Film at Arizona State University, and Pinholster is an assistant professor of media design at Arizona State University. McMahan lives in Tempe.

Panel Comments: The writing and staging in this project is really interesting and complex. The artists' experimentation of interactive media is very current with national ideas in theatre and performance. Also, both artists have extensive experience and clear creative influences, which only reinforces for us that these artists are connected with current practice. Because of all of these strengths, we anticipate that this project will be noticed outside of Arizona.

Dominic Miller – *Teeth as White as Bone (Chemotherapeutical Turbine Songs)*. The artist, and collaborator Adrianna Delgado, will record the experiences of Navajo uranium miners living on The Navajo Nation that will be later joined with sculptural and

installation-based artworks. The artwork will use the audio recordings as a means to bridge forms of language, myth, and social intervention. The artists will also create a website where they will make available their research. Both artists live in Phoenix.

Panel Comments: Miller's project is intriguing in that he proposes to combine complex cultural and technological issues through the traditional form of storytelling and later integrate it with contemporary installation work. His interest in contemporary social issues was clearly illustrated in his supplementary materials. The samples showed work elegantly simplistic but poignant, yet supported by complex theory and content.

Patricia Murphy – *My Brother's Genius*. The writer will write a memoir about her brother, describing the dynamics of a family of four who survive the implosion of mental illness, addiction, and self-destructive behavior. The story will explore how the writer, a socially more compliant student, survived and thrived in school, while her brother, a musical genius, floundered—prescribing their different paths into adulthood. Murphy lives in Phoenix.

Panel Comments: Murphy is presenting to the literary world a new venture in childhood memoir. Her perception is so new and original that we cannot help but predict that it will revise everyone's sense of what memoir is or can be.

Chris Pexa – *A Throne of Horses*. The poet will produce a book-length collection of prose poems exploring the intersections of family stories and official histories of the Spirit Lake Sioux reservation by imaging the afterlife of a recently-deceased tribal elder—the poet's grandmother—as an escape narrative. Moving freely through time, and using as a source book the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Pexa will reimagine the events and figures through the chapter on "Great Liberation by Hearing." Pexa teaches English and Creative Writing at Pima Community College. He lives in Tucson.

Panel Comments: Pexa's prose poems are slyly sophisticated without being presumptuous. It seems to us that he writes out of a Whitman-like trance—a wholly new voice in contemporary poetry. We can't wait to read his book. We will buy his book.

Beverly Seckinger – *Hippie Family Values*. The filmmaker will produce a 30-minute documentary that explores the historical and contemporary hippie counterculture of the Southwest. This project seeks to counter the media stereotypes of hippies as cultural curiosities of the 1960s with an intimate portrait of one back-to-the-land communal experiment that has remained true to its ideals. Seckinger lives in Tucson.

Panel Comments: Seckinger's project addresses pertinent shifts happening in our culture with regard to sustainability and family. This is a very interesting documentary. We find that the subject matter is formally complemented with excellent camera work, editing and lighting.

Susan Southard – *Nagasaki*. The writer with translator Mariko Sugawara Bragg will complete research and writing of a nonfiction book about the survivors of the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Following the stories of three of the few remaining survivors, Southard will weave their words and experiences with scientific information about the effects of radiation on their bodies, vivid descriptions of Nagasaki then and now, and nuances of Japanese culture and language. Southard is the founding and artistic director of Essential Theatre. She lives in Tempe.

Panel Comments: Southard’s project is a work that stems out of deep compassion and commitment. That said, we also are deeply impressed by her thorough research on the topic of the bombing of Nagasaki and how she crafts the facts into such stunning prose. This is a story whose time has come, and Southard is the only one who can write it.

The Commission is also pleased to announce that Southard received the **Bill Desmond Writing Award** for the best nonfiction submission. This award was established by Kathleen Desmond to honor her husband, Bill Desmond, a reporter, editor, and nonfiction writer. Literature panelist, **Todd Petersen**, the award judge, says of Southard’s work: “The matter of our nuclear attacks on Japan is common enough in our history, but our sense of the true costs don’t come out in our telling of the stories. Susan Southard’s work with the stories of the Japanese victims is profound and moving, an intersection of journalism and prose at its most poetic. It presents fact and moves us, as the best non-fiction does, to see through the haze of language into true experience.” She will receive an additional \$700 toward her project.

Denise Uyehara – *Senkotsu (Mis)Translation Project*. The interdisciplinary artist will develop the ensemble, choreography, script, and audio/visual for an interactive performance installation. The project will explore the entangled history of Okinawa and the U.S. military presence. The installation will be constructed from the fabricated remains of quasi-beings, childhood games, scientific inquiry, narrative, and interactive soundscapes and video montage. The ensemble will perform the words inspired by Okinawans and former military as they recount their memories of war and peacetime. Uyehara lives in Tucson.

Panel Comments: Uyehara is a real treasure on a local and national level. She has the ability to successfully blend social and cultural issues in her work—a task not easily accomplished. She creates innovative work using technology in sophisticated but simple ways. It is clear that she is a very dedicated artist, who is committed to exploring and exposing her own cultural heritage while also telling other people’s stories.

As the state arts agency, the Arizona Commission on the Arts envisions an Arizona where all people can broaden, deepen and diversify their engagement with the arts, as creators, audiences and supporters, in ways that are satisfying and integral to their lives.

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