

417 W. Roosevelt St.
Phoenix, AZ 85003-1326
p 602.771.8501
f 602.256.0282
info@azarts.gov
www.azarts.gov



Arizona
Commission
on the Arts

18 ARIZONA ARTISTS AWARDED 2009 ARTS COMMISSION PROJECT GRANTS TO DEVELOP NEW WORKS

In January 2009, the Arizona Commission on the Arts awarded its prestigious Artist Project Grants to 18 artists from across Arizona, practicing in a variety of artistic disciplines. Offered annually, Artist Project Grants support the professional development of Arizona artists with awards of up to \$5,000. In all, 176 Arizona artists applied during this cycle. Competition for these awards is fierce, and thus only the most exceptional and well-crafted applications with the strongest work samples receive funding. Artists may receive only one Artist Project Grant in a lifetime.

The 2009 recipients are: **Jane Armstrong, Susan Berger, Nicholas Bernard, Eric Boos, Ivan Bronston, Dan Bush, Jessica Drenk, Deborah Ford, Niki Herd, Fenton Johnson, Brandon Kodama, Jamie A. Lee, Thomas Schultz, Jamie Taucher, Gisela Telis, Kathyanne White, Derek Wilkinson and Steven Yazzie.**

2009 Artist Project Grant panelists included **Otoño Lujan**, Executive Director for Side Street Projects, Los Angeles, California; **Kristin Poole**, Artistic Director of The Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Sun Valley, Idaho; **Rosalba Rolon**, Artistic Director and co-founder of Pregones Theater in the Bronx, New York; and **Afaa Michael Weaver**, poet and endowed chair at Simmons College as the Alumnae Professor of English and Director of the Zora Neale Hurston Literary Center, Boston, Massachusetts. **Diane Prescott**, an Arizona Commission on the Arts board member from Cottonwood, chaired the panel.

The Commission is committed to maintaining support for artists through grants, as it has for 20 years. Over the years these awards have been known to springboard recipients into the next level of their careers as artists, whose business is researching, developing, marketing and delivering their creative product. Through their work with communities, in education and in partnership with local vendors, artists stimulate local economies and improve the quality of life across Arizona.

Artist Project Grants Descriptions:

Jane Armstrong (Flagstaff) – *Building the House I Grew Up In: A Book of Lies*. The writer will produce a book-length collage of essays where she will investigate the reliability of personal narrative and reveal the intricacies of the created Self by exploring the incongruities between what one knows of one's self and what one actually is. Armstrong is an associate editor for the *Mississippi Review* and teaches creative writing at Northern Arizona University.

Susan Berger (Tucson) – *The Side of the Road*. The artist will travel secondary roads and photograph roadside memorials, which often go unnoticed by drivers but which exhibit a great deal of care and work. She sees these memorials as honoring life rather than mourning death. The photographs will be made with black and white film, printed as large-format silver gelatin prints for exhibition. Berger works as an assistant to Frank Gohlke, noted landscape photographer and laureate professor of photography at The University of Arizona.

Nicholas Bernard (Scottsdale) – *Development of Monochromatic Texture and Color on Large-scale Ceramic Vessels*. The ceramicist will create large-scale vessels, developing color formulae for glazes and finishing and firing techniques. The goal is to use clay itself as glaze to generate color and texture. Bernard has been juried and exhibited in prestigious American Craft exhibitions in Chicago, Washington, D.C. and New York City.

Eric Boos (Prescott) – *Personal Ecology*. The artist will create biomorphic ceramic sculptures that draw their inspiration from forms found in nature, such as bacteria, fossils, fungi or other life forms on a very large scale. The project will entail also building a kiln to accommodate the pieces to be fired. Boos teaches ceramics at Yavapai College.

Ivan Bronston (Flagstaff) – *Animation, Expiration, Regeneration*. The artist will create an indoor sculpture installation made up of five independent components that are metaphorical representation of a Native American father's teachings to his son. Each piece will be constructed to occupy the full dimension of a room.

Dan Bush (Queen Creek) – *CHAOTICA*. The composer-musician, along with collaborators Gary Toth, Patrick Riggle, Jeff Pawlicki and Patrick Korst, will compose original music that will explore the personal and private elements of self-discovery. Bush is the owner of Cold Fusion Records, an independent record label and music publishing company.

Jessica Drenk (Tucson) – *Archaeologica*. The artist will create an installation that re-imagines the traditional natural history museum using disposable household items. The common materials will be put through a series of processes that transform them from ordinary objects into curiosities resembling natural shapes and forms. The artist's most recent exhibitions were at the Penumbra Gallery in Los Angeles, Book-Art Object in Belgrade, Serbia, and the Lana Santorelli Gallery in New York City.

Deborah Ford (Prescott) – *Like Insects in Amber*. The artist will explore the relationship between private memory and public history in the American West. She will incorporate public records, such as maps, GIS data and personal artifacts into the images, creating a sense of the interrelationship between stories and landscape.

Niki Herd (Tucson) – *To Sleep with Forks and Knives*. The poet will complete the third section of a book of poems. The section will be made up of poems of celebration of women of the past and written in blues style. Herd received her M.F.A. from Antioch University Los Angeles.

Fenton Johnson (Tucson) – *Desire and Solitude: A Singular Vocation*. The writer will complete a book of nonfiction about the lives and works of writers who completed their major work while living alone. The book will elaborate the place of the spinster and bachelor in arts, letters and society, and celebrate the necessity and dignity of this singular calling. Johnson is a professor in the Creative Writing Program at The University of Arizona.

The Commission is also pleased to announce that Fenton Johnson 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, **Afaa Michael Weaver**, the award judge, said of Johnson's work: "Fenton Johnson's deft way of capturing detail brings the reader to the intimate space that is the hallmark of exemplary writing. His choice of subject shows not only a breadth of knowledge but a depth of compassion. He chooses what to write based on a genuine desire to contribute to our lives. This is an admirable selflessness from a gifted writer." Johnson will receive an additional \$700 toward his project.

Brandon Kodama (Tucson) – *NEGYPT*. The Artistic Director of qCA will collaborate with composer Daniel Naiman, and performance artists Geneva Foster-Gluck and Aurelia A.

Sometimes, to create an evening of dance inspired by visionary artist Paul Laffoley's Timeline of the Cosmic Task and Buckminster Fuller's theory on a universal coordinate system.

Jamie A. Lee (Tucson) – *aguamiel: secrets of the agave*. The filmmaker, along with collaborator Adela C. Licona, will create a documentary film focusing on women's cooperatives along the border and how these women are using traditional and contemporary knowledge to inform practices of survival, sustainability and security. Lee is the founder of visionaries filmworks, inc.

Thomas Schultz (Surprise) – *El Mirage*. The artist will capture the community of El Mirage at a critical moment in time, recording the rural way of life as urban pressures and populations move into the area. He will create large, high-resolution digital images printed on archival paper to be shown at exhibitions.

Jamie Taucher (Sedona) – *Sea of Change*. The filmmaker will produce a documentary about the Sea of Cortez, Mexico, interviewing people that live and make a living from the sea as well as two inventors that are developing technology to make the sea sustainable. Taucher is the Director of Photography for Sedona Greencast.

Gisela Telis (Tucson) – *The Cemetery Songbook*. The writer will complete a novel about a gifted Latina grappling with her identity as she comes of age in a remote corner of America. Telis works as a freelance writer.

Kathyanne White (Prescott) – *Expanding the Digital Print to Uncommon Surfaces*. The artist will digitally print images of trees that she has taken at various state and national parks around the country and print them on a variety of surfaces, such as tyvec, burlap, lutradur, dyed canvas, organza and vellum, as well as other hand-made surfaces. The surfaces are altered and combined with other fibers in order to express the textures of the trees. White's work has been exhibited across the country and internationally. She currently works as an adjunct faculty at Yavapai College.

Derek Wilkinson (Tempe) – *Relationship Paintings*. The artist will create a group of three large-scale oil paintings, exploring the ever-changing nature of human relationships. Each painting will feature a life-sized human figure of family or friends. Wilkinson's work has been exhibited widely across the country.

Steven Yazzie (Phoenix) – *Postcommodity: The Repellent Fence*. The artist, along with collaborators Kade L. Twist, Nathan Young, Paco Velez and Raven Chacon, will create an interactive installation/public space that will explore the impact of immigration on the lives of indigenous peoples that live on either side of the border fence.

As the state arts agency, the Arizona Commission on the Arts is committed to fostering an Arizona where 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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