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## GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARDS

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*Department of Cultural Affairs*

### 2011 Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts

## Seven artists and art contributors have been selected for New Mexico's highest artistic honor

**SANTA FE** – Governor Susana Martinez, along with the New Mexico Arts Commission, have announced the seven artists and arts supporters who will be recipients of the 2011 Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts.

“Day in, day out and year after year, these artists and supporters work to enrich our lives, our communities and our spirit. We applaud their efforts and their achievements,” said Gov. Martinez.

The 2011 Governor's Arts Awards recipients are: **Judy Chicago** of Belen for Multidisciplinary Arts; **Arnold Herrera** of Cochiti Pueblo for Traditional Pueblo Arts; **Robert Highsmith** of Las Cruces for Painting; **Amadeus Leitner** of Chimayó for Photography; **Bill Wiggins** of Roswell for Painting; **Bruce and Mary Anne Larsen** of Santa Fe – Major Contributor to the Arts; and the **Las Cruces International Mariachi Conference** – Major Contributor to the Arts.

The 2011 Governor's Arts Awards ceremonies will be held on Friday evening, September 16, 5:15 to 7:00 pm at the St. Francis Auditorium, New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe. The ceremony is preceded by an afternoon reception and exhibition opening, 3:30 –

4:30 pm, in the Governor's Gallery, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, State Capitol. Both the awards ceremony and gallery reception are free and open to the public.

The Governor's Arts Awards were established in 1974 by Governor Bruce King and First Lady Alice King to celebrate the extensive roles – both economic and cultural – that artists, craftspeople and arts supporters play in the life of New Mexico. During its 37-year existence, a diverse and prestigious list of painters, weavers, sculptors, dancers, musicians, storytellers, poets, actors, playwrights and potters have been honored. Past awardees include Maria Martinez, Bill Mauldin, Glenna Goodacre, Tony Hillerman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Patrick Oliphant, N. Scott Momaday, Tammy Garcia, Luis Jimenez, Pop Chalee and Robert Redford.

Nominations for the awards are invited each year from arts groups and interested New Mexicans. All nominations are reviewed by a committee of the New Mexico Arts Commission, which sends its recommendations to the full Commission and to the Governor. The 2011 Awards Selection Committee consisted of Terri Salazar of Los Ranchos as Chairperson, and Arts Commissioners Charmay Allred of Santa Fe, Glenn Cutter of Mesilla, Sherry Davis of Santa Fe and John Rohovec of Silver City, as well as Chuck Zimmer, manager of the state public art program for New Mexico Arts. Loie Fecteau, executive director of New Mexico Arts, served on the committee in a nonvoting capacity, and Virginia Castellano, a program manager for New Mexico Arts, provided technical support.

*The following are brief profiles of the 2011 Governor's Arts Awardees:*

**Judy Chicago**, who lives in Belen along with her husband, photographer Donald Woodman, is an artist, author, educator and feminist whose career spans more than four decades. Her art has been widely exhibited in the United States as well as in Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. A graduate of the University of California-Los Angeles with both undergraduate and graduate degrees in art, Chicago turned her attention to the subject of women's history in 1974 and began creating what would become her most well-known work – *The Dinner Party*. This large-scale, multimedia project, which includes weaving, china painting, ceramics and needlework, is a symbolic history of women in Western Civilization. *The Dinner Party*, which has been seen by more than a million viewers during its sixteen exhibitions at venues in six countries, is now on permanent display in the Brooklyn Museum

of Art. Other high-profile Judy Chicago ventures include the *Birth Project*, a series of birth and creation images for needlework, originally exhibited in more than 100 venues and now in the collection of the Albuquerque Museum. In 1978 Chicago founded the nonprofit arts organization, *Through the Flower*, to serve the general public and especially K-12 schools with educational programs that communicate the importance and power of art through exhibitions, workshops, seminars and lectures, as well as a website and study center. “Judy Chicago is an artist who has an inspiring sense of responsibility to younger, developing artists and who has made an outstanding contribution to the artistic and cultural life of New Mexico,” said Mary Kershaw, director of the New Mexico Museum of Art, an institution that holds more than 20 of Chicago’s works in its collection.

**Arnold Herrera** of Cochiti Pueblo is a lifelong New Mexico artist, a master of several traditional Pueblo art forms and a cultural interpreter and preservationist. He is best known as a drum maker, but is also celebrated for his silverwork jewelry and red willow baskets, as well as his skills as a Keresan song composer and traditional dance choreographer. Herrera was class valedictorian of Santa Fe Indian School and graduated with a degree in psychology from New Mexico Highlands University. In addition to his extraordinary proficiency and achievements in the Pueblo arts, Herrera has worked for the National Park Service at both Bandelier and Pecos National Monuments, and for the Institute of American Indian Arts. He has also worked with the Santa Fe Indian School and many of New Mexico’s Pueblos teaching young people crafts and leadership skills. In 1998 and 2000 he represented New Mexico’s Pueblo culture with drum making demonstrations at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C. He currently serves as a member of the New Mexico Humanities Council’s Speakers Series. In her letter supporting his nomination, storyteller Mary Ellen Gonzales of Santa Fe said Herrera is not only an artist but an art sharer. “Arnold draws out of each individual his or her own artistic, creative talents,” said Gonzales. “By interacting with his art, we become artists ourselves.”

The dramatic New Mexico landscapes portrayed by Las Cruces watercolorist **Robert Highsmith** have inspired artists, art-lovers and critics alike, and have contributed greatly to the appreciation of his watercolor medium and his home state. Highsmith received his art

training from New Mexico State University and the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Florida. He has had numerous one-man and group shows of his work throughout the country and is represented in private and corporate collections including the New Mexico Capitol Art Foundation Collection, Hartford Insurance, Southern New England Telephone and the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Highsmith's work is currently featured in the travelling *Paint the Parks Top 100 Exhibit* and is featured on the cover of the February/March *Santa Fean* magazine. He is a signature member of both the New Mexico Watercolor Society and the American Watercolor Society. "Robert Highsmith embodies the best of New Mexico," said his nominator Carl Brown of Las Cruces. "The strong work ethic, generosity of spirit, and integrity with which his art is imbued is grandly reflected not only in the enchanting landscapes he portrays but, equally important, in the life he lives."

Chimayó native and Santa Fe resident **Amadeus Leitner** is a 13<sup>th</sup> generation "Chimayóso," descendent of famed weaver Reyes Ortega. While he is receiving a Governor's Award for his photography, Leitner has worked in various traditions of Spanish Colonial folk art including *bulto* carving and *retablo* painting. He holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of New Mexico where he interned with renowned architect Antoine Predock. Following graduation from UNM in 2004, Leitner moved to San Francisco and managed architectural projects from small residences to large scale commercial projects such as a new school and synagogue in Oakland, California. He moved back to New Mexico in 2008 to pursue his medium of landscape photography full-time. Leitner is a juried member of the Santa Fe Society of Artists and participated in more than 20 shows with the 75-member group. His photos have appeared in publications including *Interior Design* magazine, *Atomic Ranch* magazine and *The Santa Fean* magazine. "Amadeus demonstrates superb technical abilities in many creative endeavors, from architecture to graphic design, but it is in his photography that the finely honed technical skill meshes with a keen aesthetic sensibility to produce art on a high level," said Santa Fe author and photographer Don Usner. "He has a remarkable talent for finding subtle yet powerful subject matter (especially in landscapes), photographing it with an acute eye for composition, and rendering images in exquisite fine prints. Amadeus has developed his talents to a remarkable degree for his young age, and for

him the future holds great promise. He is truly a rising, shining star in the New Mexico art scene."

Self-taught painter **Bill Wiggins** of Roswell began applying his oils to canvas in 1940 and exhibiting his work in 1952 and has never stopped. The 93 year-old Wiggins was born in Roswell in 1917 to parents who were early homesteaders, both from pioneer ranching families. He has lived in New Mexico his entire life, leaving only for brief periods to attend college in Abilene, Texas; to join the U.S. Army during WWII; and to stay in England after the war to attend art school. He continues to live and paint in Roswell in the family home. Wiggins has exhibited at the Peter Eller Gallery in Albuquerque, the Arkansas National Gallery in Jonesboro, Marietta College in Ohio, the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe and the Roswell Museum and Art Center. He has made numerous contributions to the arts in New Mexico beyond his own successful artwork. Beginning in 1953 for ten years, he taught art classes for children and adults at the Roswell Museum, and in the 1960's served on an "unofficial" state arts council with notable artists Randall Davey, Elmer Schooley, Eric Gibberd, Raymond Jonson and Frederick O'Hara to assist with issues concerning artists of that time. In recent years, Wiggins has suffered from macular degeneration, but has refused to let dwindling eyesight slow him down, continuing to paint almost every day in a new medium, watercolor. "His *Macular Degeneration Series* is a testimony to his tenacity and love for his craft," said Donald Anderson, President of the Roswell Artist-in-Residence Foundation and himself a Governor's Art Award recipient in 1983. "His works do not require any signature: they say Bill Wiggins, and continue to be as strong and unique as ever."

**Bruce and Mary Anne Larsen** of Santa Fe have addressed their passion for New Mexico's arts and culture by contributing their time, expertise and much-needed funding to help build success for New Mexico museums and performing arts. Bruce Larsen has been a member of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation Board since 1999, serving four years as chairman. During that time, the Foundation raised more than \$26 million in support of the construction and an endowment for the New Mexico History Museum. The new, high-profile museum, located behind the Palace of the Governors in downtown Santa Fe opened to the public in May of 2009. Mary Anne Larsen played a central role in negotiations to expand the Aspen

Ballet of Colorado to Santa Fe – forming the Aspen-Santa Fe Ballet. She is a past board chair of the nationally-prominent performing arts organization. The Larsens are also supporters of the Lensic Performing Arts Center, the Wheelwright Museum and the Santa Fe Indian Market. “Even when the Larsen’s are not leading a fundraising activity, you will find them working on a committee, or an event,” said Liz Crews of Santa Fe in her letter supporting the nomination. “They are both outstanding examples of individuals giving of the time, leadership, effort and resources to the arts and people of New Mexico.”

Now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, the **Las Cruces International Mariachi Conference** has made a major contribution to the arts in New Mexico by safeguarding and showcasing the vibrant Mexican and New Mexican cultural traditions of mariachi and ballet folkloric dance. Since its birth in 1994, the educational programs of the Mariachi Conference have hosted some 13,000 youth and adult musicians and dancers, and reached more than 150,000 audience members through its culminating public performances. Central to the annual five-day conference held each November in Las Cruces are workshops that draw between 750 and 800 students who are offered the opportunity to work with world-renowned visiting artists. Many students from the conference have gone on to study mariachi and classical music at the college level, eventually organizing their own musical groups. “Clearly, not all of these young, aspiring artists will make it BIG on the mariachi record charts,” said Paul H. Gutierrez, an extension specialist at New Mexico State University. “However, the literature is clear, that youth exposed to positive development assets are much more likely to make it BIG in life.”

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