For Immediate Release: June 20, 2019 (Santa Fe, New Mexico) - Today, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Arts Commission announced the artists and major contributors to the arts who will be recipients of the 2019 Annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts.

“Art is intimately woven into the fabric of our great state,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “Artists uplift us, inspire us and tell the stories that define us. I’m humbled to have the opportunity to celebrate the diverse and unique talents of these incredible artists and supporters of the arts. Their creativity and commitment to craft represent the very best of the Land of Enchantment.”

The 2019 Governor’s Arts Awards ceremonies will be held Friday, Sept. 20, at 5:30 p.m. at the St. Francis Auditorium in the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe. The ceremony is preceded by a public reception beginning at 4:30 p.m. in the museum courtyard. A hosted open house exhibiting the awardees work will take place in the Governor’s Gallery at the State Capitol from noon to 4 p.m. Both the awards ceremony and gallery open house are free and open to the public. Earlier in the day, the awardees and their families will be hosted by the Governor at the Governor’s Mansion at a private brunch.
This year marks the 46th annual celebration of the Governor's Arts Awards, which was established in 1974 to celebrate the extensive role that artists and their work have played in New Mexico. A diverse and noteworthy list of painters, weavers, sculptors, dancers, musicians, storytellers, poets, actors, playwrights, and potters have been honored by the Governor’s Arts Awards. Past awardees include: Georgia O’Keeffe, Robert Redford, George R.R. Martin, Maria Martinez, Tony Abeyta, Glenna Goodacre, Tony Hillerman, N. Scott Momaday, Tammy Garcia, Lucy Lippard and Catherine Oppenheimer.

Nominations are accepted 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.

Governor Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Arts Commission announce that the awardees for this year’s Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts are:

**Individual Artists:**

1. **Victor di Suvero of Santa Fe, Artist, Poetry, Publishing:** Victor di Suvero has been an outspoken literacy, literature and poetry activist since he first began studying and memorizing Dante at the age of 10. He has participated in bringing poetry and literature to the people for nearly 80 years in his role as poet, publisher and community organizer. His more recent poetry books include *Harvest Time* (2001), *Spring Again* (2005), *Moving On* (2007), *A Gathering* (2010), *Considering* (2012), *Still Here* (2014), and *Once Again* (2016). *Spring Again* was awarded the Independent Publishers Association Bronze Medal in 2007. He has edited several anthologies including *¡Saludos!* the first bilingual collection of the poetry of New Mexico, and *We Came to Santa Fe* (2009), which was awarded a 2009 Southwest Book Design and Production Award by the New Mexico Book Association. Through his publishing company, Pennywhistle Press, which he established with his wife, di Suvero has consistently published the work of many unknown New Mexico writers from small communities whose talents would have gone unnoticed without his support. Those writers include the likes of Joan Logghe, Renée Gregorio, John Brandi, Judyth Hill and Luci Tapahanso, all now well-known New Mexico writers. di Suvero was a key force in founding several important and long-standing literary organizations and programs in New Mexico including the Poetry in the Schools program, New Mexico Book Association, PEN New Mexico, New Mexico Literary Arts (formerly The Poetry Center of New Mexico), and the Live Poets Society. As the Director of the National Poetry Association he assisted in establishing National Poetry Week, which has now
grown into National Poetry Month and celebrated across the country.

2. **Marc Neikrug of Santa Fe, Artist, Pianist, Musical Composition:** Marc Neikrug's musical career has spanned over 54 years as a globally recognized concert pianist, composer, and artistic director of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. As a pianist, he performed as a soloist, a chamber musician, and most notably as a duo partner with the violinist Pinchas Zuckerman for over 35 years. Together they performed in North and South America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East in concert halls such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. His performances with Mr. Zuckerman have been recorded in over 20 CDs and performances broadcast on German, Swiss, English, and Japanese stations as well as on PBS. As a composer, major pieces were commissioned by the Berlin Opera, London's South Bank Festival, the Frankfurt Festival, the Polish Radio Symphony, the Library of Congress, Lincoln Center and the Atlanta, Houston, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Boston, Washington National and Jerusalem symphonies. He has written five pieces on commission for the New York Philharmonic and G. Schirmer has published over 60 of his works. Since 1998, Neikrug has been the Artistic Director of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Its annual season of 45 concerts features nearly 100 musicians from all over the world and the festival's three-month series of radio shows is broadcast by over 200 stations. He developed major educational components to the Festival that brings curriculum, teacher training and performances to 6,000 elementary students as well as pre-K students through the Music in Our Schools program.

3. **Nicolas Otero of Los Lunas, Artist, Painter, Retablos:** Nicolas Otero began practicing the tradition of Santo making at just 16 years old by apprenticing with master artists. Otero produces retablos, bultos, altars, gesso reliefs, hide paintings and ramilletes (paper flower adornments). He continues to use traditional methods in his work such as the production of natural pigments and hand carved panels. In his 22 years of practicing the Santero tradition he has garnered over 42 awards including, in 2017, Grand Prize Best of Show for Traditional Spanish Market. Working within his community of artistic colleagues, he curated the exhibit *Ayer, Hoy, y Mañana: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: An Exhibition of Traditional and Contemporary Arts*, at the Los Lunas Museum of Heritage and Arts that was noted for its power, authenticity and meaningful community engagement. Otero’s work can be found in the museum collections of the Denver Art Museum, Regis University Museum, Taylor Museum, Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, College of Saint Catherine, Colorado University Art Museum, Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Museum of International Folk Art and the Archive Collection of the White House.

4. **Roxanne Swentzell of Santa Clara Pueblo, Artist, Sculpture, Clay:** Roxanne Swentzell's first piece of art was a clay dog at the age of four. After formal training at the Portland Museum Art School and the Institute for American Indian Arts and the development of her own style, Swentzell began to create full-length clay figures that represent the complete spectrum of the human spirit. She feels that many people are out of touch with their environment and hopes relating to her expressive characters will help them get back in touch with their surroundings and feelings. Her figures represent a full range of emotions and irrepressible moods. Swentzell often focuses on interpretative female portraits attempting to bring back the balance of power between the male and female, inherently recognized in her own culture. Additionally, she increasingly uses a powerful sense of humor to communicate. Though steeped in her own culture, Swentzell's work demonstrates an astounding universality, speaking
to people of all cultures. Awards for her work include the Spirit of the Heard Award
(Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ), the Native Treasures Living Treasures Award (Santa
Fe), a Santa Fe Community Foundation Award, and awards for specific work from the
Southwest Association of Indian Arts Indian Market and the Heard Museum Guild
Indian Fair and Market. Her piece, “E-wah-Nee-nee” was commissioned for their
auditorium by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Smithsonian
Institute, in Washington, D.C. Her work is continuously shown in the Tower Gallery in
Pojoaque.

Major Contributors to the Arts:

5. New Mexico PBS/KNME ¡COLORES! of Albuquerque, Major Contributor to the
Arts: Non-commercial, educational and inspirational, ¡COLORES! is dedicated to
telling stories about the remarkable creative spirit, the rich multicultural communities,
and extraordinary history found in the Land of Enchantment. It is a weekly art series
that features local and national stories about film, visual and performing arts, theater,
photography, literature, painting, sculpture, poetry and dance. Since 1989 they have
produced over three hundred thirty-minute and one-hour programs. Featured artists
include Arlene Cisneros Sena, Allan Houser, Rudolfo Anaya, Judy Chicago, Nicholas
Herrera, Elodie Holmes, Peter Hurd and Georgia O’Keeffe. Through a variety of
media platforms, ¡COLORES! brings New Mexico’s art, culture, and history to
households across New Mexico, the U.S. and the world. With broadcasting and cable
they reach over 1 million homes throughout the state. Available via the internet, the
series can be viewed from anywhere. Its programs have been included in museums
across the country, at community events, and in classrooms from elementary school
to higher education. ¡COLORES! has received a National Emmy nomination for
Community Service, several southwest regional Emmys, the Jury Prize at the
Telluride Mountain Film Festival, and a showing at the Smithsonian’s Latino Film
Festival. They celebrate their 30th anniversary this year.

6. Lee Gruber of Silver City, Major Contributor to the Arts: Lee Gruber has been
a major force in her community through initiating ideas and shepherding them to
reach goals that promote contemporary visual art, foster an understanding of the
history of New Mexico cultural arts, and nurture an environment that will economically
support the business of art. Gruber founded the Silver City tile business Syzygy with
her husband over 25 years ago. Though she recently retired, Syzygy continues to
thrive making architectural ceramics whose production process embraces technology
for building construction worldwide while maintaining an artistic sensibility. The
company’s many actions as part of their community include donating an estimated
$50,000 of materials over 20 years to local organizations and projects. As board
president of the Southwest New Mexico Arts Culture and Tourism, Gruber led the
establishment of the Silver City Arts & Cultural District, where she was board
president. Through her vision were established both the Silver City Clay Festival and
the Southwest New Mexico Clay Arts Trail. The Clay Festival has evolved into a
national event of exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations. The Clay Trail, begun in
2013, has grown to 60-70 member sites in Luna, Hidalgo, Grant and Catron counties.
It also partners with historic sites related to clay such as the Gila Cliff Dwellings and the Mimbres Cultural Center.

This year’s Governor’s Arts Awards Selection Committee was chaired by New Mexico Arts Commissioner John Rohovec of Silver City and included Arts Commissioners Charmay Allred of Santa Fe; JoAnn Balzer of Santa Fe; Glenn Cutter of Mesilla; and Terri Salazar of Los Ranchos. Michelle Laflamme-Childs, director of the state public art program for New Mexico Arts and Jenice E. Gharib, New Mexico Arts acting executive director, served on the committee in a nonvoting capacity.


**Image(s):**

Top Left: Nicolas Otero, Los Lunas artist, retablo Santo Nino de Atocha

Top Middle: Roxanne Swentzell, Santa Clara Pueblo artist, clay sculpture, Special Girl

Top Right: Roxanne Swentzell, Santa Clara Pueblo artist, clay sculpture, Admiration

Second Row: Victor di Suvero, Poet, Pennywhistle Press Book Covers: We Came to Santa Fe, and ¡Saludos!

Third Row: New Mexico PBS, ¡Colores! Logo

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**About New Mexico Arts:**

*New Mexico Arts is a division of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs and partners with the New Mexico Museum of Art in presenting the annual Governor’s Arts Awards events. The New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs is New Mexico’s cultural steward charged with preserving and showcasing the state’s cultural riches. With its eight museums, eight historic sites, arts, archaeology, historic preservation and library programs, the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs is one of the largest and most diverse state cultural agencies in the nation. Together, the facilities, programs, and services of the Department support a $5.6 billion cultural industry in New Mexico.*