Artists and Arts Contributors Named for 2017 Annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts

Santa Fe – Governor Susana Martinez and the New Mexico Arts Commission today announced seven artists and major contributors to the arts who will be recipients of the 2017 Annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts.

“The work of these distinguished artists and arts supporters enriches our lives, our communities and our state,” said Governor Martinez. “Through these lifetime achievement awards for the arts, we celebrate the diverse and amazing talents of these 2017 recipients whose efforts help drive our creative economy and truly make our state the Land of Enchantment.”

The 2017 Governor’s Arts Awards ceremonies will be held on Friday, September 15, at 5:15 pm at the St. Francis Auditorium in the 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 at the State Capitol. Both the awards ceremony and gallery reception are free and open to the public.

This year marks the 44th 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, New Mexico’s most prestigious 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, 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 Martinez and the New Mexico Arts Commission announce that the awardees for this year’s Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts are:

1. **Bayou Seco of Silver City, Artists, Music:** Ken Keppeler and Jeanie McLerie, known the world over as Bayou Seco, are not only extraordinary performers but they are ambassadors of New Mexico music. They have made significant contributions to New Mexico by preserving the cultural heritage of Hispanic and Cowboy folk music, and bringing it to life for future generations through their performances and teaching. McLerie has been a professional musician since 1962, performing in the United States, Canada and Europe with the groups Sandy & Jeanie, The Harmony Sisters and the Delta Sisters. For more than 30 years, she has taught fiddle instruction to children through “The Fiddling Friends,” which focuses on an international repertoire of fiddle styles and music, with an emphasis on the sources of the music. Keppeler, a fourth generation Southwesterner with roots in New Mexico, Arizona and California, grew up with the music of the region and has been a professional musician since 1972. He plays fiddle, harmonica, banjo, and accordion and is also a violin maker. Together in Bayou Seco they are renowned for their “chilegumbo music,” which celebrates the cross-cultural music of the Southwest. Former State Folklorist Claude Stephenson said Keppeler and McLerie were instrumental in helping to bring the old traditional Hispanic style music of such New Mexico legends as Cleofes Ortiz, a violinist from Bernal, into the mainstream of the folk music scene. Cipriano Vigil of El Rito, who received a Governor’s Arts Award in 1994
for traditional music, said he has known and admired Keppeler and McLerie since the early 1980s. “So many other people know our music because of their efforts,” Vigil said. Rus Bradburd, an associate professor at New Mexico State University, said Bayou Seco have found and kept alive traditional dances in Albuquerque, Silver City, Las Cruces and Mesilla. “Simply put, nobody else in the history of our great state has done so much for the music and gotten so little personal gain,” Bradburd said. “In a world overrun with smart phones, iPads, iTunes and technology gone wild, Keppeler and McLerie have pushed in the other direction. To them, the oldest magic is the best kind – the music that gets you dancing, the love of tradition, the respect for roots and older people.”

2. William deBuys of El Valle, Artist, Writing/Literature: William deBuys is an internationally recognized author and conservationist, who has worked throughout his lengthy literary career to celebrate New Mexico’s distinctive peoples and landscapes. The celebrated author, who has lived in New Mexico since 1972, describes his writing process as trying to “capture the wonderful complexity of this thing that we call life and communicate that complexity and the sense of wonder that comes with it, the sense of passion and commitment, the desire to change it, and yet the obligation to celebrate it as it is.” The writings of deBuys have garnered numerous awards, and one of his books focused on New Mexico – River of Traps: A New Mexico Mountain Life – was a finalist for the 1991 Pulitzer Prize. “He is one of a small handful of authors I have worked with whose prose is so polished that it could go straight to the printer without any editorial work,” said Elizabeth C. Hadas, Director Emerita of University of New Mexico Press. “I know of no other writer whose work on New Mexico is so broad and deep with appeal to so many audiences. His work transcends categories.” Jack Loeffler, who received a Governor’s Arts Award in 2008, called deBuys “one of New Mexico’s greatest human treasures.” “One of William deBuys’ most compelling characteristics is that he practices what he articulates in his writing.” Loeffler said. “For over four decades, he has tended his own farm and ranchland in rural northern New Mexico, ... He is deeply aware of the wealth of perspective that is retained in the various human cultures indigenous to New Mexico, and has worked hand in hand with people of the land both to glean their inherent wisdom, and to present their voices to the wider cultural audience.”

3. Gustavo Victor Goler of Taos, Artist, Master Santero/Spanish Colonial Bultos and Retablos: Raised in Santa Fe, Gustavo Victor Goler’s early years were spent apprenticing in his family’s conservation studios where he learned wood carving skills. Goler began carving Santos in high school as a hobby, creating a few pieces a year that he would give to family and friends. In 1988, Goler was juried into Traditional Spanish Market where his high level of craftsmanship and innovative design have garnered him dozens of awards including being recognized in 2016 with a Master’s Award for Lifetime Achievement, the highest honor given by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society. “It is fair to say, that through his dedication and commitment Mr. Goler has become the Michelangelo of New Mexico’s Spanish Colonial traditions,” said James M. Long, the former chairman of the board of the Spanish Colonial Society. “I believe Mr. Goler has personally set a new standard of beauty and quality in the New Mexican Santero art world.” Goler is renowned for not only his art but his in-depth research of New Mexico Santeros. Along with his study of artists and their history, Goler has immersed himself in the history of saints and their iconography. In 2005, Goler exhibited a 17-year retrospective show of his personal work at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, and in 2011 he was honored by the Millicent Rogers Museum with a 25-year retrospective exhibition. He has also been honored in his hometown of Taos with a distinguished artist award for his achievements both in art, as well as conservation. Goler led the technical restoration effort of the altar screen at Santa Cruz de la Canada. He designed the altar screen at Costilla and routinely offers his knowledge to other restoration efforts, such as the Nuestra Senora del Rosario church in Truchas.

4. Russell Sanchez of San Ildefonso Pueblo, Artist, Pottery: Russell Sanchez of San Ildefonso Pueblo, who has been making pottery since he was 12 years old, has continued a Native American tradition that has been in New Mexico for hundreds of years. “By adhering to his methods and even at times expanding on the designs and shapes of his pieces he is showing the next generation what is possible,” said nominator Nancy Youngblood, who received a Governor’s Arts Award for pottery in 2004. “He has not only followed the long standing traditions of San Ildefonso Pueblo’s pottery, but has also brought a new level of excellence to the art form.” Sanchez follows the traditional ways of gathering clay, processing it, and creating it through the traditional coil method. Sanchez fires his pieces using the traditional methods of an open outside fire using cedar wood, dried
cow pies and dried horse manure. “His strict dedication to the traditional ways is not only admirable but rare in this day and age, where many have lost touch with this sacred process,” Youngblood said. While keeping with tradition, Sanchez has not only revived forms that were done in the 1800s but has also established new contemporary styles that show his originality and talent as an artist. Youngblood said she once asked Sanchez what he was most proud of: “He told me, ‘Giving recognition to the potters of the past and carrying on their work. We are part of a living tradition.’” In addition to his art, Sanchez also has a passion for skiing, rafting and kayaking. His interest in rafting led him to be a guide in the 1990s and he has participated in expeditions worldwide, navigating rivers in the Grand Canyon, Peru and North Africa. As a result of his outdoor pursuits, the themes of nature are often reflected in his pottery. Sanchez has received numerous awards for his pottery including Best of Division at both the Santa Fe Indian Market and the Heard Indian Market. In 2011, he was awarded the special “Tony Da Award” for Pottery at Santa Fe Indian Market.

5. **William (Will) Wilson** is a Diné photographer who spent his formative years living on the Navajo Nation. Born in San Francisco in 1969, Wilson studied photography at the University of New Mexico (Dissertation Tracked MFA in Photography, 2002) and Oberlin College (BA, Studio Art and Art History, 1993). Wilson is renowned for combining digital technology, historic photographic processes, performance and installation to address the themes that most concern him, including the impacts of cultural and environmental change on indigenous peoples, and the possibility of cultural survival and renewal. In 2007, Wilson won the Native American Fine Art Fellowship from the Eiteljorg Museum, and in 2010 was awarded a prestigious grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation. Wilson has held visiting professorships at the Institute of American Indian Arts (1999-2000), Oberlin College (2000-01), and the University of Arizona (2006-08). From 2009 to 2011, Wilson managed the National Vision Project, a Ford Foundation funded initiative at the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, and helped to coordinate the New Mexico Arts Temporary Installations Made for the Environment (TIME) program on the Navajo Nation. Wilson is part of the Science and Arts Research Collaborative (SARC) which brings together artists interested in using science and technology in their practice with collaborators from Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia Labs as part of the International Symposium on Electronic Arts, 2012 (ISEA). Recently, Wilson completed an exhibition and artist residency at the Denver Art Museum and is currently the King Fellow artist in residence at the School of Advanced Research in Santa Fe, NM. He also has headed the photography department at Santa Fe Community College.

**Major Contributors to the Arts:**

6. **Helen R. Lucero of Albuquerque, Major Contributor to the Arts:** Dr. Helen R. Lucero has spent her entire career helping to promote and educate the public about the Hispanic arts of New Mexico. One of the first female Hispanic curators in the country, Lucero served as director of visual arts at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, associate curator at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American Art, curator of Hispanic Arts for the University of New Mexico Art Museum, and curator of Southwestern Hispanic Art at the Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA). “Few scholars have been such pioneers both as a researcher in the world of traditional arts, and as a ceiling-shattering leader in the world of professional museum practice,” said Andrew Connors, Curator of Art at the Albuquerque Museum. “Helen has opened so many doors, not just for herself, but for subsequent generations hoping to contribute something substantial to the world of ideas.” Born in Vadito, Lucero grew up in her grandparent’s adobe house with no running water, an outhouse in the back, and a kerosene lamp to light her high school homework. She was the first in her family to go to college and one of a very small number of Hispanic women to receive a Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico in 1986. Catalina Delgado Trunk, who received a Governor’s Arts Award in 2015, said Lucero has been a steady mentor and supporter of her artwork. “She has constructively critiqued my work by encouraging me to develop as an artist,” Delgado Trunk said. “Her gift to me is priceless.” Lucero was key to the opening of the ground-breaking Hispanic Heritage Wing at MOIFA – the first museum gallery in the country dedicated to the Hispanic arts – and was co-curator of its celebrated inaugural exhibition Familia y Fe, a tribute to the artistic legacy and culture of Hispanic New Mexico. She co-authored Chimayo Weaving: The Transformation of a Tradition, the first scholarly publication to recognize this weaving tradition and the weavers of northern New Mexico. “She remains the expert on Chimayo weaving and its history,” said Robin Farwell Gavin, chief curator of the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, who first met Lucero when they were both new curators at MOIFA. “Although I had studied Spanish Colonial art at UNM and lived in New Mexico since 1974, what I had learned about the traditional art of New Mexico was academic, stylistic and distant. What Helen taught me was about its soul.”
7. **Roswell Artist-in-Residence Program of Roswell, Major Contributor to the Arts:** The Roswell Artist-in-Residence (RAiR) Program, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, provides about six contemporary artists a year with “a gift of time” – a one-year residency with a house, studio, living stipend and an exhibition at the Roswell Museum and Art Center. Founded in 1967 by artist, oilman and philanthropist Donald B. Anderson, RAiR was envisioned as a program solely for the benefit of artists, without any obligations that would hinder creativity. Since its inception, RAiR has hosted some 238 artists from the United States, Europe, Japan, Chile and Australia, including nationally noted artists such as Robert Colescott, Luis Jimenez, Milton Resnick, Alison Saar, Jane South, and Kumi Yamashita. Eight RAiR artists have received a Governor’s Arts Award in New Mexico: Jiminez in 1993; Howard Cook in 1979; Cook’s wife Barbara Latham in 1988; Elmer Schooley in 1986; Frank McCulloch in 2001; William Goodman in 2005; Eddie Dominguez in 2006; and Edward Vega in 2009. In addition, Anderson himself received a Governor’s Arts Award in 1983 as a major contributor to the arts. “These honors speak to the caliber of the program and its participants,” said nominator Brinkman Randle, president of the Roswell Interarts Organization. RAiR has “served as a mecca for artists from throughout the world, many of whom have remained in Roswell and New Mexico past their residencies – enhancing our state’s cultural bounty,” Randle said. The RAiR artists “leave with studio discipline, personal contacts and a greater sense of one’s wealth as an artist,” Goodman said. “I can testify that in my own case the experience was very valuable. …An artist can be brimming full of skill, imagination and ideas, but it also takes time and money for these elements to come together to produce something worthwhile.” Saar said her residency gave her an incredible amount of room and time to explore new mediums and materials: “I bought my first chainsaw at Roswell and it escorted me into a whole body of life scale sculptures that I feel are now my central focus in my work.” In 2002, the RAiR Foundation was formed as a nonprofit to oversee the RAiR Program and the Anderson Museum of Contemporary Art, the public face of this remarkable residency program. RAiR artists have developed strong relationships within the community and often play key roles in local arts education initiatives. The RAiR Program’s “gift of time” has not only impacted the work of emerging and established artists from throughout the world but has contributed to the vitality of contemporary visual arts in New Mexico, especially through the strong and sustained exhibition programs of the Roswell Museum and Art Center and the Anderson Museum of Contemporary Art, said Caroline M. Brooks, the executive director of the Roswell Museum and Art Center and Laurie J. Rufe, the former executive director. “RAiR artists have taught classes, led our Second Saturday free art programs, and contributed to our events and educational outreach,” Brooks and Rufe said. In October, the Roswell Museum and Art Center, will mount an ambitious exhibition to celebrate the RAiR Program and its alumni and to commemorate the Roswell Museum and Art Center’s 80th and the RAiR Program’s 50th anniversaries.

This year’s Governor’s Arts Awards Selection Committee was chaired by New Mexico Arts Commissioner John Rohovec of Silver City, and included Arts Commission Chair Sherry Davis of Santa Fe; Arts Commissioners Charmay Allred of Santa Fe; JoAnn Balzer of Santa Fe; Glenn Cutter of Mesilla; as well as Michelle Laflamme-Childs, manager of the state public art program for New Mexico Arts. Loie Fecteau, New Mexico Arts Executive Director, served on the committee in a nonvoting capacity.

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.

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