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Centennial 2012 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 and the New Mexico Arts Commission have announced the seven artists and arts supporters who will be recipients of the Centennial 2012 Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts.

“Arts and culture have played such an important role in New Mexico’s history, it is only fitting that we honor these amazing artists and supporters for their contributions during our State Centennial year,” said Governor Martinez. “We applaud these talented artists and arts contributors who do so much to enrich our lives, educate our children and improve the quality of life in our great state.”

The Centennial 2012 Governor’s Arts Awards recipients are: Tony Abeyta of Santa Fe for Painting/Jewelry; Michael Berman of San Lorenzo for Photography; Lonnie Klein of Las Cruces for Music; Ed Sandoval of Taos for Painting; Thomas B. Catron III of Santa Fe – Major Contributor to the Arts; J. F Maddox Foundation of Hobbs – Major Contributor to the Arts; and Catherine Oppenheimer of Santa Fe – Major Contributor to the Arts.

The Centennial 2012 Governor’s Arts Awards ceremonies will be held on Friday evening, September 14, 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, 4th 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. A diverse and prestigious list of painters, weavers, sculptors, dancers, musicians, storytellers, poets, actors, playwrights and potters have been honored by the governor’s arts awards, now in its 39th year. 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 Centennial 2012 Awards Selection Committee was chaired by Arts Commissioner Terri Salazar of Los Ranchos, and included Arts Commission Chair Sherry Davis of Santa Fe, and Arts Commissioners Charmay Allred of Santa Fe, JoAnn Balzer of Santa Fe, Glenn Cutter of Mesilla, 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 Centennial 2012 Governor’s Arts Awards Recipients:

Artist Tony Abeyta of Santa Fe is considered one of the finest contemporary painters in New Mexico and beyond. Growing up in Gallup surrounded by the Navajo and Zuni reservations, his modernist painting style pays homage to native culture and place. His translation of traditional designs and themes into contemporary expressions highlights his talent and innovation among a generation of Native American artists. Abeyta continues to work in different artistic media, and has recently started making jewelry. Abeyta left home at 16 to
study at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, and received a masters in fine art from New York University. A large mural by Abeyta graces the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture’s (MIAC) gathering space, and one of his paintings served as the official illustration for the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. Abeyta’s work is also in museum collections including the Heard Museum of Art, Millicent Rogers Museum, National Museum of the American Indian, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, and Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Abeyta was honored this year with the Native Treasures Living Treasure award. The artist generously donates artwork to local and national charities. He also served on the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture’s development committee, and is represented by Blue Rain Gallery.

Artist **Michael Berman of San Lorenzo** has photographed the desert southwest for over three decades and captured its dramatic surroundings in compelling landscape prints. Born in 1956 in New York City, Berman came west to study biology at Colorado College. He later received his masters of fine arts from Arizona State University. Berman has lived for 34 years in San Lorenzo on the edge of the Gila National Forest, the focus of his next book, currently in production at the Museum of New Mexico Press. As part of his commitment to the Gila wilderness, Berman took part in the New Mexico BLM Wilderness Photography Survey in 1996, and became a founding board member of the Gila Resource Information Project in 1997. His landscape photography reflects his strong interest in ecology developed through his early studies, and his images call attention to wild places that are under threat. He donates his time and artwork to conservation organizations, including the Gila Conservation Coalition. His work is represented in the permanent collections of many museums, including the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas; the Denver Art Museum; the Cleveland Museum of Art; and the Yale University Art Gallery. In 2008, Berman received a prestigious fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for his work *Grasslands: The Chihuahuan Desert Project*.

Musician **Lonnie Klein of Las Cruces** serves as the conductor and music director of the Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra. His unyielding passion for the arts has led the orchestra to new
levels of artistic excellence, with rave reviews, and ten consecutive sold out seasons. With a career as a conductor that has spanned over three decades, Klein holds a doctorate in performance from the University of Illinois. Klein has led the orchestra for 13 years, and in his work as a guest artist both nationally and internationally, he serves as an artistic ambassador for the Las Cruces Symphony. Each season the 70-member orchestra presents six programs of classical music, a Pops concert, and chamber orchestra concert. Klein has introduced his community to new composers through the presentation of world-renowned guest artist soloists and commissions of world-premieres by acclaimed composers, and innovative repertory. Klein is committed to arts education and community outreach. More than 15,000 area children benefit from school tours and other opportunities to experience the orchestra in concert, and audiences benefit from pre-concert lectures. Since Klein took the helm, the orchestra’s budget has grown by four times its original size and now reaches more than 23,000 people. The orchestra has been featured on National Public Radio’s Performance Today.

Taos artist Ed Sandoval’s depictions of rural Hispanic New Mexican life have ensured that he is one of the most popular contemporary artists in northern New Mexico. His canvases use bold color and texture to portray the people, places, and architecture of his surroundings. Born in Nambe, Sandoval lived in various northern New Mexico communities before settling in Taos. He received a bachelor of fine arts from Eastern New Mexico University, and masters in psychology from the University of Utah. In Taos, he operates his own gallery Studio de Colores. His classic style has been compared to the Taos art colony artists. Sandoval finds inspiration in the old life of New Mexico. His work sets a mood and conveys movement and translates the connection of the people to the land. Sandoval has an interest in custom adobe home design and construction. He built his own adobe house and chapel, featured in the book Artists at Home: Inspired Ideas from New Mexico Artists. Sandoval has inspired young artists through his work as a public school art teacher. He is active in his community and supports numerous charities and events with his art and posters. Sandoval’s paintings enhance countless private homes, businesses, galleries and museums. His work has been featured in many prominent publications including New Mexico Magazine, Cowboys and Indians Magazine, and Southwest Art Magazine.
**Thomas B. Catron III of Santa Fe** has made significant contributions to the cultural life of New Mexico through his support of the local museums and performing arts organizations. Catron is recognized for his efforts to shape the state’s reputation as a cultural hub and was the driving force behind the Museum of New Mexico Foundation, the Santa Fe Opera board, and the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art/Spanish Colonial Arts Society. A third-generation New Mexican, the grandson of New Mexico’s first U.S. Senator, Catron is president of the state’s oldest law firm, Catron, Catron and Pottow. An avid opera lover, Catron was a founding director of the Santa Fe Opera, serving as board president and chairman for many years, and helped to establish the Santa Fe Opera Foundation. Catron is a founder of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation (MNMF) and served on the board of trustees for over 25 years -- the foundation celebrates 50 years in 2012. Catron also helped in the early launch of the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, and serves as vice president. His work has inspired countless others to make philanthropic gifts in support of arts and culture in New Mexico. His vision has helped to steer important financial contributions and countless donations of art and historical artifacts to the state. Catron worked with Will Shuster, one of the famed Cinco Pintores, to give work to the New Mexico Museum of Art. Catron also suggested that Alexander and Susan Girard, donate their 100,000-piece folk art collection to the Museum of International Folk Art, which now houses one of the largest folk art collections in the world. Catron has supported arts and service nonprofits for over 60 years. He was named a Santa Fe Living Treasure in 2007.

**J. F Maddox Foundation of Hobbs** was established in 1963 by Jack and Mabel Maddox to serve the residents of southeastern New Mexico. The foundation has played an important role in funding the arts in Lea County, supporting many arts organizations, events, education, and community development initiatives. The foundation gave approximately $426,000 to arts and culture projects and events in Lea County in 2011. Ten years ago, the foundation granted $1.5 million to fund the establishment of the CORE Knowledge curriculum in the Hobbs Municipal Schools which included principles in teaching liberal arts, with emphasis on visual arts and music. The foundation has been a longtime supporter of organizations such as the New Western Heritage Museum Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame at New Mexico Junior
College, Southwest Symphony, and Lea County Commission for the Arts. Maddox Foundation funding has helped bring children to the Western Heritage Museum; supported projects that bring performances to children; and funded after school and summer programs at the Lea County Center for the Arts, ensuring that children have access to the arts in Lea County. Though Jack Maddox died in 1978 and Mabel Maddox in 1987, their family legacy continues through the work of their nephews, retired District Judge Don Maddox and James Maddox, who serve on the foundation board, which Don Maddox chairs. The foundation’s support of the arts impacts the lives of thousands of people each year in their community.

Catherine Oppenheimer of Santa Fe is recognized as a major contributor to the arts for her work supporting strong arts education programs in New Mexico. She co-founded the National Dance Institute of New Mexico in 1994 (NDI-NM) and is past chair. NDI is recognized for "Teaching Children Excellence," and has introduced thousands of New Mexico children to dance training and performance experiences as an effective catalyst for character development and artistic expression. Oppenheimer was also the driving force behind the creation of the New Mexico School for the Arts, New Mexico’s first chartered residential high school for the performing and visual arts. The charter school is dedicated to arts mastery and academic excellence assisting passionate young artists in developing their full potential. An impressive artist in her own right, Oppenheimer danced with the New York City Ballet under the leadership of choreographers George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins, and with the Twyla Tharp Dance Company. Oppenheimer came to New Mexico to teach residencies with NDI in Santa Fe and in selected rural communities. NDI provides classes at its Dance Barns to all children who desire to study the performing arts regardless of financial capabilities. In 2008, Oppenheimer was honored by the MS Society of New Mexico with its Award of Distinction and by the New Mexico Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts for her dedication to the arts. In 2005, the readers of The Santa Fe New Mexican named Oppenheimer to its annual “Ten Who Made a Difference” list. Under Oppenheimer's leadership, NDI received a prestigious Coming Up Taller Award from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, which was awarded by then First Lady Laura Bush.
Images available upon request, please contact Virginia Castellano by email virginia.castellano@state.nm.us or telephone (505) 827-6490.

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