For Immediate Release
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Artists and Art Contributors Named for
2013 Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts
Awards Program New Mexico’s Highest Artistic Honor

SANTA FE – Governor Susana Martinez and the New Mexico Arts Commission have announced the seven artists and art supporters who will be recipients of the 2013 Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts.

“For New Mexico’s culture is anchored by our rich history of beautiful artwork and creativity,” said Governor Martinez. “The talented artists and dedicated art supporters recognized as 2013 Governor’s Arts Awards honorees enrich the quality of life all New Mexicans enjoy.”

The 2013 Governor’s Arts Awards recipients are: Edward Gonzales of Rio Rancho, Painter and Printmaker; Darren Vigil Gray of Santa Fe, Painter; Jenny Vincent of Taos, Musician; Jim Wagner of Taos, Painter/furniture maker; Frank Willett of Santa Fe, Ceramics/Potter; Aria Finch of Roswell – Major Contributor to the Arts; and the Mimbres Region Arts Council of Silver City – Major Contributor to the Arts.

The 2013 Governor’s Arts Awards ceremonies will be held on Friday, September 27th at 5:15p.m. 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 p.m., in the Governor’s Gallery, 4th Floor, State Capitol. Both the awards ceremony and gallery reception are free and open to the public.
This year marks the 40th annual celebration of the Governor's Arts Awards, which 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 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: Maria Martinez, Tony Abeyta, Glenna Goodacre, Tony Hillerman, Georgia O’Keeffe, Patrick Oliphant, N. Scott Momaday, Tammy Garcia, Catherine Oppenheimer, 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 2013 Awards Selection Committee members were: New Mexico Arts Commission Chair Sherry Davis of Santa Fe; Arts Commissioners Charmay Allred of Santa Fe; JoAnn Balzer of Santa Fe; David Hinske of Taos; John Rohovec of Silver City; and Glenn Cutter of Mesilla (nonvoting), and 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.

The following are brief profiles of the 2013 Governor’s Arts Awardees:

Edward Gonzales, painter, is regarded as one of New Mexico’s most popular and beloved artists. An award winning author and children’s book illustrator, with an Albuquerque Public School named for him, Gonzales has made a significant contribution to education and the artistic representation of Hispanic culture through his art. Gonzales was the first chairman of the annual Contemporary Hispanic Market in Santa Fe which began in 1989 and in 1992 led the initiative championed by the Organization of Hispanic Artists to create a Hispanic arts building at the New Mexico State Fair Grounds. Gonzales’ art has been exhibited throughout New Mexico and is represented in permanent collections at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque Museum of History and Art, New Mexico Museum of Art, and the University of New Mexico Fine Art Print Collection. “Reading…was critical to my becoming an artist,” Gonzales has said. “The art world was very distant from the one I live in. But books made the art world real and
attainable for me.” As a result, Gonzales has painted to emphasize the importance of literacy, education, and family. In 2006, Gonzales served as the National Education Association’s New Mexico honorary chair for ‘Read Across America’ and was recognized by the American Association for Hispanics in Higher Education with the “Outstanding Latino Cultural Arts Award.”

Painter **Darren Vigil Gray**’s talent lies in his ability to mix tradition with imagination, said nominator Even Feldman, administrative director of contemporary art at Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe. Gray has an international audience of collectors with gallery exhibitions in France and Great Britain. He was honored with a retrospective at the Wheelwright Museum of Art in 2002 and is scheduled to have a solo exhibition at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. His work is included in such prestigious institutions as the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Denver Art Museum. Gray also dedicates significant time to bring the arts to the children of New Mexico. He works closely with New Mexico School for the Arts, where his daughters attend school, assisting with fundraising and donating his time and craft. He has taught print workshops in local Elementary schools, as well as, serving as a role model for young Native artists. His schooling at the Institute of American Indian Arts has given a solid foundation to his work. N. Scott Momaday, Gray’s father-in-law, said he believes Gray’s chief accomplishment has been “redefining the genre, of bringing Native art to a different level of expression.”

Musician **Jenny Vincent**, who just celebrated her 100th birthday on April 22, 2013, was nominated by three past recipients of the New Mexico Governor’s Arts Awards. Vincent has long been recognized as one of the greatest folk musicians in New Mexico. She has devoted her life to using the beauty of her music to nurture traditional Hispano culture, restore the Spanish language of its children, and inspire people of her milieu to appreciate the enormous depth of cultural perspective that is embedded in folk music, folk lore, and attendant folk traditions. Vincent continues to perform music weekly for her neighbors in Taos. Vincent has performed with nationally recognized musicians Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. She performed both as an individual and as a member of her own folk music group in New Mexico and the surrounding region. She has taught hundreds of youngsters folk songs sung in both Spanish and English and
deeply involved them in music to ensure that the Spanish language and traditional Hispano culture remain vital in New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona. Vincent has used music to remove barriers between people of different cultures, been instrumental in preserving the folk music of Hispano culture, and has donated her extensive archive of original recordings to the Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico.

In 1963, at the age of 21, Jim Wagner moved to Taos with one goal in mind – to become an artist. “Within a few years, Wagner himself was one of the leaders of a new breed of Taos artists, infected by the free-wheeling spirit of the times, searching singular modes of expression and social relevance,” said Stephen Parks of Parks Gallery in Taos. “More than 50 years later, he’s regarded by many of his peers as the honored elder among Taos artists.” The beauty of Taos has been the subject of most of Wagner’s paintings. He captures the mountains, sky, and adobe architecture with touches of earlier times, such as clothes hanging on a line, chicken scratching in a yard, or a well house out back. Wagner is also famed for his furniture, which he began designing and constructing in the 1980s. His chairs and chests (trasteros) are inspired by the distinctive Taos furniture of the late 18th and 19th century and embellished with brightly painted motifs. Wagner is the subject of a book, “Jim Wagner: An American Artist” and hundreds of articles. The Harwood Museum in Taos is set to feature a major retrospective of Wagner’s work this year. In 1984, Wagner and a friend established Muebles, a program which educates and encourages former convicts and at-risk youth to follow a positive path in furniture-making and decoration. Muebles has been featured in New York Magazine and in a cover story in New Mexico Magazine.

Potter extraordinaire Frank Willett has made a living as an artist for more than 60 years. “A true master of his craft, Willett has continually produced pottery made with an unerring sense of beautiful form, good design and superb craftsmanship,” said nominator James Marshall, associate professor of art at Santa Fe Community College. “He devotes each and every day to the production of some of the finest, most highly crafted functional pottery in today’s environment of handcrafted pottery produced in this country.” In 1971, Willett established Santa Fe Pottery, a working studio where he produced and sold his own pottery and mentored fledgling potters, who went on to forge their own careers in ceramics. Willett sold Santa Fe Pottery in 2003 but has
continued to make one-of-a-kind pieces in his home studio. Noted as a New Mexican artist who has worked with clay, while remaining true to himself and his artistic vision, Willett continues to be a role model for his fellow artists. Willett was one of the original founders of New Mexico Potters and Clay Artists in the early 1970s and has participated in cultural exchanges with Kazakhstan and Korea.

**Aria Finch**, an arts educator and founder of the Pecos Valley Potters Guild, is being recognized as a Major Contributor to the Arts. Finch has nurtured generations of youth and adults in the community of Roswell. Artist Eddie Dominguez, a 2006 Governor’s Arts Award recipient, noted, “Aria Finch has done more to build and shape the local art scene of Roswell than any other individual I know, and has done so through an unyielding dedication to community and an unflinching pursuit of big dreams for a small town.” Finch has taught art in elementary, middle school and high school and inspired students to pursue their artistic dreams. An acclaimed artist in her own right, Finch was invited to participate in the highly acclaimed Korean Biennial for her ceramic sculpture. Under Finch’s leadership, The Potters Guild has raised $187,000 for the Roswell Museum and Arts Center and the Roswell Artist-in-Residence (RAiR) Program through the ‘Soup n Bowl’ benefit and $54,000 for the Patricia Lubben Bassett Art Education Center, a wing that houses a state-of-the-art ceramics studio, in 1998. “She is clearly a dynamic and masterly teacher who has a strongly inspirational effect on her students and creates a deep, lasting commitment to ceramic arts,” said Sally Anderson of the Roswell Artist-in-Residence Foundation and its Anderson Museum of Contemporary Art.

The **Mimbres Region Arts Council** (MRAC) of Silver City is recognized as a Major Contributor to the Arts. Led by long-time director Faye McCalmont, MRAC has served the Grant County community and surrounding areas for 32 years, providing quality arts programs, including artist shows, art walks, and lecture series. The local arts council’s annual Blues Festival features well-known national performers and emerging New Mexico artists, drawing thousands of visitors to Silver City each year. The nonprofit arts council provides a number of exemplary programs for youth in the area including Fine Arts Fridays, which provides hands-on workshops by New Mexico artists for K-5 students, giving them an extensive introduction to dance, music, drama and visual arts. The local arts council’s Youth Mural Program pair
professional artists with educators, historians, and at-risk youth to plan, design, and create mural for the region. MRAC’s youth programs reach more than 4,700 students annually serving the geographically isolated and ethnically diverse Grant County region. The arts council also acts as mentor and fiscal agent for fledgling arts groups, such as Southwest Festival of the Written Word and the Virus Theatre. MRAC spends more than $200,000 annually on arts programming for the Grant County region and its hundreds of volunteers contribute more than $50,000 in in-kind services. The Mimbres Region Arts Council is credited with transforming the arts and cultural offerings of Grant County.

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