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9 ARIZONA ARTISTS CHOSEN TO CREATE AWARDS FOR 2018 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARDS HONOREES

PHOENIX, Ariz. (March 15, 2018): Nine Arizona artists from Phoenix, Tucson, Sedona and the Navajo Nation who work in a variety of mediums have been selected to create individual awards for honorees at the upcoming 37th annual Governor's Arts Awards dinner and celebration on March 22 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort.

Artists are:

- **Laura Spaulding Best, Phoenix, oil on found object.** The recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, Best has completed several public murals in downtown Phoenix, and is a 2017 winner of a Contemporary Forum Artist Grant. She has been the Exhibitions Manager at Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art for eleven years.
- **Melissa Cody, Navajo Nation, linoleum print.** A member of the Edgewater Clan of the Navajo Nation in Arizona, she is from the region known as "No Water Mesa," which is part of the historical Painted Desert. A fourth generation weaver with the sensibility of a contemporary textile artist, her work is a combination of traditional patterns deconstructed and reworked, breaching the restrictive boundaries of "regional" and "trading post" influenced styles, and signifying her as a new wave weaver and printmaker, which she finds to be vital in the continuation of creativity.
- **Mitch Fry, Phoenix, wall mounted wood sculpture.** Fry uses geometric shapes found in nature to explore the relationship between the individual and the collective with particular interest in how these forms manifest the resolved symmetry of nature's design.
- **Benjamin M. Johnson, Tucson, oil on canvas.** Originally from southern New Jersey, Johnson grew up between urban Philadelphia and the New Jersey Pine Barrens which gave him an early appreciation for the interaction between wild places and the human element; a balance which continues to inform his work. He relocated to Tucson in 2009 after a birdwatching trip to Arizona.

• **Saskia Jorda, Phoenix, thread drawing on industrial felt.** An interdisciplinary artist working on site-specific installations, soft sculptures, and drawings, her work has referenced the relationship between body and space, cultural identity, and mapping a sense of place since her undergraduate studies at Arizona State University and her graduate studies at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where she earned her MFA.

• **Erik Karnonen, Phoenix, encaustic on birch panel.** Karnonen pulls material and content from his emotional and physical environments, past and present. Not only inspired by nature, he brings his love for modern architecture, design and music into his work. Encaustic is the perfect medium to capture, layer and create these synesthetic scenes. The variety of materials he can use -- wax, pigments and endless other mixed media — allows him to create works that draw in the viewer for a closer look.

• **Katharina Ross, Sedona, hand-built porcelain.** Born and raised in Switzerland, where she studied art history at the university of Basel, Ross moved to the United States in 1992. She learned jewelry making and metal smithing, working for several years in that field. Curiosity, a driving force in her life, led her to return to school. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Northern Arizona University in 2015 with focus on ceramics, sculpture, and printmaking. Her works have been exhibited in several shows.

• **Carrie Seid, Tucson, aluminum, acrylic, silk, epoxy resin.** Originally from Chicago, Seid maintains a full-time fine and public art practice out of her studio in Tucson. She also works with groups and individuals as a creativity coach, helping people realize their creative dreams and goals through workshops and private sessions. Her works are made primarily of metal, wood, and silk, and incorporate illumination and pattern investigation to conjure various states of being.

• **Claire A. Warden, Phoenix, pigment print.** Warden's work has been exhibited widely in the United States and abroad. She has been named LensCulture's Top 50 Emerging Talents, Photo Boite's 30 Under 30 Women Photographers and a Critical Mass finalist. Her work has been featured in various publications, including Real Simple magazine, The HAND Magazine, Common Ground Journal, Prism Magazine, and Diffusion Magazine.

Governor's Arts Awards finalists in each category are:

• **Artist:** Liliana Gomez, Phoenix; Doug Hyde, Prescott; Dennis Rowland, Phoenix.

• **Arts in Education, Individual:** Julian Ackerly, Tucson; Dennis Ott, Sedona; Karen Rolston, Mesa.

- **Arts in Education, Organization or School:** Foothills Fine Arts Academy, Glendale; Hilltop Gallery & Arts Education Center, Nogales; Young Arts Arizona, Ltd, Phoenix.
 - **Business, Large:** Alliance Bank of Arizona, Phoenix; Vestar, Tucson.
 - **Business, Small:** Benner Nawman, Inc., Wickenburg; Changing Hands Bookstore, Tempe; Manley Films and Media, Phoenix.
 - **Community:** Del E Webb Center for the Performing Arts, Wickenburg; Phoenix Center for the Arts, Phoenix; PSA Art Awakenings, Phoenix.
 - **Individual:** Hope Ozer, Paradise Valley; Sam, Phoenix; Vincent VanVleet, Phoenix.
- Judith Hardes of Phoenix will receive the second annual Philanthropist Award.

Alberto Álvaro Ríos, Arizona’s inaugural State Poet Laureate and currently Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, has been named the 2018 Shelley Award Honoree.

The Governor’s Arts Awards are presented by Arizona Citizens for the Arts in partnership with the Office of the Governor. Since 1981, more than 200 distinguished artists, individuals, arts and cultural organizations, educators and businesses have received Governor’s Arts Awards.

Individual tickets are \$250 for individuals and \$200 for Arizona Citizens for the Arts members and donors at the \$300 level. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

For more information, visit www.azcitizensforthearts.org.

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Arizona Citizens for the Arts, a 37-year-old 501 c3 organization, acts as the eyes, ears and voice of the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Arizona at the State Legislature, in local city halls and partnerships with business and community leaders involved in building and supporting quality of life in Arizona.