

Oregon Arts Commission Awards Eleven Artist Fellowships

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Grants Recognize Excellence in Performing and Literary Arts

The Oregon Arts Commission has recognized 11 Oregon artists with Artist Fellowship awards of \$3,000. The Commission's Fellowships recognize outstanding work created by artists throughout Oregon and consider both past achievement and future promise in the arts. This year, the program considered artists involved in the literary and performing arts.

The purpose of the Commission's Fellowship program is to honor Oregon's professional artists and their artistic achievements and to support their efforts in advancing their careers. The Commission chooses Oregon artists of outstanding talent, demonstrated ability and commitment to the creation of new work(s) to receive its Fellowships. Artists may use the \$3,000 Fellowship grants to complete work in progress or embark on a new body of work, undertake research, study or experiment with new materials or media.

Discipline panels of practicing professional artists, curators and administrators reviewed a total of 89 applications. The Oregon Arts Commission awarded the Fellowships based on the quality of the artists' work as well as sustained professional activity and achievement. The Oregon Arts Commission approved these awards at its December meeting.

Artists selected for 2007 Fellowships:

Linda Austin, Portland, dancer and choreographer
Mark Allen Cunningham, Portland, fiction writer
Kenneth Dixon, Portland, fiction writer
Michele Glazer, Portland, poet
Tahni Holt, Portland, dancer and choreographer
Betty Lynch Husted, Pendleton, essayist
Devin Phillips, Portland, jazz musician and composer
Patricia Staton, Astoria, poet
Molly Best Tinsley, Ashland, playwright
Yuqin Wang, Tigard, traditional Chinese puppeteer
Bo Yu, Portland, fiction writer
Background on each of the selected artists follows.

Linda Austin, Portland, dancer and choreographer Austin is a dancer, choreographer and artist engaged in the dance community, and dedicated to collaboration with other artists. As one panelist remarked, "she embraces the sheer "thinginess" of dance." Linda Austin debuted her early performance and dance works amidst the blooming 1980's downtown New York arts community, at venues such as Performance Space 122, the Danspace Project and the Kitchen. After two years living and working in Mexico, Austin moved to Portland where she co-founded Performance Works Northwest. Austin has performed in Northwest New Works at On the Boards in Seattle and PICA's TBA Festival. She was one of ten artists selected to

participate in the 2004 pilot project of New England Foundation for the Arts'™s Regional Dance Development Initiative. In 2005, she participated in Deborah Hay'™s Solo Performance Commissioning Project in Findhorn, Scotland and her adaptation of Hay'™s "Room" debuted at PICA'™s 2006 TBA Festival in Portland.

Mark Allen Cunningham, Portland, fiction writerA novelist and short story writer, Cunningham'™s short fiction has appeared in a number of literary magazines, including Glimmer Train, Boulevard, Epoch and Alaska Quarterly Review. His writing, which panelist Howard Aaron noted "is full of some highly polished sentences," has been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and received Honorable Mention in the Hermann M. Swafford Fiction Award. Unbridled Books published Cunningham'™s first novel, *The Green Age of Asher Witherow*, in 2004. He is currently at work on a new novel set throughout Europe at the turn of the last century. He moved, with his wife Katie, from Northern California to Portland, where he is at work on *Lost Son*, a fictionalized biography capturing the "mystery of the creative process and the imperfect loyalties faced in work and life."

Kenneth Dixon, Portland, fiction writerDixon is the author of *My Desk and I*, a collection of short stories. Ranging freely from the fractured character sketch to the political satire, from the study of strained relationships to office angst, his stories are short on sentimentality, but not necessarily on sentiment. Dixon has published fiction, non-fiction and poetry in a number of journals, including *V*, *Make* and *Open Spaces*. In addition to his creative work, Dixon has written visual arts reviews for *The Oregonian*, and he was, for a time, a regular columnist for the both *Scene Magazine* and *Metro Magazine*.

Michele Glazer, Portland , poetMichele Glazer is the author of two books of poetry: *It Is Hard to Look at What We Came to Think We'd Come to See*, which received the Associated Writing Programs Award in Poetry and *Aggregate of Disturbances*, which received the Iowa Poetry Prize. Her work has been widely published in literary journals such as *Boston Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Ploughshares* and *Harvard Review*, and nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Literary Arts, as well as the Regional Arts & Culture Council's first Individual Artist Fellowship in Literature. She teaches at Portland State University. Glazer received her Bachelor'™s Degree in English from the University of Oregon Honors College and an MFA from the University of Iowa Writers'™ Workshop.

Tahni Holt, Portland, dancer and choreographerChoreographer and dancer Tahni Holt is considered "one of Portland'™s brightest young talents." Her choreography, including the most recent *Island Desk: My Teeny Tiny Knowledge of Nothing* has been performed at contemporary venues throughout the Northwest, including PICA'™s TBA Festival, *Conduit Dance*, *Disjecta ;On the Boards* and *Bumbershoot* in Seattle; and *Drop Contemporary Dance* in Boise. She was, along with fellow recipient Linda Austin, one of ten artists selected to participate in the 2004 pilot project of New England Foundation for the Arts'™s Regional Dance Development Initiative, as well as to adapt and perform Deborah Hay'™s "Room" for the 2006 TBA Festival. Holt has received a number of individual artist project grants from the Regional Arts & Culture Council and was commissioned for new work by *Sojourn Theatre* and *Lewis and Clark College*. One panelist commented, "Holt embraces her work " and her movements are virtuosic. She uses her full technical ability with a fluidity of expression that is wonderful, accessible and artistic."

Bette Lynch Husted, Pendleton, essayistHusted is a personal essayist exploring issues of land, identity and social class. Her first book, *Above the Clearwater: Living on Stolen Land*, was a 2004 finalist for the Oregon and Idaho Book Awards. Her second collection of memoirs is nearing completion. Her work has been published in *Prairie Schooner*, *Oregon Humanities* and *Best Essays of the Northwest* 2003. Although she lives in Eastern Oregon, Husted meets in Portland for a monthly poetry critique with fellow writers Ursula Le Guin, Molly Gloss and others. Sheâ€™s retired from Blue Mountain Community College. Said panelist Christopher Zinn, â€œShe brings a very interesting and critical perspective, and seems to be reaching even further in her upcoming work.â€•

Devin Phillips, Portland, jazz musician and composerPhillips is a talented jazz musician with a personal vision for his writing and arranging. Born and reared in New Orleans, Devin Phillipsâ€™ began his affair with the saxophone at the age of eight. Trained in music theory and multi-styles composition at the prestigious New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, he graduated with honors in 2000. This Katrina-displaced musician evacuated to Portland, and has immersed himself in the music scene of Oregon, working to establish an Oregon Jazz Orchestra, emulating a New Orleans institution.

Patricia Staton , Astoria, poet Patricia Staton is â€œa high-octane poetâ€• said one panelist. Her work has been published in *The Iowa Review*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Pleiades*, among others. Her â€œWalking After Dinnerâ€• was awarded a 2005 Pushcart Prize, and she received an Artist Trust Fellowship in 1995. She received a B.S. in theater from Skidmore College. Staton lives and works in Astoria, but commented: â€œMy work is concerned with getting out the words. I am curious about everyday language. â€¦ While my surroundings infiltrate my poems, I lay no special claims on nature.â€•

Molly Best Tinsley, Ashland, playwrightEight years ago, Tinsley resigned from the English faculty of the U.S. Naval Academy and moved across country to Oregon. At the same time, she shifted her work from fiction to playwriting. She is gaining recognition for her playwriting, and her fiction has received recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts, an Oregon Book Award and more than one Pushcart Prize. *Fission*, her most recent work, was produced at the Live Girls Theater, Seattle, where it garnered runner-up honors in the *Seattle Times*â€™ Best New Play, 2005. â€œI was fascinated with her writing,â€• said a panelist, â€œI would love to see it performed.â€•

Yuqin Wang, Tigard, traditional Chinese puppeteer Yuqin Wang was born in Beijing, China where she began training in the Beijing Opera School at the age of ten. By the time she was eighteen, she had sung and acted in scores of classical Beijing operas. Beginning in 1964, she directed her artistic energy toward puppetry. Wang came to Oregon in 1996, where she and her husband and fellow performer, Zhengli Xu founded their own puppet theater, Dragon Art Studio. Wang was a master artist for two years in the Oregon Folklife Programâ€™s Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program, and received a prestigious National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Bo Yu, Tigard, fiction writer Bo Yuâ€™s writing is intertwined with her familyâ€™s experiences. Her first novel, loosely based on her motherâ€™s journey to locate and re-unite her family after the Korean War, was finished just days before the first birthday of her twin daughters. Its completion took her from New York,

where she received an MFA from Columbia University, to Korea, where she lived and taught for three and a half years, and ultimately to Portland, in search of a place that “felt right.” She has been honored with an Oregon Literary Fellowship from Literary Arts and her fiction, essays and reviews have been published in ZZZZYVA, and Korean Quarterly.

The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of the Economic Development Department in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon Legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission’s expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

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