

# Artist of the Year 2023

“An Award to Recognize a Lifetime of Achievement”



## Stephen Kessler

Stephen Kessler has been named the 2023 Artist of the Year by the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission. Kessler has distinguished himself over the last 50 years as one of his generation’s most versatile and prolific writers, author of a dozen volumes of original poetry, 16 books of literary translation, three collections of essays, and a novel, *The Mental Traveler* (Greenhouse Review Press, 2009). He has edited numerous literary journals and community newspapers and is the editor and principal translator of *The Sonnets* by Jorge Luis Borges (Penguin Classics, 2010). Locally in recent years he is best known as a wide-ranging and freethinking opinion columnist in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*.

During most of the 1970s and '80s he was active as an organizer of and advocate for the Santa Cruz poetry community, putting on readings, writing reviews and essays in the local weeklies, and cohosting with Gary Young The Poetry Show and Bards After Dark on KUSP radio.

He is known nationally and internationally as a translator of modern Spanish and Latin American poets including the Argentine master Borges, Nobel laureates Vicente Aleixandre and Pablo Neruda, the exiled Spaniard Luis Cernuda, and the Argentine expatriate Julio Cortázar.

**2012 Gary Young** Since 1975, Gary has designed, illustrated, and printed limited edition artist’s books and broadsides. His print work is represented in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Awards include the Pushcart Prize and the prestigious Shelley Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America.

**2011 Phil Collins** Collins co-founded New Music Works in 1979, serving as the organization’s Artistic Director and Conductor since 1982. His works have been played throughout the U.S. and abroad. Awards include: First Prize, 1994 L’ARCIM Festival; The Gail Rich Award; and a Dramalogue Award.

**2010 Robert Kelley** Robert Kelley was Artistic Director for the Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre from 1998-2019. Two of his works were given the Regional Dance America Choreography Award. He has served on the Tannery Arts Center Board and in 2009, received a Gail Rich Award.

**2008 Manuel Santana** Manuel Santana studied art at Otis Art Institute. After decades in the restaurant business, he began actively painting and sculpting again, becoming an accomplished artist. His numerous awards include a Gail Rich Award.

**2007 Richard Deutsch** Richard’s sculptures are in the permanent collection of the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum and the Smithsonian Institution. He was a founding and active member of Santa Cruz Art Center and was instrumental in bringing Open Studios to Santa Cruz County.

**2006 Laurie R. King** Laurie R. King, a New York Times best-selling mystery writer, has won the Edgar and Creasey awards, the Nero, and the MacCavity. Her nominations include the Agatha, the Orange, the Barry, and two more Edgars.

**2005 “Sista” Monica Parker** Sista Monica wrote, produced, performed and toured in support of her original music. She received the coveted Bammie Award for “Best Blues Artist” in California in 1998, and the Artist of the Year Award at the Monterey Bay Blues Festival in 2002.

**2003 Karen Thuesen Massaro** Karen Massaro’s ceramic work explores how ceramic painting and abstract forms can come together. Her work is included in The National Gallery of Art, the Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, and the Milwaukee Art Museum.

**2002 Jessica Williams** Jessica Williams creates strikingly original jazz music. Leading her own bands and as a solo artist, she has amassed a large and critically acclaimed body of work. Her awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship and two NEA Fellowships.

**2001 - Carol Summers - Visual Artist**

**1999 - Morton Marcus - Poet**

**1998 - Lynda Watson - Visual Artist**

**1997 - Paul Whitworth - Actor**

**1996 - Frans Lanting - Photographer**

**1995 - Adrienne Rich - Poet**

**1994 - Linda Burman-Hall - Musician**

**1993 - Jack Zajac - Visual Artist**

**1992 - Douglas McClellan - Visual Artist**

**1991 - William Everson - Poet**

**1990 - Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County**

**1989 - Charles N. Hilger - Visual Artist**

**1988 - George Barati - Composer and Conductor**

**1987 - Cabrillo Music Festival**

**1986 - James D. Houston - Author**

**1985 - Lou Harrison - Composer**

**1984 - Tandy Beal - Dancer, Director and Choreographer**



Artist of the Year is sponsored by the County of Santa Cruz Dept. of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services

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Over the last 39 years, the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission has selected outstanding artists nominated by the public, and has honored them through the Artist of the Year Award. The *Artist of the Year* award is presented for outstanding achievement in the discipline of performing, visual, and literary arts. For more information, please visit [www.scparks.com](http://www.scparks.com).

2022

Annie Morhauser



Handcrafting her glassware in Santa Cruz County since 1983, Morhauser has developed Annieglass throughout the years to become one of the largest and most successful American glass studios. Annieglass is featured in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Gallery of Modern Art in Scotland, and the Corning Museum of Glass. Over 400 non-profits annually receive cash and in-kind donations from Annieglass, and over 40 scholarships have been awarded to students in need.

2021

Guillermo “Yermo” Aranda



Yermo is a co-founder of “El Centro Cultural de La Raza”, a cultural art center focusing on Latino and Indigenous Art forms where he initiated the first Chicano Park Murals in San Diego, now recognized as a National Historical Landmark. In 1983, he began to practice and teach Aztec dance; he co-founded the Whitehawk Dancers, an organization which provides visual and performing arts workshops for youth that still thrives today.

2019

Ellen Bass



Ellen has published over six books of poetry. Among her literary honors are three Pushcart Prizes, the Pablo Neruda Prize, and the Chatauqua Poetry Prize. Ellen is also a celebrated nonfiction writer and a pioneer in the field of healing from child sexual abuse. Ellen helped found and build two thriving Santa Cruz-based non-profit organizations, Kidpower, Inc. and the Survivors Healing Center.

## Previous Artists of the Year 2022-1984

2018

Cheryl Anderson



Cheryl Anderson built the choral and vocal programs at Cabrillo, including founding the Cabrillo Youth Chorus. She is Past President of the American Choral Directors Association Western Region, as well as an internationally-acclaimed guest conductor. Under her direction, Cabrillo’s choirs have performed in many of the world’s most famous concert halls, cathedrals, and opera houses.

2017

Shelley Phillips



Shelley Phillips has played with many professional folk musicians in America, Ireland, and the UK. Her solo albums with Gourd Music include *The Fairie Round*, *Pavane*, and *The Wood Between The Worlds*. Director of the Community Music School of Santa

Cruz, she runs Celtic music camps for children and teens, maintains a private studio, and presents concerts and workshops with visiting musicians of the highest caliber.

2016

Shmuel Thaler



Shmuel’s photographs have been published in every leading newspaper in the United States, including the New York Times and Washington Post, as well as in numerous magazines including *Time* and *Forbes*. He has been honored three times with awards in the prestigious National Press Photographers Association Best of Photojournalism contest, most recently in 2015.

2015

Geoffrey Dunn



Dunn is the author of several books, including two volumes of *Santa Cruz Is in the Heart*, *Chinatown Dreams* and *The Lies of Sarah Palin*; his films include *Dollar a Day*, *10 Cents a Dance*; *Miss...or Myth?*; *Calypto Dreams*; and most recently, *The Glamour Boyz Again*. For over 40 years Dunn has been an actively-engaged member of the artistic community, including as co-founder and former Executive

Director of Community Television of Santa Cruz Co., as well as a founder and Board member of the Pacific Rim Film Festival.

2014

John Babcock



John Babcock’s work has been shown in over 30 major museums in Europe, the United States and Japan, and is held in many public and private collections, including the Museum of Art and Design, NY. Shows include *Craft Today, USA*, organized by the American Craft Museum, and *The Artful Object*, *Recent American Craft* at the Fort Wayne Art Museum.

2013

Susana Arias



Susana Arias has shown her work nationally and internationally, with work in museums in Latin America as well as the United States. Awards include a 1987 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her love of the arts and for children shows in her commitment to both; she is either at her studio working, volunteering at local elementary schools, or organizing events where local artists share their expertise with the public.