

Bush Foundation Grants 2005 Artist Fellowships

May 15, 2005

For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Julie Dalglish, Program Director
Mary Bensman, Communications Director
651-227-0891
mbensman@bushfoundation.org

St. Paul, Minnesota—Fifteen 2005 Bush Artist Fellows were named in the categories of film/video, literature, music composition and scriptworks in April. The Bush Foundation's Artist Fellows program will provide financial support to 11 artists from the Twin Cities metropolitan area, two from Greater Minnesota and one each from Wisconsin and South Dakota to continue and develop their work. The Fellowships recognize the strong visions of artists at any stage in their life's work, their potential for continued development and the contribution to their communities that may come from their artistic and professional growth. The 15 fellows were selected from a field of more than 500 applicants by a panel of nationally known artists and curators. Each fellow will receive \$44,000 over a 12- to 24-month period.

A complete list of fellows and panel members, including panel biographies follows at the end of this release.

Film/Video

Among the 2005 fellows are four filmmakers, including **Rolf Belgum** of Minneapolis, who was featured in the 2000 Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial and on the Sundance Channel. Belgum is interested in exploring the anatomy and bio-mechanics of expression and in answering the question, "How do our physical bodies serve in the expression of our emotions?"

David Eberhardt of Saint Paul premiered his first feature-length documentary, *Long Gone*, at Slamdance in 2003. He earned best documentary award there and at the Minneapolis/Saint Paul Film Festival, Savannah Film Festival and River Run Film Festival. Also a still photographer, Eberhardt is interested in nomadic subcultures. "You have to earn the right to document another person's life—to walk a mile in their boots," said Eberhardt. To that end he spent an average of four months a year over seven years riding the trains with the individuals featured in *Long Gone*.

Teresa Konechne of Minneapolis, originally from South Dakota, has begun work on a video about the lives of South Dakota rural women and the rural Diaspora. Konechne's first documentary, *this black soil*, also about rural people, has received honors at various festivals around the country. She said, "I am committed to bringing art and social change

together, to use my work to explore issues of race, class and gender, and push boundaries to open up the documentary vernacular to include a feminine aesthetic that includes not only stories that are rarely told, but the way in which we tell these stories.”

Va-Megn Thoj of Saint Paul makes documentary and narrative films about the Hmong Diaspora experience. Currently working on a documentary that will chronicle the life of a Minnesota Hmong family who do small-scale farming, Thoj said he wants to use the media of film/video to continue to get nontraditional and disenfranchised voters involved in electoral politics and the democratic process. He has received grants and fellowships from the Minnesota State Arts Board, New York State Council for the Arts and the Jerome Foundation. Thoj is also a 2004 Bush Leadership Fellow.

Literature

Menomonie, Wis. resident **Devin Corbin** was among six 2005 fellows chosen in the literature category. He writes essays that explore relationships between people and their physical environments. He has received fellowships from the Wisconsin Arts Board, the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the University of Minnesota, where he recently received his Ph.D. His essays have appeared in such publications as *The American Scholar* and *The North American Review*. Corbin is interested in “how culture and the natural world shape one another.”

Fiction writer **Shannon Gibney** of Minneapolis is managing editor of the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* newspaper. She is the recipient of the 2002 Hurston/Wright Award and is a recent graduate of Indiana University's M.F.A. program. Her work concerns race, identity and power. Her writing addresses questions such as: Who gets to define “blackness” and who gets to be “raceless,” and in what settings? How does identity shift from group to group? What is the power of naming and claiming an identity? Gibney will use her fellowship to complete her novel, *Hank Aaron's Daughter*.

Sean Hill of Bemidji, Minn. has written poetry about and in the voices of black characters, real and imagined, and based on the history of his home town, Milledgeville, Georgia. “My poems engage notions of the African American community and family, interpretations of race relations, personal and societal history, and Southern identity,” said Hill. His work has been published in *Callaloo*, *Indiana Review*, *Pleiades*, the anthology *Blues Poems* and the *Cave Canem* anthology among others. Hill received his M.F.A. in poetry from the University of Houston in Texas where he was the 2003 James A. Michener Fellow in poetry.

Lake of the Woods County in northern Minnesota is home and inspiration to **Cheri Johnson**, a Minneapolis-based fiction writer and poet. She writes “about the landscape I know better than any other, a land of water, woods and peat. But of equal importance to me is how the people around me dealt with and loved and hated it.” A recent recipient of a Loft Mentorship Series Award, she has published in the *Rio Grande Review*, *Nidus*, *Touchstone* and other publications. Johnson will receive her M.F.A. this month from the University of Minnesota.

Kurt Schweigman of Rapid City, S.D. is a spoken word poet whose work is influenced by the storytelling traditions of his Oglala Lakota culture. He writes within the context of contemporary American Indians, especially within urban communities. Many of his poems address unsafe topics; they have perspectives of racial issues past and present, substance abuse, poverty and dysfunctional relationships. But they also have a sense of hope and a thread of humor, often dark humor. Under his pen name, “Luke Warm Water,” he has won several poetry slam competitions across the U.S. and as far away as Germany.

Poet **Katrina Vandenberg’s** first book, *Atlas* (Milkweed Editions, 2004), was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award. She has an M.F.A. from the University of Arkansas and was a Fulbright fellow to the Netherlands. She has held residencies at the Poetry Center of Chicago and the Anderson Center for Interdisciplinary Studies; her work has appeared in magazines like *The American Scholar* and *The Iowa Review*. “A central theme of art and myth is exile, and we are all exiles from the past,” she writes. “I care about the ways history and memory interact.” Vandenberg lives in Saint Paul.

Music Composition

Four composers were awarded 2005 Bush Artist Fellowships. Choral music is the genre of **Eric Barnum** of Mankato, Minn. He is currently the composer-in-residence for Kantorei in Denver. He was also the composer-in-residence for The Rose Ensemble in Minneapolis for the 2004-2005 season, and a 2003 winner of the Chanticleer Composer Competition in San Francisco. A recent graduate of Minnesota State University in Mankato, Barnum said, “I try to write about ‘eternal’ moments of ideas, which are experienced by everyone. In doing so, I strive to find the essence of beauty, which often contains simplicity and balance.”

Exploring programmatic issues of social and environmental justice is the musical goal of **Steve Heitzeg** of Saint Paul. Recent commissions include those for the Minnesota Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Dale Warland Singers. In 2000, he was named Minnesota Composer of the Year by the Minnesota Music Academy. Heitzeg said, “I strive to compose a music that inspires people to embrace peace, human rights, respect for the environment and our shared humanity.”

Judith Lang Zaimont of Edina, Minn. has written more than 100 works in every genre. A composer and professor at the University of Minnesota, her music appears on repertoire lists for international performance and conducting competitions. Among many prizes, she has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, 2003 Aaron Copland Award and the Gottschalk Centennial Competition Gold Medal. Zaimont calls herself “a romantic modernist,” often embracing the verve and energy of jazz in her compositions.

The resident music director for The Children’s Theatre Company, **Victor Zupanc**, has also composed for productions at the Mixed Blood Theatre, the Guthrie Theater and the LaJolla Playhouse, among many others. “There is no greater joy than sitting down with a playwright, a director and a group of designers to create a new work—it’s the collaboration that excites me.” A graduate of the University of California in San Diego,

Zupanc has received grants from the McKnight, Jerome and Otto Bremer Foundations. His music has been presented in Asia, Australia, Europe and South America.

Scriptworks

Lee Vang of Saint Paul tells stories about the Hmong people through her work as a screenplay writer. Co-founder and executive director of the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent, Vang is a 2001 recipient of the Saint Paul Companies Leadership Initiative in Neighborhoods grant. Of her work Vang said, “I’m compelled to tell the Hmong stories so that our voices will continue to be heard and through it, I can be proactive in defining my culture.” Vang received her degree from the University of Minnesota.

The 15 new Bush Artists Fellows were among a group of 513 applicants and were selected by national preliminary and final panels of working artists, educators and curators of arts organizations from outside the Foundation’s region. The final selection panelists included:

- W.S. Di Piero, poet and essayist, San Francisco, Calif.
- Gerald Early, essayist and director, Center for Humanities, Washington University, Saint Louis, Mo.
- Claire Hopkinson, producer and general manager, Tapestry New Opera Works, Toronto, Canada
- Rosalba Rolón, artistic director, Pregones Theater, Bronx, N.Y.
- Herb E. Smith, filmmaker, co-founder, Appalshop, Whitesburg, Ky.

Begun in 1976, the Bush Artist Fellows Program selects up to 15 fellows each year from artists living in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and parts of northwestern Wisconsin. The program provides grants to artists who may apply in eight categories which rotate on a two-year cycle, including visual arts (two and three dimensional), choreography/multimedia/performance art/storytelling, traditional and folk arts, literature, music composition, scriptworks and film/video.

The Bush Foundation supports artists whose work reflects the region’s diverse geographic, racial and aesthetic communities; the Bush Artist Fellows Program is one of few such programs in the country. Artists may be at any stage in their life’s work and may use the fellowship in a variety of ways—to explore new directions, continue work already in progress and accomplish work without financial worries. Fellows may use the time to travel, learn or reflect about their work.

The Bush Foundation is a grantmaker that improves the quality of life in its communities by supporting individuals and organizations that strengthen communities. It was established in 1953 by 3M executive Archibald Bush and his wife, Edyth. Across its grantmaking programs and in a variety of ways, the Foundation has a special interest in creating opportunities for people who may lack them. In addition to fellowships offered for artists, physicians and leaders, the Bush Foundation makes grants in the areas of arts and humanities, education, health and human services and ecological health.

2005 ARTIST FELLOWS

Film/Video

Rolf Belgum, Minneapolis, Minn.

David Eberhardt, Saint Paul, Minn.

Teresa Konechne, Minneapolis, Minn.

Va-Megn Thoj, Saint Paul, Minn.

Literature

Devin Corbin, essayist, Menomonie, Wisc.

Shannon Gibney, fiction writer, Minneapolis, Minn.

Sean Hill, poet, Bemidji, Minn.

Cheri Johnson, fiction writer, Minneapolis, Minn.

Kurt Schweigman (a.k.a. Luke Warm Water), poet, Rapid City, S. Dak.

Katrina Vandenberg, poet, Saint Paul, Minn.

Music Composition

Eric Barnum, Mankato, Minn.

Steve Heitzeg, Saint Paul, Minn.

Judith Lang Zaimont, Edina, Minn.

Victor Zupanc, Minneapolis, Minn.

Scriptworks

Lee Vang, screenwriter, Saint Paul, Minn.

2005 SELECTION PANEL MEMBERS—Biographies follow

Film/Video - Preliminary Panel

Craig Baldwin, filmmaker, San Francisco, Calif.

Gretjen Clausing, Program Director, Scribe Video Center, Philadelphia, Pa.

Herb E. Smith, filmmaker, co-founder, Appalshop, Whitesburg, Ky.

Literature - Preliminary Panel

Kathleen Alcalá, fiction writer, Bainbridge Island, Wash.

Gerald Early, essayist and director, Center for the Humanities, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.

Vijay Seshadri, poet and essayist, professor, Sarah Lawrence College, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Music Composition - Preliminary Panel

Paul deBarros, jazz columnist, *Seattle Times*, founder of Earshot Jazz and the author of *Jackson Street After Hours*, Seattle, Wash.

Claire Hopkinson, producer and general manager, Tapestry New Opera Works, Toronto, Canada

Pamela Z, composer and performer, San Francisco, Calif.

Scriptworks – Preliminary Panel

Jay Craven, filmmaker and artistic director, Kingdom County Productions, Barnet, Vt.

Jim Grimsley, novelist and playwright, Decatur, Ga.
Rosalba Rolón, artistic director, Pregones Theater, Bronx, N.Y.

FINAL PANEL

W.S. Di Piero, poet and essayist, San Francisco, Calif.
Gerald Early, essayist and director, Center for the Humanities, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.
Claire Hopkinson, producer and general manager, Tapestry New Opera Works, Toronto, Canada
Rosalba Rolón, artistic director, Pregones Theater, Bronx, N.Y.
Herb E. Smith, filmmaker, co-founder, Appalshop, Whitesburg, Ky.

2005 BUSH ARTIST FELLOWS PROGRAM—PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES

KATHLEEN ALCALÁ is the author of four books of historical fiction set in Mexico and the United States. She is a co-founder of and contributing editor to *The Raven Chronicles* and has taught in University of Washington Extension, Clarion West, and workshops throughout the country. She has been a writer in residence at Seattle University and Richard Hugo House in Seattle, WA. A member of Los Norteños, a group of writers and performers, Kathleen co-wrote a play with Olga Sanchez based on her first novel, *Spirits of the Ordinary*. She was recently a visiting lecturer at the University of New Mexico. Her books are: *Mrs. Vargas and the Dead Naturalist*, *Spirits of the Ordinary*, *The Flower in the Skull*, and *Treasures in Heaven*.

CRAIG BALDWIN, an independent filmmaker, is interested in the recontextualization of “found” imagery, which led him to the theories of the Situationist International and to various practices of mail art, ‘zines, altered billboards, and other creative initiatives beyond the fringe of traditional fine-arts curriculum. His works have included *Wild Gunman* (1978), *RocketKitKongoKit* (1986), *Tribulation 99* (1991), and *¡O No Coronado!* (1992), for which he received the 1992 Phelan Award in Film Arts from the San Francisco Foundation. *Sonic Outlaws* was an experimental documentary on the emerging “electronic folk culture,” exploring the legal, political, and artistic implications of the audio-collage work of culture-jamming collectives. Baldwin has recently completed *Spectres of the Spectrum*, a sci-fi spoof utilizing early educational kinescopes to criticize the corporate control of electronic technologies. He is a graduate of San Francisco State University.

GRETJEN CLAUSING is a Philadelphia-based programmer, filmmaker, and media activist. She is the program director at Scribe Video Center and producer of the 2005 National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) Conference, to be hosted by Scribe in Fall 2005. She is part of video collective BiG TeA PaRtY. Their award-winning videos can be seen nationally on FreeSpeech TV.

JAY CRAVEN is an award-winning director, writer, and producer whose feature films include *Where the Rivers Flow North* (1994), *A Stranger in the Kingdom* (1998), *The*

Year That Trembled (2003), and *Disappearances* (2005). His films have played 345 U.S. cities; 52 countries; and more than 40 international film festivals, including Sundance. Craven also produced, directed, and co-wrote the New England Emmy-nominated comedy series, *Windy Acres* (2004). Craven founded and directs Kingdom County Productions (KCP) in Barnet, Vermont, where he develops new film projects and directs KCP's Fledgling Films program for teen filmmakers. He also teaches film studies at Marlboro College. Craven's awards include two National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Film Fellowships; two NEA Media Arts Film Production Grants; and the 1995 Producers' Guild of America's 1995 NOVA for Most Promising New Motion Picture Producer of the Year.

PAUL DE BARROS is the jazz columnist for *The Seattle Times*; a regular contributor to *Down Beat* magazine; founder of the Seattle jazz support organization, Earshot Jazz; author of the award-winning history, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle*; and a former National Arts Journalism Program fellow. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, de Barros has served as adjunct professor of music at Seattle Pacific University since 2000, where he teaches jazz history. In recognition of his contributions to local jazz, de Barros was inducted into the Seattle Jazz Hall of Fame in January 2003.

W.S. DI PIERO is the author of eight books of poetry, the most recent being *Brother Fire* (Knopf, 2004). He's also a well-known essayist on art, literature, culture, and personal experience. He writes a regular column on the visual arts for the San Diego Reader and has been a frequent contributor to *Poetry* and *Threepenny Review*, and has written for *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Bookforum*, and other magazines. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Partisan Review*, and many other journals. Di Piero has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Award, and the Berlin Prize from the American Academy in Berlin.

GERALD EARLY, the Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters in the English department at Washington University in St. Louis, is the director of the Center for the Humanities of the College of Arts and Sciences. He also has an appointment in the African and Afro-American Studies Program. His publications include *Tuxedo Junction: Essays on American Culture*, *One Nation Under a Groove: Motown and American Culture*, and *The Culture of Bruising: Essays on Prizefighting, Literature, and Modern American Culture*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism in 1994. Early has worked as a consultant with Ken Burns on several films, and in 1997 he was elected a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences.

JIM GRIMSLEY is the author of *Comfort & Joy*, published in 1999; *Winter Birds*, a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award and winner of the Sue Kaufman Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; *Dream Boy*, nominated for the Lambda Award for fiction and winner of the GLBTF Book Award for Fiction from the ALA; and *My Drowning*, a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers Award winner. He is also a playwright and the author of *Mr. Universe and Other Plays*. He lives in Atlanta.

CLAIRE HOPKINSON has been producer and general manager of Tapestry New Opera Works since 1990 and is considered to be a leader in the field of new opera and music theatre. In addition to producing award-winning world premieres of works by some of Canada's finest artists, she has developed artistic collaborations with many theatre, music, and opera organizations across Canada and the USA, thus providing new works with a life beyond the premiere.

Ms. Hopkinson is currently founding president of Creative Trust, Toronto's arts stabilization project for mid sized arts organizations, and vice-chair of OPERA America. She serves as past chair of Opera.ca. She has also served as a theatre committee member for the Toronto Arts Council, and on the board of directors for Artscape, Toronto Theatre Alliance, and McGill Alumni Association of Toronto. Hopkinson received her honours degree in literature from McGill University in Montreal.

ROSALBA ROLÓN is co-founder and artistic director of Pregones Theater in New York. She is an actor, director, and writer. Ms. Rolón has adapted for the stage short stories, novels, and periodicals by Latino and Latin American writers, set to original musical scores. In the 2005-06 season, she will direct Pregones Theater's new work *The Red Rose*, and will co-direct *Betsy*, a creative collaboration between Pregones and Roadside Theater (KY). She is currently leading a capital project that will culminate in the construction of a new theater for Pregones. Ms. Rolón works extensively on international projects in Europe, Central America, and the Caribbean. She is also the chair of the board of the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture (NALAC) and a member of the board of Theater Communications Group (TCG).

VIJAY SESHADRI is the author of two books of poems, *Wild Kingdom* and *The Long Meadow* (winner of the 2004 James Laughlin Prize of the Academy of American Poets). His poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared in many periodicals and anthologies, including *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *Best American Poetry*. He has received grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and has been awarded The Paris Review's Bernard F. Connors Long Poem Prize and the MacDowell Colony's Fellowship for Distinguished Poetic Achievement. He holds an A.B. degree from Oberlin College and an M.F.A. from Columbia University. He currently teaches poetry and nonfiction writing at Sarah Lawrence College and lives in Brooklyn with his wife and son.

HERB E. SMITH continues to make films in Whitesburg, the small town in the southeastern Kentucky coalfields where he grew up. His films explore cultural, social, and economic issues of the Appalachian region. His latest film, *The Ralph Stanley Story*, is a portrait of the mountain musician who has been performing for over 55 years. Smith is currently making a film based on an essay by Kentucky writer Wendell Berry. Since 1969 when Smith was a high school student, he has played an active role in the creation of Appalshop, the renowned Appalachian cultural center. Smith's films and videotapes

have been shown throughout the country in venues from community centers and union halls to the Museum of Modern Art and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. International screenings include Paris, Berlin, Rome, Calcutta, Bombay and Chengdu.

PAMELA Z is a composer/performer who makes solo works combining a wide range of vocal techniques with electronic processing, sampled sounds, and The BodySynth™ gesture controller. She has also composed scores for dance, theatre, film, and new music chamber ensembles. Her multi-media performance works have been presented at Theater Artaud and ODC Theatre in San Francisco and at the Kitchen in New York. Her audio works have been presented in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum in New York, the Diözesanmuseum in Cologne, and the D'akart Biennale in Sénégal. She has toured throughout the US, Europe, and Japan in concerts and festivals including Bang on a Can, the Japan Interlink Festival, Other Minds and the Venice Biennale. Her numerous awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the CalArts Alpert Award, the ASCAP Award and the NEA/JUSFC Fellowship.