

## Arts Council's artist laureate program recognizes local talents

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Fellowship is always a good thing, but in the arts funding world, it can be a term that suggests some particular strings are attached, even when they're not. That's one of the reasons why Arts Council Silicon Valley has announced its new Artist Laureate Awards, a program to boost area artists working in a variety of disciplines.

The program will award \$4,000 each to established artists in four different categories and \$4,000 apiece to an emerging artist and to a longtime local artist.

The laureate awards are a reworking of the Arts Council's longstanding Artist Fellowship grant program, but the new "laureate" moniker, along with revamped rules for eligibility, help to highlight a unique aspect of the program: it offers a rare opportunity for artists to receive unrestricted funding. That means that the \$4,000 awarded to each recipient is not earmarked for a specific piece or project, as grants often are, but that it can be spent to further each recipient's work however he/she chooses.

"We thought of 'laureate' because every year when we have had the artist fellowship awards, there is some kind of expectation on the part of the artist that they had to propose something to do for the award money," says Anna Wong, Arts Council Silicon Valley grants program manager. "The word 'fellowship' presumes a development of sorts, and actually what we are doing is recognizing excellence and community impact. We decided that 'laureate' was a word that

reflected what we were trying to recognize. It really is a reward for service in artistry and artistic merit."

The revamping of the program came as Arts Council Silicon Valley was reexamining and sharpening its mission.

"We just completed our strategic plan. We've consolidated a lot of our areas of focus, and during the process, we really recognized that the core of everything we do is about individual artists," says Nancy Glaze, who took the reins as Arts Council executive director in July. Since early this year, Glaze was interim executive director for the Arts Council and has also served on the council's board.

"We have provided fellowships to artists for 20 years--over 100 artists over the last 20 years have been involved in the artist fellowship program," Glaze says. "We looked at the artist fellowship program and thought that there would be an opportunity to really recognize additional types of artists."

Whereas the artist fellowships provided grants in specific artistic disciplines each year--last year's fellowships were awarded in photography, sculpture, spoken word, music performance and choreography--the laureate categories have been broadened. The four categories in which established artists are eligible are: On the Wall, which encompasses art that can be hung on a wall as well film or TV work which can be shown on a screen; Off the Wall, which includes free-standing art that can be viewed from all angles, such as sculpture and installation; On Stage, which recognizes work performed for audiences, including dance, acting, mime, music and spoken word, and Off Stage, which encompasses an array of behind-

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the-scenes work, such as music composition, choreography, costume design and all written literary art forms.

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Glaze says that whereas the fellowships required artists to apply, the laureate awards will also welcome nominations of artists from others.

The laureate awards have also added two new categories: an emerging artist category, which recognizes artists working professionally in their field for less than two years, and an Arts Legacy prize, which celebrates an artist's lifetime achievement. The legacy prize will be selected by the Arts Council and is not part of the application/nomination process.

In the same manner that the fellowships were decided, an outside panel of working artists, educators and arts administrators from around the country will select the laureate recipients--the final selection is done by conference call to ensure that the judging panel has broad participation. The major criteria on which selections will be made is: artistic merit, community impact and artistic development.

The Arts Council will hold two informational workshops for artists interested in applying for the laureate awards, on Sept. 7, 2-3:30 p.m. at Sobrato Conference Center, 1400 Parkmoor Ave., San Jose and Sept. 12, 6:30-8 p.m. at the San Jose Stage Company, 490 S. First St., San Jose.

The deadline to apply for the 2012 Artist Laureate Awards is Nov. 14, 2011. The Arts Council Silicon Valley will announce the recipients of its 2012 Artist Laureate Awards in March 2012 and a reception to meet the artists will take place in the spring. Glaze says that the Arts Council hosted a reception this past spring with the 2011 fellows and it served as reminder how important it is to recognize local artists.

"In May, we had a celebration at Montalvo Arts Center, where we recognized last year's fellows," Glaze says. "It reinforced for all of us the idea of showcasing the talent we have here. So we will be looking at repeating that event showcasing our laureates, and then finding other opportunities to give them recognition."

**For more information on the Artist Laureate Awards and how to apply, visit [www.artscouncil.org](http://www.artscouncil.org).**

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