



County of Santa Cruz

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

979 17TH AVENUE, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062

Past Artist of the Year Winners

The Artist of the Year program is sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission and the County of Santa Cruz Department of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services.

Background

Over the last 34 years, the County of Santa Cruz Arts Commission has selected outstanding artists nominated by the public and honored them through the Artist of the Year Award. The award recognizes artists for outstanding achievement in the disciplines of performing, visual, or literary arts. Previous Artists of the Year include: Tandy Beal, Lou Harrison, James Houston, George Barati, Charles Hilger, William Everson, Doug McClellan, Jack Zajac, Linda Burman-Hall, Adrienne Rich, Frans Lanting, Paul Whitworth, Lynda Watson, Morton Marcus, Carol Summers, Jessica Williams, Karen Thuesen Massaro, Monica Parker, Laurie King, Richard Deutsch, Manuel Santana, Robert Kelley, Phil Collins, Susana Arias, John Babcock, Geoffrey Dunn, Shmuel Thaler, Shelley Phillips, and Cheryl Anderson.

2020 Artist of the Year – Guillermo “Yermo” Aranda:

Born and raised in National City/San Diego, California, Guillermo “Yermo” Aranda comes from a family of artists, craftsman, and musicians. He is a co-founder of “Toltecas en Aztlan” (1968), a collection of multi-media Chicano Artists. He is also co-founder and First Director of “El Centro Cultural de La Raza” (1971-75), a cultural art center focusing on Latino and Indigenous Art forms. Yermo works with youth in helping them develop their artistic skills, utilizing murals as the means to involve youth in the arts. He has over 80 murals in the Santa Cruz and Monterey county area, all youth projects. Currently he teaches art and the process of mural painting, locally and throughout the State of California, working with elementary students in Northern California and inmates in a California state penitentiary. Over the years, Aranda has been commissioned and sponsored by a host of agencies and organizations, including the California Arts Council, Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County, Santa Cruz County Arts Commission, Santa Cruz County Office of Education, Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, Mexican American Community Services Agency of San Jose, and the City of San Diego.

2019 Artist of the Year - Ellen Bass:

Ellen’s work as a poet, educator, activist, and pioneer in the field of healing from childhood sexual abuse has enriched the cultural life in Santa Cruz County for 45 years. She has published six books of poetry, the most recent of which, *Like a Beggar* (2014), was a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize, the Publishers Triangle Award, the Lambda Literary Award, and the Northern California Book Award. Among her other literary honors are three Pushcart Prizes, the Pablo Neruda Prize, the Chatauqua Poetry Prize, and fellowships from the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. She served as Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County from 2014-2016. Her poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker* and *The American Poetry Review*, as well as in hundreds of journals and anthologies including *The Kenyon*



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Review, The New York Times Magazine, The Atlantic, The Nation, and Ploughshares. Ellen teaches in the Pacific University MFA writing program, and serves as Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Over the years, Ellen has nurtured the work of thousands of students, including some of Santa Cruz's most beloved writers—Maude Meehan, Elizabeth McKenzie, Len Anderson, and Laura Davis. She has also taught many creative writing workshops at schools, colleges, universities, conferences, festivals and retreat centers nationally and internationally. Ellen currently serves on the governing board for the George Hitchcock Modern Poetry Fund at Porter College, UCSC. Ellen is also a celebrated nonfiction writer and a pioneer in the field of healing from child sexual abuse. From her work with survivors, Ellen helped found and build two thriving Santa Cruz-based non-profit organizations, Kidpower, Inc. and the Survivors Healing Center.

2018 Artist of the Year - Cheryl Anderson:

Cheryl is in her 26th year as Director of Choral and Vocal Studies at Cabrillo College. During her 26 years as Director of Choral and Vocal Studies at Cabrillo College Cheryl has taught a variety of music, as well as serving as Conductor of Cabrillo Symphonic Chorus, Cantiamo!, Cabrillo Chorale, and Cabrillo Opera, which she founded. She is also Founder/Artistic Director of the Cabrillo Youth Choir Project. The various choirs under Cheryl's direction have sung concert tours all over the world, including the Vatican in Italy, Carnegie Hall in New York. Cheryl has been a professional soloist and chorister her entire career and conducted professionally both choirs and orchestras throughout the world. She has received numerous awards and among her most cherished are Gail Rich Award, 2008, and Cabrillo Board of Trustees "Cheryl Anderson Day – December 5, 2016."

2017 Artist of the Year - 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, The Butterfly, and most recently, The Wood Between The Worlds. Shelley is director of the Community Music School of Santa Cruz, where 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. Shelley serves as a board member of the Music of Bhutan Research Center, the American Pipers' Guild, and Boxwood Flute Festivals. Here are some photos from the event.

2016 Artist of the Year - Shmuel Thaler:

Check out the Santa Cruz Sentinel article about Shmuel, by Wallace Baine: <http://tinyurl.com/h3rxptu>. Shmuel Thaler's "Profile Performance - A wonderful time was had by all at the Museum of Art and History on May 27, where a crowd of over 250 joined Shmuel for his Profile Performance. In



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conversation with Wallace Baine, Shmuel talked about his "Photo of the Day" project while previous Photo of the Day images were projected.