

FALL 2019

Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters

Now in its 41st year!

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MIAL ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

The Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters honored winners at the annual awards banquet on June 8, 2019. The banquet was held at the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX), Meridian, Mississippi. Master of Ceremonies for the evening was George Bassi, Director of the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Laurel, Mississippi. Bassi also served as chairman for the event.



Pictured right, George Bassi, Master of Ceremonies



The Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award winner, John Ruskey, is described by *Southern Living* as an “environmental evangelist for the wonders of the Mississippi River.” Ruskey is a musician, writer, diarist, watercolorist, canoe maker, and river guide. A graduate of St. John’s College with a Philosophy of Mathematics degree and of the University of Vermont with a BA in English and music, this Colorado native moved to Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1991 to become the first curator of the Delta Blues Museum. While there, he founded the Delta Blues Education Fund, a nonprofit that pairs area children with master Delta blues musicians to continue the tradition of Delta Blues. Ruskey himself plays guitar, bass, banza, piano, and accordion. He established Quapaw Canoe Company in 1998 to provide guided expeditions of the Lower Mississippi River and some of its tributaries and has become the most knowledgeable guide on the Lower Mississippi River. He is also a master cypress-strip voyageur-style canoe maker. In 1999 he founded the Mighty Quapaws Apprenticeship Program for disadvantaged youth of the Mississippi Delta to teach canoe building, canoe safety and rescue, and wilderness leadership and survival. On the “Ruskey and Clark” expedition of the Missouri River, he daily uploaded journals, photographs, and sketches to schools across the country. In 2011, he began compiling “Rivergator,” a mile by mile guide to the Lower Mississippi that includes history and stories to introduce America to its longest river.

Pictured above: Jean Medley, MIAL Board of Governors member who secured this year’s award gifts made by Pearl River Glass of Jackson, Mississippi; John Ruskey, Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award; Lawrence Deas, MIAL Board of Governors President, 2018-2019.



Pictured above (L to R): MIAL President Lawrence Deas and Jean Medley present Square Books owner Richard Howorth, Square Books general manager Lyn Roberts, and Square Books buyer Cody Morrison the Citation of Merit.

Square Books of Oxford is a winner of an MIAL Citation of Merit in recognition of its forty years of contributing to the literary life of Mississippi. Opened in September, 1979, by Lisa and Richard Howorth, Square Books quickly established itself as a center of reading and writing for the state. Originally focused on the literature of Mississippi and the South, the small bookstore grew to three storefronts and a wide selection of books on all topics. A launching pad for writers, a sanctuary for readers, a supporter of literacy and civic engagement, Square Books with its knowledgeable and dedicated owners and staff is a Mississippi treasure. Richard Howorth stated, “The initial vision is still very much what the store is today. I wanted it to serve the community.”



Pictured above: (Front, L to R) John Ruskey, *Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement*; Rory Doyle, *Photography*; Coulter Fussell, *Visual Arts*; Aimee Nezhukumatathil, *Poetry*; (Second Row, L to R) Richard Howorth, *Square Books, Citation of Merit*; Tiffany Quay Tyson, *Fiction*; John Milham, *Musical Composition (Contemporary)*; Steve Rouse, *Musical Composition (Classical)*; Julian Rankin, *Nonfiction*.

Award Category Winners

- The Fiction Award recipient, **Tiffany Quay Tyson**, Denver, Colorado, is a native of Jackson and a graduate of Delta State University. Her winning novel, *The Past Is Never*, is a Southern Gothic novel combining local legends, magical realism, family secrets, and the search for a missing child.
- **Julian Rankin** is the winner of the Nonfiction Award for *Catfish Dream: Ed Scott's Fight for His Family Farm and Racial Justice in the Mississippi Delta*. Rankin received his degree in English and Creative writing from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is the Executive Director of the Walter Anderson Museum of Art, Ocean Springs.
- The Poetry Award winner is **Aimee Nezhukumatathil** for her work *Oceanic*. A professor of English in the MFA program at the University of Mississippi, Nezhukumatathil received both her undergraduate degree and her M.F.A. from The Ohio State University.
- **Steve Rouse**, a native of Moss Point and Professor of Theory and Composition at the University of Louisville School of Music, is the winner of the Classical Music Composition Award for *This Dream*.
- Winner of the Contemporary Music Composition Award is **John Milham** for *Arden's Garden*, an album that is a blend of avant-garde jazz, blues, New Orleans funk, and electronica. Milham, who studied at Berklee College of Music, plays with his own band, the Inner Mission Band, as well as performing with other groups.
- The Visual Arts Award winner is **Coulter Fussell** of Water Valley for her exhibition, *New Work-Textiles*. Working out of her studio/workshop/quilting supply shop called YaloRUN, Fussell produces her textile art that often combines quilting and painting.
- **Rory Doyle** of Cleveland is the winner of the Photography Award for *Delta Hill Riders*, his ongoing project on African-American cowboys and cowgirls. A graduate of Delta State University, Doyle was the recipient of the 2019 Zeiss Photography Award and in the 2018 Eye Em Awards in Berlin, Germany, Doyle won the photojournalism category. He has been published in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic*, and ESPN.



Thomas & Kim Dobbs, Andrea & John Milham, Dee Dee & George Bassi



John Ruskey, Nancy & Bill LaForge



Fred Fussell, Coulter Fussell, Wil Cook, Cathy Fussell & Vickie Cook



Tanner "Kombo" Aljets, Mark "River" Peoples, & Paul Hartfield

—Banquet Photos by Brette Harman

For more photos, please visit the MIAL website at www.ms-arts-letters.org

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MIAL and Social Media

MIAL wants to be part of your "social" life! We have a presence on Twitter (@MSArtsLetters) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/MSArtsLetters). We love to share news about the wide variety of literary, artistic, and musical events around the state. Tag us with your news, and we will share on Facebook and Twitter! Also, like and follow our accounts to keep up with all of the latest MIAL and Mississippi arts news!

Please consider the **MIAL Endowment Fund** in your **estate planning**, as well as with your **memorial gifts**. Notes of acknowledgement for your gift will be sent to the family. Contributions to

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Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Award Nomination MIAL members are encouraged to make nominations to honor the artistic achievements of living Mississippians (current residents or former ones with continuing, significant ties to the state). Judges will consider only work shown, published, or performed in **2019**. Members may nominate more than one individual in any category. Please make additional copies of this form if needed. **Nominations should include a complete address or e-mail**, if applicable. Cookbooks, edited works, and self-published works cannot be considered. All nominations are subject to board approval. **Only MIAL members may nominate.**

Award Categories:

VISUAL ARTS (painting, sculpture, drawing, print, graphic arts, etc.) Eligible are thematic bodies of work, or up to 15 individual pieces. Submit CD, slides, prints, or published work.

PHOTOGRAPHY (color, black and white, combination) Eligible are thematic bodies of work, or up to 15 individual photographs. Submit CD, website link, slides, prints, or published work.

FICTION (novel, short story collection, etc.)

NONFICTION (any literature that is not fictional)

POETRY Eligible are up to 15 poems published individually or in a collection (some poems in the collection may have been published earlier). Submit complete tear sheets or publication.

YOUTH LITERATURE (writing or illustration) Eligible are fiction or nonfiction works including picture books, chapter books, middle grade, and young adult.

MUSIC COMPOSITION—CLASSICAL (song, opera, composition, instrumental music, etc.) Submit evidence of initial performance or publication (MP3 preferred, but also book, CD, tape, score).

MUSIC COMPOSITION—CONTEMPORARY (blues, country music, jazz, rock, etc.) Submit the commercial recording. At least five original compositions must be presented.

Deadline: Nominations must be postmarked on or before **January 15, 2020**. Attach the artist’s representative work (books, slides, photographs, CD’s, etc.). Please send the nomination to the appropriate category chair listed below.

POETRY
Mary Thompson
221 Clark Street
Clarksdale, MS 38614
marymckthompson@gmail.com

**MUSIC COMPOSITION
(Contemporary)**
Pete Halverson
1019 Meadow Heights Dr.
Jackson, MS 39206
phalverson@mississippi.edu

**MUSIC COMPOSITION
(Classical)**
Donzell Lee
1000 ASU Drive #175
Alcorn State, MS 39096
dlee@alcorn.edu

YOUTH LITERATURE
Nancy LaForge
Delta State University
Box 3231
Cleveland, MS 38733
ndlko@aol.com

NONFICTION
Ted Atkinson
P. O. Box 5272
Mississippi State, MS 39762
tba34@msstate.edu

PHOTOGRAPHY
Kim Rushing
406 South Fifth Ave.
Cleveland, MS 38732
kimrushing@bellsouth.net

VISUAL ARTS
Sandra Shellnut
7 Park Ridge Lane.
Pass Christian, MS 39571
sandrashellnut@gmail.com

FICTION
Sarah Frances Hardy
434 North 14th Street
Oxford, MS 38655
hardystudios@bellsouth.net

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

NAME OF MIAL MEMBER MAKING NOMINATION: _____

NOMINATOR’S ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: HOME _____ WORK _____ E-MAIL _____

AWARD CATEGORY: _____ MEDIUM: _____

TITLE OF WORK: _____

FIRST SHOWN/PUBLISHED/PERFORMED: _____

NAME OF NOMINEE: _____ NOMINEE’S ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: HOME/CELL _____ WORK _____ E-MAIL _____

NOMINEE’S DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: _____



—Photo by Yvonne Williams, Digital Media Manager, Mississippi Museum of Art

Pictured are members of the 2019–2020 MIAL Board of Governors: (front row, L to R): Aubrey Lucas (Emeritus), Hattiesburg; JoAnne Morris, Jackson; Jean Medley, Jackson; Jan Taylor, Jackson; Ted Atkinson, Starkville; Sarah Frances Hardy, Oxford; David Beckley, Holly Springs; (second row, L to R): Laura Howell, Leland; Traci Stover, Hattiesburg; Marion Barnwell, Jackson; Ann Abadie, Oxford; Margaret Anne Robbins, Pontotoc; Nancy Guice, Laurel; George Bassi, Laurel; Peter Halverson, Jackson; (third row, L to R); James G. Thomas, Jr., Oxford; Scott Naugle, Pass Christian; Kim Rushing, Cleveland; Mark Wiggs, Jackson; and Donzell Lee, Alcorn. Other members not pictured: Nicole Bradshaw, Brandon; Lawrence Deas, Jackson; Jennifer Polk Heidelberg, Ridgeland; Nancy LaForge, Cleveland; Cora Norman (Emerita), Crossville, TN; Bridget Pieschel, Columbus; Sandra Shellnut, Pass Christian; Mary Thompson, Clarksdale; Lester Senter Wilson, Jackson; Leila Wynn (Emerita), Greenville; and Swan Yerger (Emeritus), Jackson.

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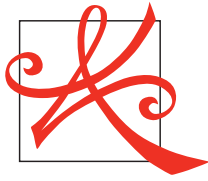
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 6, 2020, is the date for the 41th annual MIAL awards banquet. The banquet will be held at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, Mississippi. Make your plans to attend, visit your art museum, and support the talent in our state.

New Awards Category Announced

MIAL Call for Nominations

The Board of Governors recently voted to add the Youth Literature Award. We are excited to recognize this growing group of talent within our state and welcome your nominations. Please note the requirements listed on the nomination form on page 6. Nominations are due **January 15, 2020**, for this year's awards. Members only are allowed to nominate individuals for awards. MIAL welcomes new members, and anyone may join. Please see the Membership and Nomination forms in this newsletter or visit our website at www.ms-arts-letters.org. For more information, contact Margaret Robbins, Executive Secretary, 662-523-0899 or ms.arts.letters@gmail.com



James G. Thomas, Jr., incoming MIAL President for 2019–2020, thanks Lawrence Deas, outgoing President, for his leadership in 2018–2019.

Tributes

James Patterson

The art community in Mississippi lost a talented photographer and supporter with the death of James Patterson in October 2018. Patterson opened his own photography business shortly after graduating from USM and embarked on a career documenting Mississippi - mostly by taking photographs of its artists. Two of his favorite subjects were Eudora Welty and Willie Morris, both of whom were friends. James was one of two photographers allowed to print Welty's own photographs and, in 1992, James collaborated on a Eudora Welty Portfolio produced by the Department of Archives and History and Diogenes Editions.

Ronald Alan “Ronzo” Shapiro

Ron Shapiro, Oxford, died on August 19, 2019. A champion of art, artists, and creativity, Ronzo, as he was universally known, created the Hoka Theatre, a rustic art movie house that evolved into a nurturing haven for artists. For over 20 years the Hoka expanded the culture of North Mississippi. As photographer Tom Rankin explained, “Ronzo gradually, regularly educated a community on the diversity of aesthetics and expression through his Hoka creation.” Most recently, throughout the 2000s, Ronzo operated a car service for authors touring Southern bookstores, dubbed by Larry Brown as the “Stressless Shuttle.”