

Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters

FALL 2020

Now in its 42nd year!

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Ann Abadie – Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award

This year's recipient of the Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award is Ann Abadie. Born in Greenville, South Carolina, she received her bachelor's degree in English and history from Wake Forest University in North Carolina and her PhD in English from the University of Mississippi. She was on the planning committee that created the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and since its inception has served in crucial roles and in many capacities, including associate director. She is also associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* and the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, and coeditor of numerous scholarly collections from the annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. For much of the Center's history, she has served as lead grant writer and project manager. A founding director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, she is the 2019 recipient of their Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award. She is past president and a longtime board member of Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters. She was instrumental in organizing the Elizabeth Spencer memorial celebration sponsored by MIAL on February 15, 2020, in Carrollton, Mississippi. Ann lives in Oxford with her husband, Dale Abadie.



Pictured above: (Top, L-R) Minrose Gwin, Fiction; Margaret McMullan, Nonfiction; Bark (Susan and Tim Lee), Music Composition (Contemporary); C. T. Salazar, Poetry; Steve Rouse, Music Composition (Classical); (Bottom L-R) Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival, Special Achievement; Will Jacks, Photography; Lemuria Books, Citation of Merit; Stacey Johnson, Visual Arts; Angie Thomas, Youth Literature.

Award Winners

- The **Fiction** award recipient is **Minrose Gwin**, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Austin, Texas, for her novel, *The Accidentals*. A native of Tupelo, Gwin attended Mississippi University for Women and the University of Tennessee where she earned her PhD. She has taught at universities across the country, most recently the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- **Margaret McMullen** is the winner in **Nonfiction** for her memoir *Where the Angels Lived: One Family's Story of Exile, Loss, and Return*. Born in Newton, Mississippi, McMullen earned a BA degree in religious studies from Grinnell College and an MFA in fiction from the University of Arkansas. She served as Chair of the English Department at the University of Evansville. McMullen lives and writes in Pass Christian.
- The winner in **Contemporary Music Composition** is **Bark**, for *Terminal Everything*. Bark is the collaboration between husband-and-wife vocal duo, **Susan Bauer Lee and Tim Lee**. Launched in 2014, Bark is based in Knoxville, Tennessee. According to one reviewer, in this release they've stripped down their music to its bare essentials while incorporating the juke-joint blues from their native Mississippi.
- **Poetry** category winner is **C. T. Salazar** of Caledonia for *This Might Have Meant Fire*. Salazar received his BA and MA degrees from Mississippi University for Women and is pursuing an MA in library and information sciences with an emphasis in archiving from the University of Southern Mississippi.
- The winner in **Classical Music Composition** is **Steve Rouse** of Louisville, Kentucky, for *The Bird, the Bee, and the Bear*. Rouse also won MIAL awards in this category in 2009, 2013, and 2019. A native of Moss Point, Rouse studied with Luigi Zaninelli at the University of Southern Mississippi, then earned his MM and DMA degrees from the University of Michigan. He has been professor of music composition at the University of Louisville School of Music since 1988.

- Receiving a **Special Achievement** award is the **Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival**. The festival, founded and sponsored by Coahoma Community College, has introduced high school and college students to Williams’s work and attracted fans from around the world to Clarksdale and Mississippi since 1992.
- **Will Jacks**, a Cleveland native, is the recipient of the **Photography** award for *Po’ Monkey’s: Portrait of a Juke Joint*, published by University Press of Mississippi. Jacks received a BA degree from Millsaps College and an MFA degree from the Maine College of Art. Jacks is project manager for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area at the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University.
- A **Citation of Merit** goes to **Lemuria Books** in Jackson. Founded in 1975 by John and Mel Evans, Lemuria has flourished and is an active supporter of local cultural endeavors such as the Mississippi Book Festival. Lemuria’s ‘Dot Com’ presentation space has often been the site for MIAL’s awards weekend readings.
- In **Visual Arts**, the winner is **Stacey Johnson** of Pass Christian for her sculpture exhibit, *Storytellers*. Johnson, a Yazoo City native, holds an MFA in ceramic sculpture from the University of Georgia and a BFA from Loyola University. She is a two-time recipient of a Mississippi Arts Commission artist fellowship and teaches art at Coast Episcopal School in Long Beach
- Winner in MIAL’s new category, **Youth Literature**, is **Angie Thomas** for her bestselling novel, *On the Come Up*. A native of Jackson, Thomas received a BFA degree from Belhaven University, the first Black student to graduate in creative writing. She received a Walter Dean Myers Grant in 2015.

Endowment Fund Donations

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**Contributors to the Celebration of the Life of
Elizabeth Spencer February 15, 2020**

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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 MIAL are recognized by the IRS as tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Donations may be made on-line from our MIAL website www.ms-arts-letters.org/membership or by mailing to:

MIAL Endowment Fund
P. O. Box 2346
Jackson, MS 39225-2346

A Letter from MIAL 2019-2020 President



—James G. Thomas, Jr.

To begin, we are so pleased, proud, and eager to honor the 2020 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters awards winners with as much fanfare as is possible this year. Each year MIAL reminds me of just how much talent touches our lives here in Mississippi. Of course, we're incredibly disappointed to not be celebrating in person. The coronavirus has had a devastating effect on the arts this year, and since late February events across the state have been cancelled for the benefit of the common good and as a bulwark against viral community spread. The 41st Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters' annual awards ceremony, originally scheduled for June 6, 2020, was no exception to this spate of cancellations. The decision to cancel the ceremony was an easy one to make, but no less dispiriting. Through a variety of efforts, however, artists across the state are creating a sense of community cohesion and raising our spirits and morale. Artists and arts organizations are turning cancelled events into digital events, and many of us are socializing at virtual bookstore readings, watching musical performances online, and having "art and coffee" Zoomed (a new word!) in from our museums. Understandably, many online book clubs are meeting and reading more now than ever. Museums and

galleries are taking exhibitions online, and arts festivals and events are finding increasingly accessible ways to promote and share the diversity of Mississippi's arts and letters across the globe. But while society is figuring out new ways to share and celebrate the arts, the reality remains that artists of all media are being affected in numerous ways. Whether it is through income loss, a decrease in available outlets and audiences, or a loss of access to materials and workspace, our artists are affected. We encourage you to continue supporting the arts in Mississippi by whatever ways are available to you. Artists and writers across the state continue to work and produce, and they deserve our support in addition to our praise. I look forward to seeing and hearing how artists will respond to and depict this time in which we live. I suspect many responses will rightly reflect the anxiety that we are all experiencing, but I also believe that the art born from this crisis will reflect our courage and our resolve to prevail. In 2020, we are absolutely not cancelling the arts. And the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters is not cancelling the 2020 banquet. Let's just call it a postponement, as we are already planning for a combination 41st/42nd awards banquet next June. Until then, congratulations to all of our incredibly talented 2020 winners, and thank you for representing our state. The arts, perhaps more than ever, create a cultural community, and you help in immeasurable ways to shape the constellation of communities that is Mississippi. We'll see you in person in 2021.

—James G. Thomas, Jr.

THANK YOU, DONORS AND FRIENDS

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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 **2020**. 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, 2021**. 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)**

Lester Senter Wilson
1200 Meadowbrook Road, #39
Jackson, MS 39206
lsw2@dwandls.com

**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
1000 East Broad Street
West Point, MS 39773
tba34@msstate.edu

PHOTOGRAPHY

George Bassi
Lauren Rogers Museum of Art
565 North Fifth Avenue
P. O. Box 1108
Laurel, MS 39441
gbassi@LRMA.org

VISUAL ARTS

Traci Stover
104 Mamie Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
tracistover@gmail.com

FICTION

Laura Howell
3218 Tribbett Road
Leland, MS 38756
lhowell@deltastate.edu

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: _____

DEGREES SINCE HIGH SCHOOL (institutions and dates) _____



Business as Usual (Almost)

The fall MIAL Board of Governors meeting looked quite different from our normal. None the less, President Scott Naugle (center) called the meeting to order. 20 members “met”, conducted business, and made plans for the upcoming year as we look forward to a celebration honoring our award recipients from both 2020 and 2021 in Pass Christian on June 12, 2021.

MEMBERSHIP

"I have to say getting this award is a little more special than the rest. Recognition from my home state means more than words can describe."

Angie Thomas, author of "On the Come Up"
2020 Youth Literature MIAL winner

In these heartfelt words, Angie Thomas has confirmed the importance of recognition by the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters.

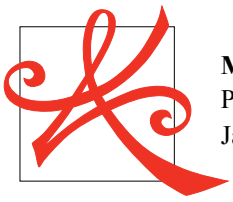
We hope you will join us in supporting the arts in Mississippi.

MIAL is proud of its more than 40-year history of supporting our creative and energetic artists, including writers, poets, musicians, photographers, sculptors, and other visual artists.

Join today or renew your membership using the form below or online from our website (see address below).

–Jean Medley, MIAL Membership Chairman

2019–2020 MIAL Membership Dues	Please complete and return this form. Payment may also be made from our website: http://www.ms-arts-letters.org/membership.html														
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CHECK the appropriate membership category:	Please make payments to MIAL and return to:														
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 12, 2021, is the date for the 42nd annual MIAL awards banquet celebrating our award recipients for both 2020 and 2021. The banquet will be held in Pass Christian at Oak Crest Mansion and Inn. Make your plans to attend, as we double our fun by celebrating two years of talent.

**Celebration of the Life of Elizabeth Spencer
 (1921–2019)**



Pictured (front L-R) Marion Barnwell, Peggy Prenshaw, Carrollton Mayor Pam Lee, and Suzanne Marrs; (back L-R) Ann Abadie, Sarah Frances Hardy, Don Shaffer, and Hunter Cole.

Approximately 85 friends and admirers gathered at Cotesworth Culture and Heritage Center in Carrollton to celebrate the life of Elizabeth Spencer on February 15, 2020. Readings from the works of Ms. Spencer included *The Voice at the Back Door*, *Light in the Piazza*, *The Salt Line*, *Landscapes of the Heart* and “The Day Before.” Organized by the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters, a complete list of sponsors is listed on page 4.



Elizabeth Spencer pictured in 1957 in front of the Courthouse in Carrollton.



Cotesworth Culture and Heritage Center