2019 Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Awards Recipients

Distinguished Artist, $40,000 award: *for a mature artist who has devoted decades to creative practice*

Richard Nelson of Sitka illustrates Alaska with research, storytelling, film and soundscapes. He is best known for his book "The Island Within," a lyrical exploration of an unnamed Southeast Alaska island, and "Encounters," a radio series recorded in the field about "observations, experiences and reflections about the world around us." Nelson is a cultural anthropologist who apprenticed himself to Alaska Native people and published acclaimed ethnographies about their lifeways. He currently is collaborating on short films about Alaska and the natural world, and he's creating soundscapes for some of Alaska's national parks. Reflecting on his work, Nelson says, "Alaska gives you these gifts of knowledge, experience and beauty."

Fellowships, $18,000 grants: *for mid-career or mature artists to focus energy and attention for one year on developing their creative work*

Stephen Qacung Blanchett lives in Anchorage and calls Bethel home**.** He will further Alaska Native dance through creation of original works, collaboration with mask makers on contemporary designs, and performance at dance festivals. With online and digital technology, he will teach traditions of music, dance and performance across Alaska. Blanchett previously received a Fellowship in 2016.

Aurora J. Ford of Anchorage will develop a nonfiction book about female mixed martial arts pioneers, exploring the successes and sacrifices of women fighting for a living in a male-dominated sport. It will feature flyweight contender Lauren Murphy, an Alaskan.

James Hoagland of Juneau models self-acceptance, strength and grace by exploring gender and artistry through drag. He will develop his craft through training in voice, dance, scriptwriting and costume design to further his solo career.

Joan Naviyuk Kane of Anchorage creates literature around themes of the Arctic, indigenousness, and humanity in a changing environment. She will complete a poetry collection and a volume of essays, and she will begin a memoir and character-driven flash-fiction. Kane previously received Project Awards in 2007 and 2016 and a Fellowship in 2013.

Bob La Montagne of Fairbanks creates works from wood and glass. He will complete construction of a hot glass studio, allowing him to expand his body of work and show in more galleries. It will be the only such glass studio in Interior Alaska. La Montagne previously received Project Awards in 2009 and 2015.

Peter A. Lind Jr. of Wasilla works in wood and ivory. He is inspired by how Alutiiq art forms communicate heritage, knowledge and traditional lifeways. He will complete a studio on his property so he can work and teach safely indoors year-round.

Neva Mathias of Chevak is best-known for traditional dolls of sealskin, leather, grass and other natural materials. She will prepare sealskins, travel to Anchorage for supplies, and seek opportunities to teach her craft to younger artists.

Vivian Faith Prescott*,* born and raised in Wrangell, will create a full-length manuscript of poems as a "climate witness." She will document her relationship to the changing climate in Alaska and how it affects glaciers and salmon through the lens of her indigenous Sámi values. Prescott previously received a Fellowship in 2015.

Jerome Saclamana lives in Anchorage and calls Nome his home. He is known for his interpretation of traditional King Island forms in ivory and bone, connecting to his ancestral lands. He will research museum collections in the Lower 48 and study with other carvers in preparation for creating new work — in wood.

Sara Tabbert of Fairbanks creates woodblock prints and panels that reveal oft-overlooked subjects and environments. She will develop new sculptural skills for her upcoming exhibit, "Lowland," which will explore the strange and beautiful landscapes of Interior Alaska. Tabbert previously received a Project Award in 2013.

Project Awards, $7,500 grants*: for emerging, mid-career and mature artists for specific, short-term projects*

Indra D. Arriaga Delgado of Anchorage — originally from Xalapa, Mexico — will create "Opaque Etymologies," with poetry and prose, intaglio prints, and a performance exploring decolonization, identity and language. This connects to the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Katie Basile of Bethel will explore climate change in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta through portraits and interviews with elders, illustrating the danger of disconnection from traditional knowledge in the Yup'ik teaching, "the weather will follow its people."

Karl Becker of Cordova will sketch, paint and photograph the spectacular landscape in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and historic buildings at the old Kennecott copper mine. He will produce paintings for an exhibit highlighting the area's significance and its connections to Cordova, the railroad and shipping.

Kathleen Bielawski of Anchorage will write, compose and record 12 songs for a CD, "The Arctic Question." She will map a journey of self and Alaska through love, the love of land, the hunt, war, corruption, life in exile, and the return to a northern home.

Quinn Christopherson of Anchorage uses music to explore his identity and navigate life as an indigenous transgender Alaskan. He will record his first album and purchase an electric guitar and equipment, aiming for a wider audience.

Kristin DeSmith of Anchorage will create "Evolution: Three," a story in ceramics. This will explore damage, heartbreak, integration and hope using tiles, platters, hand-built flowers and porcelain wall pieces created from molds of the artist's body.

Michaela Goade of Anchorage will develop ideas for picture books celebrating indigenous culture. Elements of her Tlingit heritage will frame stories that speak to all children. She will produce an “artist's book” for promotion to publishers.

Rhonda Green of Ketchikan designs sculptures from scrap metal. She will purchase equipment to fabricate 3D pieces and allow year-round work indoors. She looks forward to creating kinetic forms that incorporate elements of her Tlingit heritage.

Desiree Hagen of Fritz Creek creates art with handmade papers. She will purchase professional papermaking equipment not available in Alaska to create a body of work exploring death, grief and remembrance using papers made from clothing of the deceased. Hagen previously received a Project Award in 2012.

John S. Hagen of Haines will photograph salmon season in the village of Ugashik on the Alaska Peninsula. He hopes to reconnect with his Unangan heritage and work through historical tragedies of disease and displacement to create a path home. Hagen previously received a Project Award in 2015.

Anastasia Shaawat Kah Gei Hobson-George of Juneau will study and document rare Chilkat weaving techniques. She will travel to the Canadian Museum of History to examine a singular example of a transition tunic and work with a master weaver to create her own piece.

John Ingman of Sitka is Alaska’s only active Uilleann piper. Playing the Irish bagpipes is a calling that connects to his heritage. He will advance his knowledge and performance by studying with a champion piper and traveling to piper gatherings.

Carmen Maldonado of Eagle River describes poetry as “an exercise in linguistic lovemaking.” She will rebuild her earthquake-damaged writing studio, complete a collection of poems, submit work to journals, and attend the 2019 Kachemak Bay Writers' Conference.

Erin McKinstry of McCarthy is an audio storyteller who believes that the most extraordinary stories feature ordinary people. She will produce a multimedia series about Alaska farmers, their connection to the land, and impacts of climate change.

Marie Meade of Anchorage has been studying, singing and teaching Yup’ik music for 50 years. She was raised in the Southwestern Alaska village of Nunapitchuk and hopes to share the music of her heritage with the world. She will collaborate with others on a CD of traditional Yup’ik songs accompanied by modern instruments.

Rebecca Menzia of Big Lake explores femininity through complex melodies, painful concepts and healing textures. She will compose songs for performance and digital release, inspired by circumpolar landscapes, with organic sound samples from around Alaska. She is our first awardee from Big Lake.

Sheryl Maree Reily of Ester will create ReWilding: large-scale, site-specific installations using projected images and video to highlight the critical need for human reconnection with nature. Urban images will overlay wilderness, and vice versa. Reily previously received a Project Award in 2008 and a Fellowship in 2014.

Kurt Riemann of Anchorage will create a mixed media composition with stunning 3D images from Mars. “MARS” will include Alaska musicians performing symphonically as “technique collaborators.” It will be presented in planetariums and live with orchestra.

Ellie Schmidt of Sitka will print and bind a graphic poetry book that explores aging and transformation through stories about Yellowstone’s wolves. She will begin a second experimental book about Alaska women that weaves oral history, science and art.

Jeffery P. Sheakley Jr. calls Coffman Cove home. He hand-carves precious metal jewelry in traditional Tlingit and Haida formlines, continuing family and cultural traditions. He will purchase studio equipment to enhance his artistry, efficiency and ability to work safely.

Marjorie Kunaq Tahbone of Nome will create Iñupiaq fancy fur parkas with patterns from her ancestral homeland in Wales, Alaska, using hides from eight different Arctic animals. She will learn and teach traditional sewing, sustaining valuable cultural knowledge.

Heather A. Warren of Fairbanks will create a full-length audio poetry book exploring the fluidity of their transgender identity. “Binded” will communicate the realities of oppression on a transgender body and the societal elements that keep trans identity “bound.”

Gretchen Weiss-Brooks of Anchorage tells stories in words, paint, charcoal, photographs, sculpture and prints. She will develop “micro-stories” about family and life in Southcentral Alaska in the 1980s, exploring a generation that is “part cassette tape and part HTML.”

Bryan Whitten of Fairbanks tells stories in film. He will produce a documentary on the history of the Nenana Ice Classic from its 1906 start, focusing on the 2020 contest. Purchase of professional videography equipment will help him work independently.

Anvil Catlin Williamson of Fairbanks explores the human condition through figurative animal sculpture. Rodents, insects and endangered species are frequent subjects. Completion of a studio and purchase of a ceramic kiln will help her prepare for an upcoming show.