



# Memorandum

**TO:** ARTS COMMISSION

**FROM:** Kerry Adams Hapner

**SUBJECT: 2024 CORNERSTONE OF THE  
ARTS AWARDS**

**DATE:** June 5, 2024

Approved

Date 6/5/24

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Arts Commission approve the selections for the 2024 Cornerstone of the Arts Award, Creative Impact Award, and Luminary Artist Award.

## **BACKGROUND**

Inaugurated in September 2013, through a partnership between the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs and the Arts Commission, the Cornerstone of the Arts awards and event program was established.

The awards are bestowed annually at the Cornerstone of the Arts Event, during which Cultural Affairs grantees are also honored for their collective contributions. This year, the Community-Based/Business Support for the Arts Awards category is on hiatus as nominations have trended to be low since the inception. The new Luminary Artist Award will substitute for the Community-Based/Business Support for the Arts Award. The event is held in October and the program includes the following categories:

- **Cornerstone of the Arts Award;**
- **Creative Impact Award; and**
- **Luminary Artist Award** (*New*).

Nominated by community members and Arts Commissioners, honorees are selected according to the following eligibility and criteria for each award category:

- **Cornerstone of the Arts Award** - An individual(s) or creative entrepreneur who has provided enduring and effective leadership and/or support that has led the betterment of San José's arts community and the quality of life for our citizens.

A. Eligibility

1. An individual or individuals (not an organization)
2. Working in any sector (nonprofit, public, or private)
3. Past honorees are ineligible.

B. Criteria

1. Significance
2. Innovation
3. Inclusiveness
4. Timing of Recognition

- **Creative Impact Award** - A cultural or artistic project or program that has made a significant impact on the community.

A. Eligibility

1. An individual or individuals from either the nonprofit, or business sector.
2. Produced a special cultural or artistic project or event that has significantly impacted the San José community.
3. Special cultural or artistic project or event does not have to be reoccurring.
4. Past honorees are ineligible.

B. Criteria

1. Significance of Project
2. Community Impact
3. Innovation

- **Luminary Artist Award** – Recognizes an established artist having a substantial body of work that reflects excellence and contributions to San José's cultural vitality.

a. Eligibility:

1. Artist must have lived or worked in San José for a minimal of five (5) years.
2. Artist must have contributed to the cultural enrichment in San Jose.
3. Past honorees are ineligible.

b. Criteria

1. Significance of Work
2. Community Impact
3. Collaboration
4. Innovation

2024 will mark the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the Cornerstone Awards. Previous Cornerstone Award recipients include the late Irene Dalis, founder of Opera San Jose, late Mayor Susan Hammer, founders of the Castellano Foundation Carmen and Al Castellano, founders of San José Taiko Roy and PJ Hirabayashi, founder and former Artistic Director of Teatro Visión Elisa Marina Alvarado, founder Randall King and Executive Director Cathleen King of the San José Stage Company, Artistic and Festival Director of San José Jazz Bruce Labadie; General Director of Symphony San José Andrew Bales and the late Dr. Jerrold Hiura (*posthumous*), Founder of Silicon Valley African Film Festival Chike Nwoffiah, and former CEO of SVCcreates Connie Martinez.

The 2024 awards will be presented at the Cornerstone of the Arts event at the Hammer Theatre in October 2024. FY 2023-2024 City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs' grantees will also be recognized for their contributions to San Jose's cultural life.

## **ANALYSIS**

Applicants were asked to complete an online application by the deadline of May 3, 2024. The Cornerstone of the Arts application opportunity was promoted in the media and via Cultural Affairs website, social media, and through email. The Cornerstone of the Arts Nomination Guidelines were posted on the [Office of Cultural Affairs' website](#)

The 2024 Cornerstone of the Arts committee was comprised of the following past honorees and Arts Commissioners:

- Janett Peace, *San José Arts Commissioner*
- Bruce Labadie, *Artistic and Festival Director of San Jose Jazz*
- Karen Adamski, *San José Arts Commissioner*
- Connie Martinez, *Former CEO of SVCcreates*
- Shelby Taketa, *San José Arts Commissioner*

The Committee met on May 30, 2024, to review 13 nominations. All the nominations identified leaders that have made a significant impact on San José's cultural landscape. Each nomination was carefully reviewed against each award's eligibility and criteria. After the deliberation, the Committee is recommending the following awards in 2024:

- Rick Holden, *Cornerstone of the Arts Award (posthumous)*
- Ken Matsumoto, *Cornerstone of the Arts Award*
- 3Below Theater, *Creative Impact Award*
- Paul Gonzalez, *Luminary Artist Award*

### **Cornerstone of the Arts Honoree (selected excerpt from nomination)**

Rick Holden was a mentor providing guidance through difficult or perplexing moments. To some, he was a teacher, offering lessons in life and living. To others, Rick was a facilitator, someone who could be counted on to bring together just the right group of people to accomplish a task. To still others, he was a true citizen of the community in which he lived for almost his entire life, a citizen who believed it was his responsibility to be a positive change agent in our society and a fierce advocate for the arts and artists.

Rick Holden began his professional life as a teacher. He taught English at Lynbrook High School in San José for over a decade, during which time he served as president of Local 2390 of the American Federation of Teachers. Rick left teaching to move on to other careers – travel planning, computer software – but also started to drift into what would be his life-long commitment to and support of the arts. Having grown up in a home full of jazz music, Rick joined the board of San José Jazz, serving as a member for over 14 years. From 1994 to 2002, he was chair of the board. It was a difficult period for the organization, and he is credited with stabilizing the group and helping to steer towards the prominent place it now holds in the jazz world and the local arts landscape. He was a member of San José Jazz's Emeritus Board from 2012 until his death.

In 1995, Rick graduated from Community Leadership San Jose, a program sponsored by the San José Chamber of Commerce. Shortly afterwards, he was named the program's executive director and for over a decade, worked to develop young leaders in the arts and other non-profits, government, journalism, and business and connect them to the community. He also created the Leadership Academy, providing San José Unified School District high school students with the same community-building tools.

From 2008 to 2015, Rick represented District 3 on the San José Arts Commission, serving three terms as chair. He also served on the boards of We Players, a Bay Area theater company that produces site-specific work, and the Belle Foundation, which provides unsolicited monetary awards to emerging artists. Through all those years, Rick and his wife, Sandra Moll, were major supporters of the San José Repertory Theater, the Institute of Contemporary Art and City Lights Theatre Company. In 2016, Rick was the driving force behind the creation of Friends of Levitt Pavilion whose mission is to build a music pavilion in San Jose's St. James Park as part of the park's revitalization. He founded the non-profit and served as the first president of its board.

When Rick passed away in early April, his death stunned many in the community, but it also served as a reminder to his friends, associates, and students just how much he had meant to San

José and Silicon Valley. Mercury News columnist Sal Pizarro – one of many community leaders influenced by Rick – wrote that it would be hard to overstate the impact that Rick Holden had on San Jose, especially on its arts community. ... “He’ll be remembered by so many people for years to come.”

*The Cornerstone of the Arts Committee is pleased to recommend Rick Holden as the recipient of this year’s Cornerstone of the Arts Award.*

### **Cornerstone of the Arts Honoree (selected excerpt from nomination)**

Ken Matsumoto is a renowned sculptor who has brought prominent recognition to the art and cultural landscape of San José for almost 50 years. His sculptures, made of stone, steel, and bronze, convey a sense of energy, calm, and tranquility that help us connect with the world on a deeper level. The qualities of his character and personality ripple from his heart and hands through organic materials of nature, creating art pieces that grace the spaces of private homes and public places. He creates pieces that create peace to invoke social, environmental, and spiritual consciousness.

After graduating from SJSU with a BFA and MFA degrees, Ken moved into two different studios between 1981 and 1996 to focus on creating his sculptures with tools and machines that required his personal adjustments to hone his craft. In 1996, he moved to the heart of San José Japantown, where he made a profound impact when the community was losing its sense of cultural vitality. The new studio became the Art Object Gallery—an ample studio space for Ken to work on his massive stone pieces; a space to be subdivided into studios for other creatives; a gallery for Ken's work and guest curators to produce fine arts exhibitions; and a venue for creative gatherings for readings, poetry slams, dialog, and music performances.

With tenacity, discipline, and unwavering dedication to his artmaking and community service as a solo artist, he has been making remarkable contributions. He acknowledges the hard work it takes to remain true to creating one's art while giving care and attention to business sustainability. With determination, he has successfully kept the Gallery open and accessible.

Ken has been integral to Japantown and the arts community for decades. His sculptures for Japantown are infused with love and respect for what he regards as the generational/ancestral blood that is part of the ground. He has brought vitality and recognition to San José Japantown—one of only three historical Japantowns remaining in the U.S.—in energetic ways where visitors and residents can feel a special warmth of the community which they cannot feel from the other two remaining Japantowns in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Ken uplifts San José Japantown's culture and history with his sculptures:

- The steel Gateway towers at North 5th/Taylor Streets are a "welcome portal" into Japantown. The gateway spans the corners of the streets, metaphorically joining the east and west foothills of Silicon Valley and the cultures of East and West.
- Ikoi no Ba (Place of Rest and Reflection). Ken designed two stone benches in Japantown. One bench is next to the Lotus Pre-School building. It is called "Festival," Ken

incorporated ceramic tiles made by children, incorporating the theme of Japantown's community festivals. The second bench is in front of the San José Buddhist Church, with the theme of "Heritage."

- Newly installed stoic stone sculptures in Fall 2023 commemorate the opening of Heinlenville Park in Japantown on North 6th/between Jackson & Taylor Streets. The design has the spirit of the layers of the archaeological dig upon the unceded land of the Muwekma Ohlone and the historic Chinatown that came before Japantown's development.
- Ken is currently commissioned to design, create, and install a monument at the Japanese American Museum of San José (JAMsj) to honor the Japanese American Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) recipients from the 442nd Infantry Regiment/100th Battalion during WWII. The CGM is the highest civilian award given by the U.S. Congress to acknowledge persons who have made a significant and long-standing impact on American history and culture.

Ken has made the Arts Object Gallery accessible to the public, who pass by with curiosity and wonder. People are welcome to enter the gallery area where they can witness Ken creating his stone sculptures in real time. He often stops to chat and inform them of the process involved and the potential final destination for his creation. He makes himself available to school programs that bring culturally diverse students to visit him annually to learn about his work and the Japantown community.

Ken has also provided support and space for countless artists, photographers, and spiritual leaders at his Arts Object Gallery for decades to launch their creative careers. He has opened his studio/Gallery to host community events, fundraisers, and launch parties for artists, musicians, and for the Japantown community. He has hosted many diverse arts and social service organizations at his Gallery to support their work. Other art galleries in San José have come and gone or have had to move many times—Ken's ability to sustain his Gallery is proof of his resilience and his highly respected work locally and internationally.

Since the inception of the Cornerstone of the Arts Awards in 2013, Ken has custom-made every stone award presented to all Cornerstone honorees. This beautifully crafted award truly reflects the significance of this recognition.

San José needs more artists like Ken Matsumoto, who selflessly work to support others while creating world-class works of art to represent San José.

*The Cornerstone of the Arts Committee is pleased to recommend Ken Matsumoto as the recipient of this year's Cornerstone of the Arts Award.*

**Creative Impact Honoree (selected excerpt from nomination)**

3Below Theater is significant to downtown San José as it occupies and enlivens the ground floor of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Parking Garage, bringing new audiences and activities to an important downtown corner.

All the programs at 3Below Theater welcome and engage people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests. Scott and Shannon Guggenheim have invested their energy in creating film festivals and productions that celebrate the works of filmmakers from diverse and marginalized communities, including foreign films that attract people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition, the Guggenheims provide employment to Equity professional and semi-professional actors, singers, and dancers. Their education, taught by professionals, programs are diverse in content, attracting students from 8 to 80.

Scott and Shannon Guggenheim have been bringing live theatre, vintage and contemporary art films, theatre classes and events to San José for many years, while rescuing and animating moribund or struggling buildings. They have done this work despite having to move from one venue to another and have brought fun and excitement to every venue they have occupied. Their work has also served the purpose of bringing attention to abandoned, historic or under-used buildings, bringing life to the neighborhoods they occupy and attention to San Jose's beleaguered architectural heritage.

Here are a few of their accomplishments, which can best be described as an impactful labor of love by arts professionals who love their city and bring joy to it:

- They occupied and breathed new life into the abandoned Oasis Nightclub creating the *Schoolhouse Rock Live Theater*. When the building was scheduled to be torn down, they took on another project.
- They rebranded Century 25 as The Retro Dome operating year-round live theatre and film entertainment and arts education programs.
- Within this venue, they produced interactive film events and led efforts with Preservation Action Council for the building to be designated a landmark. When the lease at the theater ended, they...
- Rebranded Camera 3 as 3Below Theaters operating year-round live theatre and film entertainment and arts education programs. Under their direction, 3Below offers five programs for the community:
  - The Playhouse - professional live musical theatre
  - The Arthouse - new release films, documentary and art films, and special event cinema
  - The Clubhouse - live and cinema events for youth and families
  - The Schoolhouse - classes in theatrical arts led by professional educators
  - The Funhouse - open mic nights, karaoke events, family game nights and more

The Guggenheim's took significant risks to remain at 3Below Theater, continuing their work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, creatively using the roof of the parking garage for both

films as well as live theater. 3Below Theater is currently the only movie theatre downtown where students of all ages can participate in classes in singing, dancing, set design, etc.

*The Cornerstone of the Arts Committee is pleased to recommend 3Below Theater as the recipient of this year's Creative Impact Award.*

### **Luminary Artist Award (selected excerpt from nomination)**

Paul J Gonzalez is a native San José artist, who has contributed to the cultural enrichment in San José with approximately 210 murals in the South Bay Area.

In 1998 Paul was among the first muralists to conceive and organize the "Bus Bench Mural Project" in San José and expanded the project to include at risk youth giving them the opportunity to create mural art in their own neighborhood that would be seen by VTA riders and pedestrians and passers by.

In the early 2000s, as art was being cut from public school programs, Paul was launching his business, Paul J Gonzalez Art Studios. Wanting to make certain that school children had art included in their school curriculum, Paul added art education to his offered services, with several art courses that would encompass reading, writing, and arithmetic so that it would appeal to school districts and their program ideals. His passion for inspiring youth was ignited. Paul began offering hands on learning experiences to engage and include students from kindergarten to high school age in the entire process- concept, design and painting which later became an offered course called "Paint a School Mural."

Paul also assisted public schools and PTAs in finding and solidifying funding for these art projects. Eventually, his art courses were utilized within the GATE program where he was able to teach throughout several school districts until the GATE program concluded.

During Paul's professional career he has lent his knowledge and experience to other local artists and artist friends as an unofficial mentorship. He even took some on as apprentices so they may learn his process and techniques.

Paul came up with an innovative technique for long-lasting vibrantly colored brush painted murals that can be competed with the popular spray-painted murals. He is true testament to the impact that a community art program can have on its citizens.

*The Cornerstone of the Arts Committee is pleased to recommend Paul Gonzalez as the recipient of this year's Luminary Artist Award.*



ARTS COMMISSION

June 17, 2024

**Subject: 2024 Cornerstone of the Arts**

Page 9 of 9

**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The nomination guidelines were posted on the City's website and dispersed through the Office of Cultural Affairs' distribution lists. Announcements of the nomination guidelines were also made through social media.

/s/

KERRY ADAMS HAPNER

Director of Cultural Affairs