

Alabama Writers' Forum

ASCA awards 2011 Fellowships, Art & Cultural Facilities Grants

At its June meeting in Montgomery, the **Alabama State Council on the Arts** (ASCA) awarded ten Fellowship grants totaling \$50,000 and five Art and Cultural Facilities grants totaling \$240,500, for a total of \$290,500. Fellowship grants are awarded to individual artists and one arts administrator and are based on merit of work, career achievement, career potential, and service to the state. Art and Cultural Facilities grants are awarded for planning, design, or construction of an arts space. This round of grants will support artistic endeavors October 1, 2010-September 30, 2011.

This year's Literature Fellowship recipients are **James Hilgartner**, assistant professor of English at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, and **Brett Levine**, director of the Visual Arts Gallery at the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB).

Fellowships are the most prestigious of grants awarded to individuals by ASCA. Fellowships are given to individuals working in literature, crafts, dance, design, media/photography, music, theatre, visual arts, and arts administration. These awards recognize artistic excellence as well as professional commitment and maturity. Recipients may use funds to set aside time to create art, improve their skills, or to do what is most advantageous to enhance their artistic careers.

[COMPLETE LIST OF RECIPIENTS...](#)



James Hilgartner to pursue various writing projects

James Hilgartner, an assistant professor of English at Huntingdon College since 2006, previously taught English and writing at Alabama Southern Community College, where he directed the Alabama Center for Literary Arts, and at the University of Alabama. Before relocating to Alabama in 1994, he taught English to speakers of other languages in the United States, Portugal, and France. His writing has appeared in journals including *Apocryphal Text*, *Mid-American Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *ACM: Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Distillery*, *Greensboro Review*, *Red Mountain Review*, and others. Hilgartner earned a BA in English at Amherst College, an MAT in Teaching English as a Second Language and French at the School for International Training, and an MFA in creative writing at the University of Alabama. He is also a lifelong martial artist, a sixth-dan shidoshi in Bujinkan budo taijutsu, the ancient warrior art of Japan's historic ninja.

According to Hilgartner, the fellowship will advance his writing and his literary career. "Its funds will help finance writing-related travel, writing residency applications and fees, technology upgrades, writing contest fees, manuscript submissions, journal subscriptions, and book purchases," he said.



James Hilgartner (Photo by Karen Hilgartner)

"I am honored and grateful that the Alabama State Council on the Arts has awarded me for my work a Fellowship in Literature," said Hilgartner. "This recognition is an honor and a responsibility. The support it provides is not only financial, it's also a validation of my efforts and my art. In a rather humbling way, it designates me a representative of the State's vibrant literary community-and it provides an encouraging nudge in the direction of filling such enormous shoes."

[JAMES HILGARTNER...](#)

Brett Levine combines writing, photography

Brett Levine is a writer and arts administrator, who has been writing about visual arts and media culture for over fifteen years. He began writing about the arts while living in Australia after completing his master's degree in arts administration. For over a decade he lived in Australia and New Zealand, working in museums and galleries and writing for a range of arts and culture publications. He returned to Alabama in 2000 and began working as the director of the Visual Arts Gallery at UAB the following year. After traveling around the world, he met and married his wife Mindi, coincidentally with whom he had attended high school. They share a modernist house in Birmingham with their peek-a-poo Maxine.

His primary projects have included a monograph on the Australian installation artist Brad Buckley, published by Artspace, Sydney, and ongoing critical writings for *Art Papers*, *Urbis*, *Art New Zealand*, *B-Metro*, and others. He is currently working on a book, featuring the life and work of photographer **James "Spider" Martin**.

"The Literature Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts is a revelatory award to receive," said Levine. "As an arts writer, as for many writers, I often have the perception that what I think may be interesting is not necessarily timely, perhaps not fashionable, or just too difficult to explore. I have always been a non-fiction writer, and this grant will allow me to take the time necessary to spend hours on the road researching, rummaging through libraries, archives, and people's private lives to tell the story that is waiting to be written."

"I am grateful to the Alabama State Council on the Arts for their support of my project, and for their ongoing commitment to the arts in general," he said. "I hope that I can channel their support into a work on Alabama artist Spider Martin that will truly reflect the honor with which this fellowship is received."

BRETT LEVINE...



Brett Levine (Photo by Steve Wood)

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