



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bainbridge Island Museum of Art Announces Return of BRAVA Awards, Celebrating Excellence in Visual Arts with \$15,000 Unrestricted Prizes in Four Categories

Applications Open April 1, 2025

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, Wash. – The Bainbridge Island Museum of Art is excited to announce the return of its biennial artistic award program, the BRAVA Awards (BIMA Recognizes Achievement in the Visual Arts). The awards recognize outstanding contemporary artists, craftspeople, and makers across four categories. Winners are chosen by an independent jury committee, which seeks to honor artists whose work demonstrates artistic merit, technical mastery, contribution to the arts, and professional accomplishments. For complete information, including application requirements, dates, and the selection process, visit BIMA's website at <https://www.biartmuseum.org/the-brava-awards/>.

The BRAVA Awards were inspired by the values and vision of museum founder Cynthia Sears, a passionate advocate for a world that supports, respects, and honors artists, craftspeople, and creative makers. The awards are designed to make a direct and significant difference in the lives of contemporary working artists and craftspeople, as well as a lasting impact on the arts landscape of our region and beyond.

One artist will be selected in each of the four categories to receive an **unrestricted award of \$15,000**, along with recognition through a short video, promotional efforts, and a live award ceremony. Each BRAVA awardee is chosen through a unique competitive process by one of four independent jury committees, consisting of working artists, educators, leaders, and thinkers in the art sector. The BRAVA Awards are presented every two years, funded by a dedicated reserve established through a restricted gift to the museum and maintained by BIMA.

BIMA's Executive Director, Sheila Hughes, shared, "While it's uncommon for museums of our size to create an award program, BIMA believes our mission demands that we find ways to help artists directly. We want to do more than champion and share artists' work - we want to be a vital part of a sustaining ecosystem. From the moment we announced this program, artists immediately recognized the opportunity and responded."

Suquamish tribal master weaver Betty Pasco described her experience winning a BRAVA Award in 2023:

"My winning the BRAVA Award was a humbling experience, especially when I realized the incredible works of the other artists. It still is to this day. I believe that artists are recipients of ancestral gifts, enabling us to see beauty in our life experiences and the ability to create. Artists are blessed with special gifts that allow us to find beauty in a mud puddle, the dew on a cedar branch outside a window, or music that stirs emotions so deeply it brings tears to your eyes. I like to believe there is an artist in all of us. I know my talents were gifted to me by my ancestors, which is why I want to honor them in the works I weave. I thank BRAVA for honoring my effort."

CATEGORIES OF RECOGNITION

The inaugural BRAVA Awards will recognize excellence in four categories:

Native American & First Nations Artist Award

The BRAVA Award for Native American & First Nations Artist supports the work of contemporary visual artists and craftspeople who self-identify as Native American and/or First Nations. The award is open to artists working in a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to painting, sculpture, weaving, textile, carving, printmaking, photography, video, performance art, beading, installation, pottery, and mixed media or collaborative projects. Artists may work in both contemporary and traditional styles and content. *The BRAVA Award for Native American & First Nations Artist is open to any Native American & First Nations artist who lives and works in the Salish Sea region territories.*

Artist's Books Artists Award

The BRAVA Award for Artists' Books Artists supports contemporary visual artists and craftspeople working in the genre of Artists' Books. These works of art incorporate the concept of the book in various ways, often inviting the user to engage with them over time through interpretation, manipulation, or storytelling. Artist's books can be small edition works or unique one-of-a-kind objects. The BRAVA Award for Artist's Books Artist is open to artists working in media including but not limited to fiber/textile, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, installation, ceramics, and mixed-media or collaborative projects. *Open to artists who live and work in the United States.*

Emerging Artist Award

The BRAVA Award for Emerging Artist recognizes the work of contemporary visual artists and craftspeople in the Puget Sound region who are early in their professional careers. This award is intended for artists who have gained initial recognition for their visual arts practice, demonstrate a serious commitment to pursuing a career in the arts, and whose work is considered promising by a jury. Eligible artists work in a variety of media, including but not limited to fiber/textile, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, video, performance art, installation, ceramics, and mixed-media or collaborative projects. *The BRAVA Award for Emerging Artist is open to artists who live and work in the Puget Sound Region, defined as within the counties of Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, Whatcom, Clallam, Kitsap, Island and San Juan Counties.*

2025 Special Choice Award: Children’s Book Illustrator Award

The BRAVA Award for Children’s Book Illustrator supports the work of contemporary visual artists from the Puget Sound region who specialize in children’s book illustration. Eligible work may include original illustrations created for books aimed at readers 16 years or younger. This can encompass book covers, interior illustrations, and complete book designs, including but not limited to graphic novels, e-books, interactive books, picture books, chapter books, works of fiction and non-fiction, zines, reference books, artist books, and pop-up books. *The BRAVA Award for Children’s Book Illustrator is open to artists who are residents of the Puget Sound Region, defined as within the counties of Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, Whatcom, Clallam, Kitsap, Island and San Juan Counties. The Special Choice Award may switch between award years to highlight other categories of artists*

THE AWARD

Each of the four BRAVA awardees will receive an unrestricted award of **\$15,000**. In addition to the cash prize, the recipient of each award receives:

- Recognition in BIMA media, including website, print and online publications, and social media, and provided a template press release to distribute to their media outlets;
- Participation in an online or live event featuring the awardees;
- A short video to be produced about the recipient;
- Invitation to participate in an Award Ceremony, likely held at the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art on September 20, 2025
- Invitation to serve as one of the jurors on the review panel of the next biennial award process.

The recipients of the first-ever BRAVA Awards in 2023 were Kamari Bright (Emerging Artist), Julie Chen (Artists’ Books Artist), Julie Paschkis (Children’s Book Illustrator), and Betty Pasco (Native American and First Nations Artist).

About Bainbridge Island Museum of Art:

Bainbridge Island Museum of Art inspires curiosity, wonder, and understanding by connecting people with the contemporary art and craft of the Puget Sound region. The art museum exhibits, interprets, preserves, collects, and promotes works of proven cultural value as well as new works by emerging artists and craftspeople.

The art museum is open daily 10am-5pm. Free admission. BIMA is located in beautiful downtown Bainbridge Island, at the corner of Hwy 305 and Winslow Way, just steps away from the ferry terminal, and with easy access via public transportation or by car from the Kitsap Peninsula.

BIMA is supported through contributions by members and donors like you, with ongoing support from Cogwheel Construction, The Klorfine Foundation, Leslie & Michael Lebeau, Chap & Eve Alvord, John & Ann Underwood, Kathy Alvord Gerlich, Gnarly Tree Foundation, Ames Family Foundation, Stoel Rives LLP, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Capital Group Private Client Services, BIMA PRISM, ArtsFund, CascadePBS, ArtsWA, Public Display Art.

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