

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Applications for the BRAVA Awards Are Now Open

*Bainbridge Island Museum of Art's award program will honor artists in four categories: Emerging Artist, Native American & First Nations Artist, Artists' Books Artists, and Ceramics Artist*

**BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WA** – The Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (BIMA) is excited to announce that applications are now open for the 2026 BRAVA Awards (BIMA Recognizes Achievement in the Visual Arts). The Awards honor outstanding contemporary artists, craftspeople, and makers across four disciplines with \$15,000 of unrestricted funding, promotional videos, publicity, and recognition at an award ceremony.

The BRAVA Awards are BIMA's flagship award program. Inspired by the vision and values of BIMA founder Cynthia Sears, the Awards seek to provide significant and direct support to make a meaningful impact in artists' lives. Thanks to the generosity of a special donor, the Awards have been expanded to be an annual program, allowing even more artists to receive recognition and material support.

"Like many facets of BIMA, the BRAVA Awards can seem like a surprising program to come from a museum. But from our end, it makes perfect sense to look for unusual ways to help artists directly at various points along their journey. These Awards are one more way we can demonstrate our appreciation to the artists who enrich our world," said BIMA Executive Director Sheila Hughes. "In the words of one of our inspiring, inaugural BRAVA winners, Suquamish elder and master weaver Betty Pasco, 'Artists are endowed special gifts that can see beauty in a mud puddle and see the dew on the cedar branches outside my window, or music that stirs emotions in you to bring tears to your eyes.' The BRAVA Awards support these very artists who inspire us every day—artists, we like to believe, that are within us all."

Awardees demonstrate artistic excellence, technical mastery, and significant contribution to the arts. To ensure a rigorous and equitable selection process, awardees are selected by an independent jury committee of working artists, educators, and leaders in the arts sector. Previous awardees include Sarah Bryant, Dan Friday, Yolanda Galery, and Nikki McClure in 2025, and Kamari Bright, Julie Chen, Julie Paschkis, and Betty Pasco in 2023.

The 2026 BRAVA Award categories are:

### **Emerging Artist Award (Puget Sound Region)**

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. *This award is open to artists based in the Puget Sound region, which includes Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, Whatcom, Clallam, Kitsap, Island, and San Juan Counties.*

### **Native American & First Nations Artist Award (Salish Sea region)**

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. *This award is open to any Native American & First Nations artist who lives and works in the Salish Sea region territories, including Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, Whatcom, Clallam, Kitsap, Island, and San Juan Counties in the U.S. and Alberni-Clayouquot, Capital, Cariboo, Comox Valley, Cowichan Valley, Metro Vancouver, Mount Waddington, Nanaimo, Powell River, Sunshine Coast, and Thompson-Nicola areas in Canada.*

### **Artists' Books Artists Award (United States)**

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. This award is open to artists working in a range of media, including but not limited to fiber/textile, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, installation, ceramics, and mixed-media or collaborative projects. *The award is open to artists who live and work in the United States.*

### **2026 Special Choice Award: Ceramics Artist Award (Puget Sound Region)**

The BRAVA Award for Ceramic Artists supports contemporary visual artists and craftspeople whose primary practice centers on clay and ceramic processes. This award recognizes artists working across functional, sculptural, and conceptual approaches, including wheel-thrown, hand-built, slip-cast, experimental, or interdisciplinary ceramic work. Artists may explore traditional techniques, contemporary forms, or innovative uses of material, scale, surface, and firing methods, demonstrating technical mastery alongside a distinct artistic voice. *This award is open to artists based in the Puget Sound*

*region, which includes Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, Whatcom, Clallam, Kitsap, Island, and San Juan Counties.*

Learn more about these prestigious Awards at: <https://www.biartmuseum.org/the-brava-awards/>

Applications are open April 1, 2026 through May 18, 2026 at 11:59pm Pacific Standard Time. For full details on eligibility, application requirements, and the selection process, please visit: <https://www.biartmuseum.org/brava-awards-process/>.

**About Bainbridge Island Museum of Art:**

Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (BIMA) BIMA creates a welcoming space and inspiring platform for lively public engagement and appreciation of the contemporary art and craft of the Puget Sound region and its international collection of Artists' Books. 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 from 10 AM to 5 PM. 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. <https://www.biartmuseum.org/>

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