



## Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation Celebrates Five Recipients of 2026 Awards in Craft

*\$100,000 unrestricted award recognizes five craftspeople who steward cultural preservation and advance the field of craft*

(SAN FRANCISCO — May 21, 2026) Today the **Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation** announced the 2026 recipients of the **Maxwell/Hanrahan Awards in Craft** that recognize craftspeople for their unique approaches to materials-based practices and stewardship of cultural traditions. Each awardee will receive a \$100,000 unrestricted award. Working among papermaking, quilting, weaving, ceramics and piñata sculptures, the 2026 awardees reflect the vast and ever-expanding range of craft practice and the possibilities contemporary craft offers to express personal, environmental and social narratives.

Administered by [United States Artists \(USA\)](#), the Foundation launched the Awards in Craft in 2022 to recognize stewards among the material-based field of craft and honor individuals as champions of cultural traditions. This unrestricted award seeks to resource the recipients in advancing their cultural impact and contributions to the field, while investing in their individual practices and evolving skillsets.

Through deep engagement with materials, disciplines, trades and the transmission of historical knowledge, the 2026 Maxwell/Hanrahan Awards in Craft exemplify craft's enduring power to forge bonds across communities and cultures. This year's recipients are expanding the boundaries of their fields, bringing historical and cultural awareness to long-standing disciplines, and exploring possibilities across mediums and tools.

### **The Maxwell/Hanrahan Awards in Craft 2026 Recipients are:**

- **Hong Hong**

Born in China and currently based in Tulsa, Okla, Hong Hong works across image-making, writing and movement through repetition, disruption, duration, accumulation, limitation and translation. Hong's practice is structured around recurrent, interconnected temporal systems, notating and responding to shifts in meteorological conditions, solar and lunar periodicities, seasonal intervals, migratory patterns, and the body. Through paper-making, performance, language, painting and lens-based media, she engages lineages in craft and modes of poetic transmission to produce as well as sustain forms of subjectivity. This subjectivity is unruly and at times illegible, refusing governance. Instead, it persists as a conceptual and material field grounded in multiplicity and transcendence.

- **Loretta Pettway Bennett**

Loretta Pettway Bennett is a direct descendant of Dinah Miller, the earliest quilter from Gee's Bend, Alabama, whose name is known today. Based in Huntsville, Ala., Bennett continues to create hand-stitched quilts in the tradition taught to her by her mother, Qunnie Pettway, and passed down

through her family for many generations. Since 2006, her quilts have featured in dozens of major museum exhibitions and collections nationwide and in nineteen US Embassies worldwide. In addition to gallery and museum exhibitions, Bennett shares the tradition of making quilts by hand by teaching regular workshops in Gee's Bend and at special events across the country.

- **Melissa Cody**

A fourth-generation Navajo weaver, Melissa Cody creates tapestries that draw on the tradition of Germantown Revival, a stylistic movement that emerged from the Long Walk or Hwéeldi, the forced migration and ethnic cleansing of Navajo people by the US Federal Government in the late nineteenth century. The weaving style was characterized by a complex interaction of traditional and historical contingencies: vivid commercial dyes and new economic pressures prompted enterprising Navajo weavers to adapt, creating bold new textiles. Working on both a traditional Navajo loom and mechanized jacquard machine, she recombines traditional patterns into sophisticated geometric overlays and haptic color schemes that bridge traditional and contemporary vernaculars.

- **Paul Andrew Wandless**

Paul Andrew Wandless is an artist, author and educator. Wandless's sculptures and prints feature ceramic processes, printmaking methods, and a wide variety of sculptural techniques and mediums. Clay, printmaking, stone carving, leather working, mold making and metalsmithing are mediums used in combination or individually to create his work. His love of craft has led him to investigate and research these mediums, incorporating traits of each into his main body of works. This union of art and craft is what gives each work a unique voice. His practice in research and experimentation is also extended through his writing and through hands-on workshops and demonstrations.

- **Roberto Benavidez**

Roberto Benavidez is a figurative sculptor specializing in the piñata form. Originally from Texas, Benavidez moved to California in 2000 where he took night classes in bronze casting at Pasadena City College. He later switched to paper, a more accessible material than bronze, ultimately deciding to focus on the piñata technique. He plays with underlying themes of race, ephemerality, beauty and sin, layered with his identity as a mixed-race queer artist, with a focus on impeccable craftsmanship.

A panel of craft practitioners, curators, educators and others guiding the field reviewed the nominations. The 2026 panelists included Mel Baiser, HELM Construction Solution co-founder and director of vision and strategy; Danny Orendorff, The Contemporary Austin interpretive and public programs manager; Teri Greeves, Kiowa Tribe member and 2025 Awards in Craft recipient; and Corey Pemberton, multidisciplinary artist and Crafting the Future executive director.

Previous recipients of the Maxwell/Hanrahan Awards in Craft include multimedia artist Adebunmi Gbadebo (2023), poly-disciplinary artist Antonius-Tín Bui (2022), furniture maker, artist and educator Aspen Golann (2023), ceramic sculptor Cristina Córdova (2024), beadwork and fashion artist Jamie Okuma (2022), ceramicist Jolie Ngo (2025), basket maker Neal Thomas (2025), basketweaver and community activist Terrol Dew Johnson (2022), and stone mason and sculptor Thea Alvin (2024).

For more information on the Maxwell/Hanrahan Awards in Craft and the 2026 class of recipients, please visit: <https://www.maxwell-hanrahan.org/programs/craft>.

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## **ABOUT THE MAXWELL/HANRAHAN FOUNDATION**

Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation powers people who explore and ask, teach and try, conserve and connect, create and captivate. Our funding supports individual scientists, teachers, conservationists and creators whose diverse perspectives enable us to discover new things about ourselves and our world. Learn more about our partners and work at [www.Maxwell-Hanrahan.org](http://www.Maxwell-Hanrahan.org).

## **ABOUT THE MAXWELL/HANRAHAN FOUNDATION AWARDS IN CRAFT**

Exploration and insight require time and commitment. The Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation Awards in Craft seek to make both possible for devoted craftspeople and artists from around the country who strive to express what we see and experience in our world through engagement with material. The award recognizes practitioners committed to material mastery and exploration with practices encompassing the stewardship of living cultural traditions, unique insight in material study, and the advancement of craft at the intersection of other fields including science. We recognize that arts funding, especially for craftspeople, is lacking in the US, and we encourage others to commit to these fields.

## **ABOUT UNITED STATES ARTISTS**

United States Artists plays a pivotal role in America's cultural ecosystem, advancing the well-being of artists through unrestricted funding and tailored professional services, amplifying artists' work, and improving conditions that support their essential roles in society. Founded in 2005 and based in Chicago, IL, United States Artists has awarded over 1,000 individuals with over \$50 million of direct support across its flagship Fellowship program and its special Initiatives.

USA collaborates with foundations, philanthropists, and other field leaders to create pathways of support for artists across the nation, working closely with our partners to conduct research, design programs, and administer funds in response to their missions and the needs of artists.

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