



Brother Thomas Fellowship Awards

The Boston Foundation will make the first awards from the Brother Thomas Fund in October 2009 when it names up to eight Brother Thomas Fellows. The Brother Thomas Fund was established in 2007 to honor the legacy of Brother Thomas Bezanson, a Benedictine monk and world-renowned ceramic artist, who wanted the sale of his work to support “struggling artists.”

The goal of the biennial Brother Thomas Fellowship program is to support a diverse group of Greater Boston artists working at a high level of excellence in a range of disciplines—the visual, performing, literary and craft arts—and to enhance their ability to thrive and create new work. The Boston Foundation also hopes that fellowship winners will have greater access to a variety of markets, including galleries, residencies and commissions, and that the importance of artists to the vitality of Boston will be more broadly recognized.

Each Brother Thomas Fellow will receive an unrestricted two-year award of \$15,000. Fellowships that are given without stipulation as to how the funds are spent match the needs of artists as well as the wishes of the donor who wanted to help other artists as his friends had helped him.

Brother Thomas Fellows will be selected in alternate years based on an inclusive, two-step process of nomination and panel review. A diverse group of nominators will each suggest up to five artists. The nominators, each of whom will receive a modest stipend, will be selected from among Boston’s large pool of nonprofit arts leaders, academics, gallerists, collectors and for profit arts presenters.

The nominators will be asked to focus their attention on mid-career and established artists—originative rather than interpretive artists—to assure that the fellowships are awarded to individuals that have made a firm commitment to their art and are working at a high level of achievement. Nominators will also give extra consideration to artists that are at a catalytic moment in their life and career when a fellowship could have a transformative impact. The Fellowship program acknowledges that even established artists often struggle for the resources they need to advance their art. Each nominator will write a brief statement about the artists they put forward, giving their rationale for their selections. To ensure the integrity of the process, the nominators’ names will not be made public until after the Brother Thomas Fellows are announced.

The nominated artists will submit work samples, resumes and an artist statement for consideration by a multi-disciplinary panel convened for the Boston Foundation by a state or regional arts agency with expertise in panel management. The first fellowship awards will be voted by the board of the Boston Foundation at its Fall 2009 meeting. A celebratory party and awards ceremony to recognize the Brother Thomas Fellows will follow. Over time, as former Brother Thomas Fellows are invited to welcome the new award winners, this event will create a community of artists of recognized excellence.

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