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## Artists Alison Saar, Kerry Tribe, William Leavitt are USA fellows

**The Southern California artists are among 50 named by United States Artists and will receive \$50,000 grants.**

By Jori Finkel, Los Angeles Times

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This form of validation comes with a check: Three artists from Southern California — Alison Saar, Kerry Tribe and William Leavitt — have been named USA fellows for 2012, receiving grants of \$50,000 with no strings attached.

United States Artists made the announcement of all 50 new fellows Sunday at a ceremony led by Tim Robbins and hosted by the Getty Museum.

The visual artists who have received the honors could not be more different.

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Leavitt, 71, is a conceptual sort of storyteller who was the subject in 2011 of a major retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art that showcased his enigmatic, stage-set-style installations alongside his paintings, works on paper and photographs.

Saar, 56, who just had a solo show at the Otis College of Art and Design gallery that will be traveling to Iowa, Maryland and Massachusetts, is known for making rough-hewn sculptures that take on big themes like spirituality, mortality, slavery and the meaning of motherhood.

Tribe, 39, is a video artist who recently made a short film about the noir history of Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills, where oil heir Ned Doheny Jr. and his secretary were found dead in 1929 in what was classified (some say dubiously) as a murder-suicide. Her script was a collage drawn from the dialogue of other movies filmed at the mansion.

The other artists honored include Luis Camnitzer and Coco Fusco of New York, Theaster Gates and David Hartt of Chicago and Edgar Heap of Birds from Oklahoma City.

L.A.-based architects Marcelo Spina and Georgina Huljich, known for geometrically adventurous buildings



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such as the Prism Gallery on Sunset Boulevard, also were named as fellows. And the California native turned New York transplant David Henry Hwang, the playwright of "M. Butterfly" and "Chinglish," won an award in theater arts, as did San Francisco performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Penç̧a.

Dance figures named include pioneering choreographer Trisha Brown and 34-year-old dancer and choreographer Kyle Abraham, whose work has been seen at REDCAT in Los Angeles. Both are based in New York.

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USA Executive Director Katharine DeShaw said that over the years "half of our grants have gone to artists in New York and California, because that's where so many artists live, but we work really hard to locate people in underrepresented states."

The other trend she sees is a sort of cross-pollination that can make it hard to place an artist in any of the award categories: architecture and design, crafts and traditional arts, dance, literature, media, music, theater arts or visual arts. "We keep seeing how artists blur boundaries. Kerry Tribe is getting an award in visual arts but does lots of work in film and video. A performance artist also makes artwork, or a visual artist is also a performance artist."

At \$50,000, the awards are a tenth of the size of the renowned MacArthur Foundation or "genius" grants, which consist of \$500,000 to an individual given over five years. But like the MacArthur recipients, these recipients are free to use the funds as they wish; they are not restricted to a particular project.

Some artists have used the awards for daily expenses such as healthcare. Others have given a portion of their award to other artists in a form of grass-roots philanthropy. Still, DeShaw said that the internal surveys show that 91% of the recipients use the money to make more work: "So we see this creative regeneration, with work being produced and put out into the marketplace."

Since it started issuing awards in 2006, USA Artists has given fellowships worth \$17.5 million. It has also raised \$3.2 million through its micro-philanthropy website called USA Projects, in which artists make pitches for projects directly to individual donors.

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