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[www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Philadelphia and Long Beach Artists Named First  
USA Knight Fellows*

*New Award Through United States Artists to Provide \$50,000 Grants to 18 Artists  
in Communities Nationwide,  
Totaling \$1 Million*

MIAMI (Dec. 15, 2009) Ceramicist **Kukuli Velarde of Philadelphia** and choreographer **Sophiline Cheam Shapiro of Long Beach, Calif.** have been named the first **two USA Knight Fellows**, each receiving an unrestricted \$50,000 grant from United States Artists (USA). The honor comes thanks to a new \$1 million grant from the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** to USA, a national grant-making and advocacy organization.

The 18 USA Knight Fellowships – part of the 50 USA Fellowships granted each year – are reserved for artists who live in one of the 26 cities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers: **Aberdeen, S.D.; Akron, Ohio; Biloxi, Miss.; Boulder, Colo.; Bradenton, Fla.; Charlotte, N.C.; Columbia, S.C.; Columbus, Ga.; Detroit, Mich.; Duluth, Minn.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Gary, Ind.; Grand Forks, N.D.; Lexington, Ky.; Long Beach, Calif.; Macon, Ga.; Miami, Fla.; Milledgeville, Ga.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Palm Beach, Fla.; Philadelphia, Pa.; San Jose, Calif.; St. Paul, Minn.; State College, Pa.; Tallahassee, Fla.; and, Wichita, Kan.** Each of the future USA Knight fellows will be chosen in coming years through USA’s competitive national selection process.

In addition to their \$50,000 unrestricted grants, USA Knight Fellows will each receive an additional \$5,000 to engage local residents by conducting workshops, talks or other events.

“In Europe, artists have celebrity status. Yet in the United States, many of them struggle to earn a living from their work,” said Dennis Scholl, a program director for Knight Foundation. “Whether in Miami or Macon, San Jose or St. Paul, the USA Knight

Fellowships will highlight the importance of the arts and the meaningful contributions individual artists make to the vitality of our communities.”

Kukuli Velarde borrows from pre-Columbian ceramic traditions that originate in her native Peru to create fantastical clay figures that confront contemporary topics such as gender, identity and socio-political concerns.

A master of classical Cambodian dance, Sophiline Cheam Shapiro was born in Phnom Penh, Cambodia where she trained and taught at the University of Fine Arts and was a principal with the Classical Dance Company of Cambodia. She is a co-founder of Khmer Arts, based in Phnom Penh and Long Beach, and develops new dance work, as well as performing in the U.S. and Europe.

Velarde and Shapiro were named as part of the announcement of all 50 USA Fellows for 2009 at a celebration in Los Angeles on Dec. 14. Each year, United States Artists conducts a rigorous national selection process and awards 50 fellowships to artists from all disciplines in recognition of the caliber and impact of their work. Experts in each discipline nominate artists. The selection process is confidential.

Since 1959, Knight Foundation has invested more than \$720 million in the communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects that promote informed and engaged communities. To that end, in Miami, the foundation launched the Knight Arts Challenge, a five-year, \$40 million initiative to bring South Florida’s diverse community together through the arts. The challenge includes endowment grants to leading arts institutions and a community-wide contest to fund the best ideas for the arts. More at [KnightArts.org](http://KnightArts.org).

### **About United States Artists**

The founding of the Los Angeles-based United States Artists in 2005 was prompted by the Urban Institute’s study, *Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structures for U.S. Artists*, which found that while 96% of Americans appreciate the arts, only 27% believe that artists contribute to the good of society. A recent study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts discovered that American artists were unemployed at twice the rate of all professionals in 2008. This rate would be even higher if not for the sheer number of artists leaving the workforce and therefore not counted.

The Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Prudential Foundation, and Rasmuson Foundation contributed a total of \$22 million to establish USA as a structure through

which private philanthropists, corporate donors, and other foundations can support individual artists. Due to seed funding from its founders, 100% of current donor contributions directly support artists. In addition to contributions provided by Eli and Edythe Broad, USA donors include Michael Bloomberg, Ella Fontanals-Cisneros, Shawn M. Donnelley, Agnes Gund, Target, and the Wynn Family Foundation, among others.

**About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation advances journalism in the digital age and invests in the vitality of communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects that promote community engagement and lead to transformational change. For more, visit [www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org).

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