

*Remarks for the
Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts Ceremony
February 15, 2002*

In 1854, Henry David Thoreau wrote, “to affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of the arts.” Today, we honor those who have affected the quality of *our* day, and whose talents reflect their commitment to the words, the music and the images that help shape our world.

I am proud to be a part of this ceremony as we honor these distinguished and gifted people.

This year's winners have demonstrated their skill in so many ways – in the written word, in the notes of music, on the stage, and behind the scenes. Our communities and our state are blessed by their dedication to the arts.

As a society, we have a strong responsibility to the arts. They evoke our most creative thoughts and ideas, from every corner of our state, regardless of race, wealth, or religion.

And, for whatever reason, our state is extraordinarily blessed with talent – talent that has made the rest of the world take notice and look to our land for inspiration.

In one publication listing famous Mississippians, 411 of the 805 people listed are involved in the arts in one way or another. Today, we add to that list.

The creativity in each of our award winners this year manifests itself in different ways.

Whether through the written word, through music, through visual or performing art, or through promotion and advocacy of the arts in general – each of this year’s winners is a living tribute to art and the promise of the human soul.

Today, and every day that creativity is expressed on paper or canvas, by voice or by instrument, we are made richer.

Let’s honor those who make us richer today.