

*Remarks for the
Governor's Arts Awards Luncheon
February 15, 2002*

This is a great day for the arts in Mississippi. We're gathering to honor those who embody excellence in their disciplines – in music, in writing, in theater, and in support of all of the above.

The role of the arts in our lives cannot be overstated; we are touched by art every day. We may not always agree on the definition of art, but we are all touched by it in different ways.

What matters is this, as expressed so well by Thomas Merton: “Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.”

The process of simultaneously finding and losing ourselves in a song, in a painting, in a book, is difficult to explain; the process is different for each of us. This year’s award winners, however, make the process easier – and that is part of the artistry.

To each of them, I offer my congratulations and the congratulations of our state. Your work lifts us all to new levels and makes us stronger in new ways. Thank you for the gifts you offer to us.

In addition to those we honor today, I want to take a moment to express my appreciation for the work done by the Mississippi Arts Commission. Tim Hedgepeth and his staff work every day to remind us of the gifts found within our borders, and to keep those gifts new and exciting for those who haven't yet found them. Thank you, Tim.

Yes, it's a great day for the arts in
Mississippi. I look forward to sharing it
with you.