



Kentucky to the World Founder Shelly Zegart Wins Governor's Award in the Arts

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (November 13, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear has announced that Founder and CEO of Kentucky to the World Shelly Zegart has received the state's most prestigious arts award in recognition of her dedication to sharing Kentucky's rich arts history with the citizens of the commonwealth.

The Governor's Awards in the Arts are comprised of nine distinct categories that celebrate the extraordinary and significant contributions of Kentuckians and Kentucky organizations to the state's art heritage.

Zegart has been honored with the Folk Heritage Award for her international work in quilts, a quintessential art form of Kentucky. This award is presented to individuals who have made an outstanding effort to perpetuate and promote Kentucky's unique artistic traditions. She joins the ranks of such luminaries as Bluegrass Musician JD Crowe, African American Folk Artist Marvin Finn, International Ballet Dancer Wendy Whelan and many more.

An internationally recognized expert on American quilts and a community leader in Louisville, Zegart is an avid collector, exhibition curator, author, lecturer and appraiser of fine quilts. Her curated quilt exhibits have been featured across the United States and abroad. Her lectures cover all aspects of quilts, from history to aesthetics.

"This recognition is one to which ANY artist, arts advocate, or arts presenter of significance in Kentucky aspires to," says Zegart. "My Governors Award in the Arts brings the extraordinary vision and aesthetic achievements of Kentucky quilt making to the attention of the public, and respects and celebrates the medium of quilting as a form of artistic expression."

For more than 30 years, she led the Kentucky Quilt Project (KQP), the first-ever state documentation project and built private and corporate quilt collections around the world. Her work with the KQP inspired other states, regions and countries to do their own documentation of their unique quilt traditions. Zegart produced, directed and hosted the nine-part documentary series "Why Quilts Matter: History, Art & Politics," which has aired on more than 250 PBS stations and streams on Kentucky Education Television (KET).

“For 30 years, Shelly Zegart has been a knowledgeable guide for Kentucky on this journey and rightfully deserves this award for her extraordinary vision,” says longtime colleague and artist Kay Grubola.

“Shelly has always seen that quilts embrace our past and the roots of rural Kentucky. Quilts tell stories of history and describe families, give a voice to women when they were denied a public voice and illustrate memories and pass them from generation to generation,” adds Grubola. “Quilts cross economic, racial and social barriers and offer insights and social conscience. Shelly has been the catalyst to help this art form continue to evolve in Kentucky and embrace the 21st century in new and inventive ways.”

Zegart adds, “The focus of my work with quilts is to continue to demolish the divisions that inhibit the reception of the quilt as art—both in the minds of makers and viewers and my recognition with this award is validation of that effort.”

She continues to be involved in a number of community organizations, especially the non-profit Kentucky to the World, which she founded in 2012 with the singular mission to elevate the cultural and intellectual reputation of Kentucky.

The Kentucky Arts Council, who recommends honorees to the Governor, accepts nominations for the Governor’s Awards in the Arts annually. Details regarding a virtual awards ceremony to honor the 2020 Governor’s Awards in the Arts recipients will be forthcoming.

For more information, visit Kentucky to the World kentuckytotheworld.org and the Kentucky Arts Council at artscouncil.ky.gov.

ABOUT KENTUCKY TO THE WORLD

Kentucky to the World, a Louisville-based non-profit, is dedicated to enhancing the intellectual and cultural reputation of the state, its people and its assets through a unique combination of live events and video outreach. We feature and promote extraordinary individuals who are passionate about their Kentucky ties through a speaker series for general and student audiences, videos distributed online, through community partners and KET (Kentucky Educational Television).

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