

Guggenheim Foundation awards fellowships to several local scholars and artists

Steve Locke, Celeste Ng, Chico Colvard, Marti Epstein, Dilip da Cunha, Muhammad Hamid Zaman and more are among the 175 scholars, artists, and writers chosen by the foundation.

By **Diti Kohli** April 9, 2020,



Artist Steve Locke in his home and studio in Brooklyn. JENNIFER S. ALTMAN

A bestselling Cambridge author, a filmmaker at MassArt, and an illustrious public artist are among the local scholars and artists included in the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation's 2020 class of fellows.

Steve Locke, Celeste Ng, Chico Colvard, Marti Epstein, Dilip da Cunha, Larry Rosenwald, Sabine Iatridou, Rebecca Saxe, Muhammad Hamid Zaman, Sarah Parcak, and Jonathan Gruber are among 175 nominees chosen by the foundation this year. The local recipients were awarded in the creative arts, humanities, natural and social sciences categories. Around 3,000 applicants competed for the coveted spots.

Since 1925, the fellowship has bestowed more than \$375 million to enable honorees “engage in research in any field of knowledge and creation in any of the arts, under the freest possible conditions and irrespective of race, color, or creed,” according to the foundation’s [website](#).

Locke is best known in the city for spearheading the bronze slave monument that had been intended for the front of Faneuil Hall. A graduate of Boston University and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, he also created “Three Deliberate Grays for Freddie” displayed at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in 2018, and the “School of Love” installation at Gallery Kayafas, among other exhibitions.



The foundation recognized Celeste Ng for her bestselling novels “[Little Fires Everywhere](#)” and “[Everything I Never Told You](#).” The author grew up in Ohio and Pennsylvania, received her undergraduate degree at Harvard University and now resides in Cambridge. Her second novel was adapted into a [Hulu](#) series, starring Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington, in March.

“I’m stunned and unutterably grateful to have received a Guggenheim fellowship,” Ng wrote on Twitter. “And when it’s on a list beside so many writers I admire, whose work has long inspired me — well. I’m speechless.”

Sarah Parcak, a renowned space archaeologist from Maine, took to Twitter to announce her triumph as well. An author and researcher, she uses satellite images to locate and map lost civilizations.

The other recipients have strong ties to Massachusetts colleges and universities.

Chico Colvard, an assistant professor at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, is well-known for his documentary films. He directed “Black Memorabilia” (2018), which explores racist and demeaning representations of Black people in America, and “Family

Affair” (2010). Colvard has been honored at multiple film festivals throughout the country and has appeared at Sundance.

Marti Epstein has composed for the likes of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt while holding a professorship at Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Her long list of work includes more than 70 pieces for piano, a cappella voices, and even brass quintet.

Boston University biomedical engineering professor Muhammad Hamid Zaman researches solutions to improve the quality of life in low-income environments, like refugee settlements. He is behind 120 peer-reviewed research articles and two books: “Bitter Pills” and “Biography of Resistance.”

Dilip da Cunha lectures at Harvard University Graduate School of Design in addition to writing about architecture and urban planning. The author of several books, he also created a design platform, titled “Ocean of Wetness,” that mimics the conditions of water and “wetness” on the planet’s surface. A 2017 recipient of the Pew Fellowship Grant, he generally works between Philadelphia and Bangalore.

Larry Rosenwald has taught English at Wellesley College since 1980 and has published an array of work on diaries, translation, and multilingualism. He recently released “War No More,” an anthology of American peace writing for the Library of America, as he works on a large project, a quest to define pacifist criticism.

Several Guggenheim honorees are associated with MIT. Sabine Iatridou, a professor of linguistics, co-founded the CreteLing Summer School of Linguistics. In her research, she focuses on syntax and comparative linguistics.

Rebecca Saxe researches human behavior, brain imaging, and, most recently, infants’ brain functions while working as a cognitive neuroscientist at MIT. More than 3 million people have viewed her 2009 TED talk, and she even adapted the way MRIs work to accommodate images of a mother and child.

Jonathan Gruber, a economics professor at MIT, is behind more than 175 research articles and the author of an undergraduate text, graphic novel, and a book, “Jump-Starting America: How Breakthrough Science Can Revived Economic Growth and the American Dream.”