



Brother  
Thomas  
Fellowships

*A Special Arts Initiative  
of the Boston Foundation*

# From Our President and CEO

The Boston Foundation and its donors have supported arts and cultural programming for close to 100 years—always with the conviction that the arts provide us with a unique and profound sense of who we are as individuals and help us discover our fundamental connection to others.

One of the most powerful ways to strengthen arts and culture in Greater Boston is to support and celebrate our exceptionally diverse community of artists. The Brother Thomas Fellowships give us the resources to do just that.

Brother Thomas was a highly accomplished ceramic artist who wanted to leave a legacy to “struggling artists” in Greater Boston. We are honored that he chose the Boston Foundation to fulfill his dream. He was also an accomplished author. In this publication, you will read some of his inspirational writing along with the thoughts of our 2011 Fellows—who were inspired by his words.

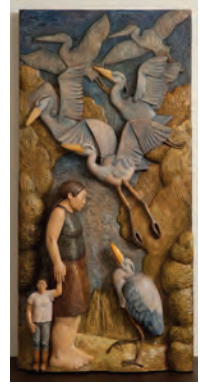
The artists who have received fellowships to date are extraordinary. They, along with all future Fellows, will make tremendous contributions to the art world over the course of their lives and they will also enrich our community in ways we can only imagine.

The Brother Thomas Fellowships, while endowed by Brother Thomas’ incredible works of fine ceramic art, do need nurturing in the short term to flourish and grow. Your support for this work would be deeply appreciated.



Paul S. Grogan

President & CEO of the Boston Foundation



**Sachiko  
Akiyama**

*Four Corners  
of the  
Floating World*  
2010, wood, oil  
paint and mixed  
media, 24 x 69 x 8”



## The Brother Thomas Fund

was established at the Boston Foundation in 2007 to honor the legacy of Brother Thomas Bezanson, a Benedictine monk and world-renowned ceramic artist, who wanted the sale of his work to support “struggling artists.” Brother Thomas Fellowships are awarded to a diverse group of Greater Boston artists working at a high level of excellence in many disciplines—with the goal of enhancing their ability to thrive and create new work.

All Fellows receive no-strings-attached awards of \$15,000 and are selected biennially through a rigorous multidisciplinary process of nominations and review by a panel of Boston area nonprofit arts leaders and practitioners.

Over time, as former Brother Thomas Fellows welcome new award winners, these talented individuals will have a unique bond that will allow them to support and encourage each other—and, in the process, enrich the cultural life of the entire Greater Boston community.



### **Wendy Jehlen's**

*choreography  
was featured at  
the December  
2011 event  
announcing the  
Brother Thomas  
Fellows.*

## 2011 Brother Thomas Fellows



**Sachiko Akiyama** was born in New York of Japanese parents, and attributes the reserve reflected in her work as a painter and sculptor to a Japanese sensibility. Through her art, she explores silence, introspection and passivity. She is an assistant professor of sculpture at Boston University College of Fine Arts.

[www.sachikoakiyama.com](http://www.sachikoakiyama.com)



**Angela Cunningham** makes ceramic objects that beg to be touched—through exquisite detailing, seductive surfaces and provocative imagery. She works as a full-time studio artist through Mudflat Studios in Somerville, Massachusetts and has exhibited nationally and internationally.

[www.cunninghamceramics.com](http://www.cunninghamceramics.com)



**David Valdes Greenwood**, an author and playwright, has published three books, including *Homo Domesticus: Notes from a Same Sex Marriage*, *A Little Fruitcake: A Childhood in Holidays* and *The Rhinestone Sisterhood*, and his plays have been staged across the U.S. and in Britain.

[www.davidvaldesgreenwood.com](http://www.davidvaldesgreenwood.com)



**Wendy Jehlen** has studied South Indian and West African dance forms and a wide-range of contemporary dance styles. Her emotionally powerful choreography has been performed in the United States, Europe, India and Japan.

[www.akhra.org/anikaiweb](http://www.akhra.org/anikaiweb)



**Chandra Dieppa Ortiz** explores the historical and contemporary use of storytelling through an interrelated series of paintings, mixed media collage and assemblage. Her work explores issues of race, class, gender and culture, creating a dialogue between communities and generations.

[www.dieppastudio.com](http://www.dieppastudio.com)



**Robert Todd** is interested in “non-fictional material poetry” and has produced a steady stream of short films that refuse to be categorized. His work has been shown in several countries and has received numerous awards. In his series of film poems, he confronts romantic notions of places and progressive social interests.

[www.roberttoddfilms.com](http://www.roberttoddfilms.com)

*As an artist, I am not into making things—the world has enough things—I am into revealing something, something even I do not know.*

Brother Thomas



*The act of performing is something ephemeral, fleeting, impermanent and precious. The performance space is a sacred space. The job of the performer is like that of the priest(ess)—to lift the veil of the hidden, but for a moment.*

**Wendy Jehlen**

Choreographer

*Risking is important, not just in the potter's art but in life itself, which in the long view is a never-ending quest of the unattainable.*

Brother Thomas

*Being a sculptor has taught me that true discovery can only come through taking risks. When I am able to resist the urge to return to what I already know, I come closer to pushing myself and making more interesting work.*

**Sachiko Akiyama**  
Sculptor



*Only those who risk going too far can possibly learn how far one can go.*

Brother Thomas



*Risk cuts both ways—risk staying where I am or risk going into the unknown. As an artist, I answer the call for personal action and the challenge to push beyond what is comfortable. Most of all, I focus on the importance of NOW.*

**Chandra Dieppa Ortiz**

Painter and Sculptor

*We all share a creative goal with art. The goal is difficult; it is an invitation to change the world. We can expect that our strength will be spent, used up in a difficult struggle.*

Brother Thomas



*There are moments when all artists get tapped out—both physically and economically—by the work we choose to do. But that is an acceptable price to pay for the privilege of being in conversation with the world—of creating work that engages all the tricky questions that make us human.*

**David Valdes Greenwood**  
Playwright and Author



*Risking and dreaming are primary acts of creativity.*

Brother Thomas

*Risking failure is a critical part of art-making. You have to dream of something beyond your capacity in order to grow.*

**Angela Cunningham**

Ceramic Artist



*Art, like poetry, music, myth and life itself, is the language of the spirit that ferries us across that brook too broad for leaping.*

Brother Thomas



*My films focus on elements within my local environment—from quite literally the smallest dust particle to the major arteries of the city—a sort of cinematic dialogue that can lead me onto the dense, private path of a spiritual journey.*

**Robert Todd**

Documentary Filmmaker

## 2009 Brother Thomas Fellows



**John Oluwole ADEkoje**, a Nigerian native, is a filmmaker and playwright who teaches at the Boston Arts Academy and is affiliated with the Providence Black Repertory Theater and Boston's Company One. His film *Street Soldiers* has been screened at the Pan African Film Festival at Cannes and the Roxbury Film Festival.

[www.knockaroundkids.com](http://www.knockaroundkids.com)



**Kati Agócs**, a composer, is a member of the composition faculty at the New England Conservatory of Music. Born in Canada of Hungarian and American parents, Kati has been recognized with a Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and residencies at Tanglewood and Yaddo.

[www.agocsmusic.com](http://www.agocsmusic.com)



**Richard Hoffman** has been writing and publishing poetry for 30 years. His four books include *Half the House: a Memoir*, which recounts the death of two siblings, abuse at the hands of a coach, childhood estrangement from his father and reconciliation as an adult.

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



**Barbara Helfgott** has published five collections of poetry. The most recent volume, *Rift: Poems*, explores marriage and betrayal and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award. She has been a visiting scholar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Tufts University and a public lecturer and teacher.

[www.poemworks.com](http://www.poemworks.com)



**Brian Knep** creates interactive video projections that explore birth, death, aging, communication, coordination and separation. He was the first artist in residence at Harvard Medical School, during which he used Memorial Hall to mount an installation recalling the lives of Harvard students who died for the Confederacy.

[www.blep.com](http://www.blep.com)



**Alla Kovgan**, who was born in Moscow, is rooted in Boston's film and dance community. Her film, *Nora*, is told almost entirely without language, using instead a rich, formal pallet of light, color, landscape, music and dance. Her films have been screened at international festivals in Paris, Athens and Roxbury.

[www.kinodance.com](http://www.kinodance.com)



**Tracy Heather Strain** is a documentary filmmaker who is drawn to personal stories that reveal the ways that race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality shape lives. Her work with Henry Hampton at Blackside Productions shaped her focus on social change.

[www.tracyheatherstrain.com](http://www.tracyheatherstrain.com)



**Heather White** makes wearable artwork, cast in polyurethane, silver or gold, that often begins with making impressions or casts of navels, teeth, lips, beauty marks and other parts of the body. Her work is in the collection of the Museum of Art and Design in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

[www.heatherwhitevanstolk.com](http://www.heatherwhitevanstolk.com)

# Supporting the Brother Thomas Fellowships

In the 1970s, when Brother Thomas first met Sue and Bernie Pucker, owners of the Pucker Gallery on Boston's Newbury Street, ceramics were considered to be more craft than art. Brother Thomas changed that perception forever. Today, his work can be found in more than 50 national and international museums and galleries—especially at the Pucker Gallery, which holds the largest and most diverse collection.

Toward the end of his life, Brother Thomas joined forces with the Puckers to create a legacy that would benefit other artists through the sale of his work. Today, the proceeds of the sale of these remarkable works held by the Pucker Gallery—a series of breathtaking vessels with luminous and delicate glazes—go to support the Brother Thomas Fellowships.

**Join the Boston Foundation in fulfilling Brother Thomas' vision.** If you are a donor interested in contributing to the Brother Thomas Fund or a collector who would like to learn more about Brother Thomas' works of art as a way of supporting the fund, please contact the Boston Foundation at 617-338-1700.



# About the Boston Foundation



**Angela  
Cunningham**

*Matriarch*

2008, white  
stoneware, cone  
10 oxidation, glaze,  
underglaze,  
9 x 13 x 13"

As Greater Boston's community foundation since 1915, the Boston Foundation devotes its resources to building and sustaining a vital, prosperous city and region, where justice and opportunity are extended to everyone. It fulfills its mission by serving as a flexible giving vehicle for donors, a major funder of nonprofit organizations and a civic leader and convener. All of the work of the Foundation is guided by two main strategic goals that reflect our deep commitment to strengthening our communities:

***Greater Boston residents are successful and thriving.  
Greater Boston communities are vibrant, safe and affordable.***

Through these goals, we seek to have a profound impact on important areas of community life—including dramatic improvements in education and health attainment; safe and vibrant neighborhoods; robust arts and cultural opportunities; and a regional economy that enables everyone to thrive.

**Our investments in arts and culture seek to strengthen and celebrate Boston through audience engagement and the elevation of culture by:**

- 1.** investing in arts education to foster creative thinking and arts learning;
- 2.** investing in field building through resource generation, research and advocacy;
- 3.** investing in the capacity and strategy development of key organizations—engaging under-represented neighborhoods and populations and addressing demand and capitalization; and
- 4.** celebrating neighborhoods through the elevation of culture—embedding arts in daily life and activating space.

For more information about the Boston Foundation or the Brother Thomas Fellowships, call 617-338-1700 or visit [www.tbf.org](http://www.tbf.org).

## Publication Credits

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## Sources for Brother Thomas Quotes

*Celebrate the Days: Brother Thomas Book of Days*

*Creation out of Clay: The Ceramic Art and Writings of Brother Thomas*

*Gifts from the Fire: The Porcelains of Brother Thomas*

*Offerings of the Spirit: Tribute to Brother Thomas*

*This is the Day: Work and Words of Brother Thomas*



With special thanks to the Center for  
Art and Community Partnerships at  
Massachusetts College of Art and Design.