

### **Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award – Artist**

#### **ANN PHONG**

Born in Saigon, Vietnam and now residing in Southern California, Phong has participated in over 200 solo and group exhibitions, spanning from local galleries and museums throughout the United States to Seoul and Tokyo. In 2025, she received the prestigious Los Angeles Lakers' *In The Paint* grant. Her art transcends traditional boundaries. In each canvas, she weaves a poetic narrative of our shared journey through life, marred by the detritus of our existence. Her work is a symphony of colors and brushstrokes that evoke motion, harmoniously intertwined with an array of found objects meticulously positioned. Phong also served as board president of the Vietnamese American Arts and Letters Association (VAALA) from 2009-2018.

### **Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award – Artistic Visionary**

#### **ELI SIMON**

Eli Simon is the founding Artistic Director of New Swan Shakespeare Festival, a professional summer theater that performs on the campus of UC Irvine with support from the Claire Trevor School of the Arts, the Department of Drama, the Office of Research and the campus community. A Chancellor's Professor of Acting in Drama, this marks his 38th year at UC Irvine. Simon is the author of three books: *The Art of Clowning*, *Masking Unmasked* and *Power Speech*. He has directed more than 100 productions at Shakespeare festivals, regional theaters and international venues across the United States and abroad, including in Romania, Italy and Korea.

### **Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award – Arts Patron**

#### **JANET and WALKIE RAY**

Janet and Walkie Ray have been a tremendous force behind the success of a number of Orange County philanthropic initiatives. They were instrumental in the strategic planning, fundraising and construction of the Discovery Science Center, and recently chaired the capital campaign for the \$17 million expansion of Sherman Library and Gardens. Individually and jointly, the Rays have played integral roles in the development of Irvine's Great Park. They have also been involved with Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Orange County High School of the Arts, and Arts Orange County, with Janet having chaired the Arts Awards on several occasions.

### **Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award – Special Award**

#### **SEGERSTROM CENTER for the ARTS**

The Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, originally the Orange County Performing Arts Center, is celebrating two big anniversaries...its 40<sup>th</sup> year for the 3,000-seat Segerstrom Hall and 20<sup>th</sup> year for the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. Renamed in 2011 to honor the family, it has grown into a major campus, now including the Samueli Theater and Argyros Plaza. The vision of the Center's founders became reality when the Orange County Performing Arts Center opened on September 29, 1986 with a concert in its new opera house-style Segerstrom Hall. Performances by Pacific Symphony, the Philharmonic Society, and Pacific Chorale, as well as celebrated international ballet companies, national tours of Broadway musicals, and much more fill the Center throughout the year. The Center also has an education department dedicated to bringing young people to the new campus for live, professional performances and to providing arts programs to schools throughout the county.

**Achievement Award – Outstanding Arts Organization**  
**ORANGE COUNTY ARTS and DISABILITY**

Orange County Arts and Disability's mission is to provide arts education and cultural opportunities by, with and for people with disabilities, making the arts accessible to people of all abilities. By creating an accessible platform that empowers individuals with disabilities to explore their creativity, they have significantly enriched the cultural landscape of the Orange County community, and proved that artistic expression has no limits. Formerly known as Very Special Arts Orange County, the organization is celebrating its 50th year producing the annual countywide arts and disability festival held at MainPlace Mall in partnership with the Orange County Department of Education.

**Achievement Award – Outstanding Artist**  
**ALICIA ROJAS**

Alicia Rojas is a Colombian interdisciplinary artist based in Santa Ana. Her work centers immigrant rights, anti-gentrification, equity, and ecological justice, using collaboration and storytelling to explore connections between land, place, people, and nature. Rojas is the Co-founder and Director of the Santa Ana Community Artist(a) Coalition, advancing community-led public art. Her work has been supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, and the City of Santa Ana, among others. She has exhibited internationally, including at ARTBO in Bogotá, and completed a residency at Grand Central Art Center. Her project *Las Poderosas* will be archived by the Library of Congress as part of the American Heroes of the Pandemic collection.

**Achievement Award – Emerging Artist**  
**BORÓKA NAGY**

Boróka Nagy is an award-winning choreographer, dancer and multimedia artist. She earned her BFA at Alvin Ailey/Fordham in NYC, and her MFA at University of California, Irvine. Nagy has performed at venues including New York City Center and the Apollo Theatre and continues to perform internationally in site-specific and concert stage works. Her choreography has been presented worldwide, exploring the human experience through movement, interactive performance, and collaborative art with her company Re:born Dance Interactive. Nagy directs The Academy of Dance in Orange County and founded Reborn Arts, a nonprofit advancing community engagement and peace through dance and shared movement experiences.