

MS artists honored at MIAL banquet

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The event was held at Staplcoth Saturday

By RACHEL HODGE
Lifestyles Editor

Artists and patrons came from all corners of Mississippi and around the country to attend the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters awards banquet, which was held Saturday evening at Staplcoth.

Each year the banquet is held to honor Mississippi natives for their outstanding achievements in the arts.

The event was hosted in Greenwood this year because Teoc farmer Will Long is the current president of the MIAL.

Long greeted the guests at the banquet and explained the area's deep connection to the arts.

"Here in the Delta we aren't sure whether Tennessee Williams made us famous or whether we made him famous," Long said.

The executive secretary of the MIAL, Margaret Anne Mitchell, said she was also glad to be holding the event at Staplcoth.

"This is a great place for it," Mitchell said, "it has lots of charm."

This year's winners include:

■ **William Dunlap** — Visual Arts

■ **Debra Ferguson** — Photography

■ **Richard Ford** — Fiction

■ **Samuel Jones** — Musical Composition

■ **Jere Nash and Andy Taggart** — Non-Fiction

■ **Natasha Trethewey** — Poetry

Lifetime Achievement awards were also given to Oscar-winning actor **Morgan Freeman** and his wife, costume and set designer **Myrna Colley-Lee**. Colley-Lee accepted the awards for both of them.

Cleda Ellington accepted the award for friend Richard Ford, who was also unable to attend the event. All the winners received cash awards, as well as commemorative porcelain sculptures designed by Penny Sanford of Kilmichael.

Natasha Trethewey, a Gulfport native who now teaches at Emory University in Georgia, recently won the Pulitzer Prize for her book of poetry "Native Guard."

This is the third time she has been chosen to receive the MIAL award.

"I always love coming to this event," Trethewey said, "Getting recognition from home is really great." The banquet was dedicated to the memory of the late Mary Jayne Garrard Whittington of Greenwood, who was a life-long supporter of the arts and an MIAL member.



Rachel Hodge

Pictured at the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters awards banquet, which was held Saturday night at Staplcoth, are, from the left, Susan Shands Jones and Myrna Colley-Lee. Colley-Lee is a well-known costume designer who, along with her husband, actor **Morgan Freeman**, was chosen to receive the MIAL's Lifetime Achievement Award this year. She accepted the award on behalf of both of them.