



*Art  
is the  
tree  
of  
life.*

William Blake

William Blake

**2012** KENTUCKY  
**Governor's**  
**Awards** IN **THE Arts**

# Artist Award

GRAY ZEITZ



**G**ray Zeitz is the founder and operator of Larkspur Press, producing dozens of fine, letterpress hand-bound editions of works by Kentucky poets and writers for nearly 40 years. Mr. Zeitz is the only publisher of books printed in the letterpress style in Kentucky and is regarded as one of the finest small press printers and designers of books in the region and the country.

Working from a shop on his farm in Monterey, Ky., Mr. Zeitz has designed, printed and published books and broadsides for numerous Kentucky writers since 1974, when he moved to Owen County to be part of its growing artist community.

Born in Mobile, Ala., and raised in Elizabethtown, Ky., Mr. Zeitz works with pre-industrial age technology and a press made in 1915 to create books that require a great investment of time, labor

and talent. He participates in every step of the intricate, tactile process – from the hand-setting of metal type to the hand-stitched binding of a book.

Mr. Zeitz's press is a living legacy of Victor and Carolyn Hammer who set up the Margaret I. King Press at the University of Kentucky, training him and a score of others in the art of fine printing. Mr. Zeitz apprenticed with Mrs. Hammer for more than two years before striking out on his own, armed with his first press and a drawer of type, gifts from Mrs. Hammer.

Students of the arts in Kentucky find Mr. Zeitz to have been a major contributor to the literary arts as a printer, writer, designer, promoter and publisher of both new and well-established Kentucky writers. He has published books for some of Kentucky's most beloved literary figures including James Baker Hall, Wendell Berry, Bobbie Ann Mason, Guy Davenport, Richard Taylor, Gurney Norman, Ed McClanahan, Mary Ann Taylor Hall and Maureen Morehead. He is a major force in promoting Kentucky writing and is recognized nationally for producing work of enduring quality.

With each book or broadside printed, Mr. Zeitz's focus is always on showcasing the writer's work. Art work is sometimes used to complement poems or stories and incredible effort is made to ensure the finished product is affordable. That effort alone sets Larkspur Press apart from other letterpress printers in the country, the majority of which produce only high-end special editions. Mr. Zeitz normally publishes two editions of each book he prints – an affordable version and a special edition. Larkspur Press has published numerous first-time authors.

In addition to publishing, Mr. Zeitz dedicates his time to preserving the traditional art of letterpress printing. He has shared the art form with several apprentices throughout his 38 years in business. He currently has two employees, Leslie Shane and Carolyn Whitesel, who assist in the production of Larkspur Press books. The press has produced more than 100 books in the span of its operation.

Mr. Zeitz earned his associate degree from Elizabethtown Community College in 1969 and studied English and history at the University of Kentucky. He was inducted into the Elizabethtown Community and Technical College Hall of Distinguished Alumni in 2008. He is a founding member of the Monterey Volunteer Fire Department and was a volunteer fireman for 23 years. Mr. Zeitz served as clerk of the city of Monterey for 10 years.

Mr. Zeitz and his wife, Jean, have two children, Jesse Zeitz and Laurel Simo, and four grandchildren.

# Owen Co. printer gets governor's award

STATE JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Gray Zeitz, 62, who has been printing high-quality books and poetry from Larkspur Press in Owen County since 1974, was presented with the 2012 Artist Award from Gov. Steve Beshear.

Zeitz sets type by hand and uses antique presses that are difficult to come by these days.

He was one of nine recipients of the 2012 Governor's Awards in the Arts, the state's highest achievement in the arts, who were recognized during a ceremony Tuesday in the Capitol Rotunda.

Other recipients and their awards were:

■ Milner Award – William G. Francis, Prestonsburg

■ National Award – Bobbie Ann Mason, Lawrenceburg

■ Business Award – UK HealthCare Arts in Health-Care Program, Lexington

■ Community Arts Award – Latitude Artist Community, Lexington

■ Education Award – Christina Hartke Towell, Morehead



Gov. Steve Beshear, left, and Gray Zeitz are pictured at the 2012 Kentucky Governor's Awards in the Arts. Zeitz was one of nine recipients of the award, the state's highest achievement in the arts.

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■ Folk Heritage Award – Leona Waddell, Cecilia

■ Government Award – U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth, Louisville

■ Media Award – Jeffrey Lee Puckett, Louisville

The awards are coordinated by the Kentucky Arts Council. Nominations are accepted annually from the public.

The deadline for 2013 is Nov. 1, 2012.