

# Grand Prize Winners Announced for 2026 L. Ron Hubbard Achievement Awards

*Grand prize winners for L. Ron Hubbard Achievement Awards: Writer Michael T. Kuester from Cincinnati, OH, and Illustrator Bafu from Ruzomberok, Slovakia.*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, April 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the evening of Thursday, April 16, 2026 at the 42nd Annual Writers of the Future L. Ron Hubbard Achievement Awards Gala in the genres of Science Fiction and Fantasy, held in the Grand Ballroom of the Taglyan Cultural Complex in Hollywood, CA, Michael T. Kuester from Cincinnati, OH was named the 2026 Golden Pen Writer Winner and Bafu of Ruzomberok, Slovakia was named the 2026 Golden Brush Illustrator Winner.



Grand prize winners with presenters: (l to r) John Goodwin, Emily Goodwin, Echo Chernik, Jannicke Mikkelsen, Illustrator winner Bafu, Writer winner Michael Kuester, Andrea Fleck-Nisbet, Jody Lynn Nye, Gunhild Jacobs, Joni Labaqui

Michael T. Kuester said, "It takes a village to write a story, and I have a city to thank. Cincinnati is a place where ordinary people do extraordinary things. The story I wrote ruined a week of my life by giving me nightmares. But, in retrospect, I suppose it's stories that make you feel something that are most powerful. I'd like to thank L. Ron Hubbard for creating these competitions. To the people of Cincinnati, I see you, and the entire world sees you. Good night, Cincinnati!"

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Thank you, L. Ron Hubbard for creating these competitions. I will forever cherish this memory!"

*Bafu, Illustrators of the Future  
Golden Brush Award Winner*

Bafu said, "I am so grateful for this and for the feedback

the contest judges have given me. This is a life-changing experience. I wrote a little note to myself in case I might win to quickly grab the award and run before the judges can change their minds. But now that this has happened, from this point forward, I won't downgrade myself

anymore. I will do the best I can. Thank you, L. Ron Hubbard for creating these competitions. I will forever cherish this memory!"

Winners from this year's competitions hailed from eight countries: Australia, China, Canada, Japan, Slovakia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In the week prior to the Awards Gala, all winners of the 2026 Contests were mentored through seminars led by contest judges to prepare them for their respective professions.

Writer's Contest Coordinating Judge, Jody Lynn Nye, and CEO of the Independent Book Publishers Association, Andrea Fleck-Nisbet, announced writer Michael T. Kuester as the 2026 Golden Pen Award-winner, presenting him with a trophy and a check for \$5,000, for his story, "In Living Color," which was illustrated by Nathan Deiwert.

Coordinating Illustrator Contest Judge Echo Chernik and the evening's keynote speaker, astronaut Jannicke Mikkelsen, announced illustrator Bafu as the 2026 Golden Brush Award-winner, presenting him with a trophy and a check for \$5,000. Bafu illustrated writer Kathleen Powell's "Saffron and Marigolds."

The 2026 Writer Winners who were presented with trophies and cash prizes included: Zach Poulter of Roy, UT; S.J. Stevenson of Wallasey, Merseyside, United Kingdom; Kathleen Powell of Springfield, MO; Thomas K. Slee of Windsor, Victoria, Australia; Brenda Posey of Bessemer, AL; Mike Strickland of Centennial, CO; Michael T. Kuester of Cincinnati, OH; Elina Kumra of Sunnyvale, CA (in absentia); Joseph Sidari of Sudbury, MA; Thomas R. Eggenberger of Fuchu-shi, Tokyo-to, Japan; Mark McWaters of Mount Dora, FL, and Dorothy de Kok of Bedford, Eastern Cape, South Africa.



Writers of the Future Grand Prize winner Michael Kuester from Cincinnati and Illustrators of the Future Grand Prize winner Bafu from Slovakia



The Writers and Illustrators of the Future 42 winners along with judges and Contest staff on the stage at the Taglyan Complex in Hollywood, CA.

The Illustrator Winners who were presented with trophies and cash prizes included: Art Ikuta of North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Roddy Taylor of Richmond, VA; Bafu of Ruzomberok, Slovakia; Karah Richardson of Tooele, UT; Josie Moore of Westfield, MA; Tray Streeter of Syracuse, UT; Nathan Deiwert of Greensburg, IN; Haotian "Allen" Zhang originally from Baoding, Hebei, China currently residing in Ann Arbor, MI; Anna Malone of Columbus, OH (in absentia), and Tracy Eire of Bellevue, WA.

#### About the Contests:

Following the 1982 release of his internationally acclaimed, bestselling Science Fiction novel, "Battlefield Earth," written in celebration of 50 years as a professional writer, L. Ron Hubbard created the Writers of the Future Contest ([www.writersofthefuture.com](http://www.writersofthefuture.com)) in 1983 to provide a means for aspiring writers of speculative fiction to get that much-needed break. Due to the success of the Writing Contest, the companion Illustrators of the Future Contest was created in 1988.

The annual Contests draw entrants from around the globe and are free to enter. Winners retain full rights to their work, and each receives a cash award. Grand Prize Winners receive an additional \$5,000. The Contest flies all winners to Los Angeles for an expense-paid, weeklong workshop led by Contest judges, culminating in a Black Tie Gala Awards event.

In the 42 years of the Writers of the Future Contest, there have been 583 winners and published finalists. The past winners of the Writing Contest have published over 8,000 novels and short stories.

In the 37 years of the Illustrators of the Future Contest, there have been 430 past winners who have produced over 6,800 illustrations and 390 comic books, graced over 700 books, 500 comics, and 130 major motion pictures, gaming feature films, TV shows, and documentaries.

The Writers of the Future Award is the genre's most prestigious award of its kind and has now become the largest, most successful, and demonstrably most influential vehicle for budding creative talent in the world of speculative fiction. Since its inception, the Writers and Illustrators of the Future contests have produced 42 anthology volumes (with this event) and awarded upwards of \$1 million in cash prizes and royalties. For more information, please visit [www.writersofthefuture.com](http://www.writersofthefuture.com) and [www.galaxypress.com](http://www.galaxypress.com).

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