



NEXT WORDS CALARTS WRITERS SHOWCASE

MAY 4, 2021

6pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CaLARTS

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles.

NEXT WORDS CALARTS WRITERS SHOWCASE

The MFA Creative Writing Program at CalArts is excited to partner with REDCAT to host the 2021 Next Words MFA Writing Showcase, which presents the grit, style and perspectives of sixteen imaginative emerging writers to a wider public.

Next Words is a reading series and publication produced by the CalArts MFA in Creative Writing Program and featuring its graduating students. Usually taking place in the spring at venues across Los Angeles—bookstores, music and art spaces, and even a permanent movie set—the 2021 Next Words series extends into June in a special hybrid in-person/remote edition, kicked off by this event at REDCAT.

This year's NextWords anthology, entitled *Elysium is Empty*, with gorgeous cover art by graduating writer Rhea Iyer, will be available for purchase in June—featuring a selection of fiction, poetry, nonfiction and genre-fluid works. The anthology and the showcase offer a range of experiences in new literary works that are uniquely CalArts—the results of this creative writing program's lively explorations alongside and across film, video, music, performance and visual art. If you would like to be added to the MFA in Creative Writing mailing list to receive updates and events for the *Elysium Is Empty* anthology, please email Tisa Bryant at tbryant@calarts.edu

For more information about CalArts' unique interdisciplinary MFA Creative Writing Program, visit writing.calarts.edu.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Aaraf Afzal was invented in Dhaka, Bangladesh at some point in the early 90s. His work spans a multitude of mediums, from superhero series to short films to video essays and beyond. He is the author of dystopian novel *Re: Revolution*, and is currently at work on his second sci-fi / fantasy epic *The Great Will of the Universe* as his CalArts MFA Thesis.

Tatum Howey will shortly be an MFA graduate in Critical Studies & Integrated Media at CalArts. They will begin their PhD at UC San Diego this September researching the precarious legibility of the transgender subject through 20th and 21st century literature, art, and visual culture. Their work has been published online by *Lemon Hound*, *Wonder*, and in print with *The Capilano Review*. In 2019 they were invited to *Performa* as part of a week-long pedagogical workshop for *Unlimited Bodies*.

A writer and visual artist from Bombay, India, **Rhea Iyer** best describes her work as a hodgepodge of identity, image and interesting unanswerables. Her art and writing have been previously published in *Room Magazine* and *The Indian Quarterly*, amongst others. Rhea likes her music soft, her lines with little wavers, and words that fold pretty around the syllables.

Karie Jacobson is a writer and musician who just completed a novel set in the world of 19th century séances and medicine shows. She's working on a collection of short stories influenced by Fairy Tales and mythology, and composing music for Christiane Cegavske's second stop-motion feature film, a surreal dark fable called *Seed in The Sand*.

Marissa Layne Johnson is a writer, activist, and strategist living in Los Angeles. Her work has been published in *Bustle Magazine*, *Entropy Magazine*, *The Rumpus*, and many others. Marissa has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in Poetry and she completed the Iowa Writer's Workshop Summer Program in 2018. She recently completed her first manuscript, a memoir entitled *The Light That Captured Us Here*, and a short film by the same name. After graduating from CalArts, she will be attending the Prague Summer Program this July.

Shirley Kim-Ryu is a filmmaker and a poet who traverses the mediums of performance, moving image and poetry. Kim-Ryu's work is motivated by the non-gendered oneness, a borderless corporeal experience across gender and borders.

Caroline Laganas is currently writing and illustrating her first poetry collection. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing at California Institute of the Arts, and received a BA in Journalism from Pepperdine University. Her poems have appeared in the City of Santa Clarita's Sidewalk Poetry Project, *Expressionists*, *FishFood Magazine*, and many others.

Qianyi Ma is a writer and visual artist. Her writings play with fiction, poetry, and experimental pieces. And she has been working on the combination of images and texts by illustrated stories and videos. So far, the inclination to imagine liminal space has started to mark her creative experiences.

She has been working on short fiction with a collection of illustrated writings, including *Stumble into Neurons*, *Falls into Hell*, *Heart*, *the World Divided* and *A Red Heel*, and *Among others*. Meanwhile, she is tiptoeing into the field of filmmaking, continuing her style of floating and wandering.

Marisa Mata is a writer and artist based in Fresno, California. Her thesis, *Our Clouds*, is an experimental memoir that combines essays, poetry and photography to explore her Mexican heritage, matrilineage, memory, inherited trauma, ghosts and hauntings, and coming of age as a writer. Her writing has appeared in the *San Joaquin Review*, *Entropy*, and elsewhere. Find her on Instagram and Twitter @MarisaMata_

Ryan "Doc" Polk was a medic in the Army with the 82nd Airborne Division for six years. On his third combat tour, Doc was wounded while treating another soldier. He was later evacuated back to the US and discharged from service. Doc struggled with reintegrating back into society and isolated himself on the streets until, by chance, he was accepted into Wesleyan University where he majored in English with a concentration in Creative Writing as

well as Theater with concentrations in Acting and Lighting Design. Upon graduating, Doc was accepted into the MFA Creative Writing Program at CalArts where he completed a memoir about his journey to become a writer. Doc has been awarded the Winchester Writing Fellowship, the Connelly Prize for unusual ability in nonfiction, the Horgan Prize for Best Short Story at Wesleyan University as well as the Cole Prize for Best Short Story for a first-year student also at Wesleyan.

Ami J. Sanghvi is an Indian-American, queer author, artist, boxer, and Eric Hoffer Book Award finalist. Her work has recently appeared in *So It Goes: The Literary Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library*, *Inverted Syntax*, *Humana Obscura*, and several other publications and exhibitions.

Daniel Spielberger writes fiction and nonfiction. His writing has appeared in *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Interview Magazine*, *SSENSE*, *Playboy*, *Peach Mag*, *The Quarterless Review*, and other magazines and literary journals.

Sarah R. Stockton is a poet and educator based in Los Angeles. Her work has been featured in *Peach Mag* and *The Quarterless Review* and is forthcoming in *The Cimarron Review*. *Angles* is their first long fiction project.

Chance Vernon is a playwright and fiction writer interested in gender construction, queer family and fantastic spaces. Chance was awarded the CalArts 2021 post graduate fellowship and will be teaching "Art and Epidemic: Understanding Covid via the Lens of HIV," at CalArts in the fall, drawing on her years of work in HIV prevention research and activism. Chance's play, *Mama's Little Monster* investigates how individuals form an identity via a collage of archetypes and narratives generated from patriarchal, racist, homophobic and capitalist culture. Her prose writing includes a series of short stories about a gay bar in the Underworld owned by Pippi Longstocking, intergenerational queer family memoir, and critical writing about the use of fictive spaces to open up narrative possibilities and invite in multiple, complicated voices.

Hally Winters is a writer living in Sunland, California. For her thesis she wrote a short story collection based in her hometown of Sunland, Los Angeles. This collection is a mixture of realism and the fantastical. "Sunland" explores addiction without a redemption arc, the hidden past of Los Angeles, and the myth of Hollywood.

Simone Zapata is a poet from San Jose, CA. Her thesis centers the voice of her aunt, who had schizophrenia and died suddenly of colon cancer in 2018. As testimony to the persistence of life after loss, Simone collages family narratives, medical records, tarot, and an on-going lawsuit against Alameda County to track notions of sound, voice, language, and power. Here, grief is not a "figuring out" but a "figuring into."

The MFA in Creative Writing at CalArts is one of the few programs in the United States where students are not limited to just one genre of writing. Instead, they are considered writers in the broadest sense, and can apply to the program with poetry, fiction or nonfiction—but that doesn't narrow thesis projects or which faculty students work with, doesn't put them on a track for what classes they can or cannot take. The Program offers genre-specific workshops, so it's possible to focus on a single genre, but also on offer are genre-fluid workshops, labs and seminars, often organized around a process, concept, topic or theme.

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