



CalArts Writers Showcase

Talks

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3 PM

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CalArts Writers Showcase

The CalArts MFA Creative Writing class of 2023 is thrilled to partner with REDCAT to present this afternoon's glimpse into their wild and varied work. Audience members will get a real feel for the incredible range of experimentation that characterizes the literary endeavors of students in the Creative Writing program. This afternoon's showcase culminates this year's Next Words Reading Series, which featured three readings at venues across the Los Angeles Basin in celebration of the Class of 23 and their Next Words anthology, *Castles in the Sky*. The anthology features writing from all of this afternoon's readers and will be available for purchase at the reception following today's reading.

The writers will read in the following order:

Farah Abouzeid (she/her) is a writer from Monterey, California. She studied Literature and Writing at UCSD, where her play *Social Suicide*, a dark comedy about an eighth grade presidential election, was produced by the Undergraduate New Play Festival. She was previously a script reader for the Berkeley Repertory Theatre and a teaching artist throughout San Diego. She recently completed her MFA in Creative Writing at Cal Arts, where she worked as a teaching assistant in the School of Critical Studies. Her thesis project, a poetry collection titled *Dreamphone*, is inspired by the underworld journey of Persephone, depicted through a mystical transformation into a mermaid. Her work is deeply tied to themes of shapeshifting, witchcraft, the divine feminine, and girlhood. Farah is currently based in Los Angeles, where she writes poetry and fiction and works as a birth doula and tarot reader.

Yazmenne Archer is a native-born Jersey girl, who has coincidentally never seen Jersey Girl. Still contending with labels, she is safe in the boxes of writer and poet. She hopes to slither her way into spoken word artist as she works toward her first spoken word album while obtaining her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. Navigating the themes of grief and loss, self-reclamation is the ultimate object of her work. To Yaz, being an artist means to give to oneself as well as others, and her work as a writer is only the first step in that direction.

Madelaine Auble is a California-based writer with a flourish of fashion in her background and a grounding in film history who successfully weaponizes memoir in service of cultural criticism.

Nicholas Barner writes artificially inhuman fiction. He also creates infotechnical artworks, and he enjoys waxing suspicious. His writing has appeared in *ergot.*, the Santa Barbara Literary Journal, *Molotov Cocktail*, the *Rumpus*, and a few other places. Nick was born in Maine and now lives in Southern California, where he received an MFA in Creative Writing at CalArts. He can I.D. and treat a wide variety of plant pathologies and is equally content to discuss literature or legume inoculants. More at: nickbarner.org.

Charlie Bohem is a writer of intersections – places where worlds and modes briefly converge or break apart. His work deals primarily with dreams and reality, and moments of catastrophe when this distinction between the two becomes useless. He currently draws the majority of his inspiration from

climate change, specifically the aberrant weather events affecting his native California. When he isn't writing, he can be found in his wood shop, hiking, fishing, turning over rocks in search of snakes and bugs, or watching TV with his cat.

Ayla Combes (they/them) is a multidisciplinary artist, witch, poet, and teacher weaving bridges between here & the Otherworlds through image, sound, and movement. Inspired by dreamscapes, landscapes, play, and their ever-evolving explorations as a tarot reader, astrologer, and somatic sound-work practitioner, Ayla crafts magical art-experiences that encourage vulnerable confrontations and conversations with our innermost selves.

Brandon Cooper (who we've been given to understand is prone to all kinds of devilish foolishness, but is not so devilishly foolish in his diurnal comportment as one could expect from such rascaliony bruiting) does not own an iguana or any other reptile. He has written two novels (unpublished – sketchy, incidental things). God willing, he will eke out another (minor, trebly minor, one critic may call it; garrulous, will another) composed beneath palm fronds in a summer of compositional ecstasy perhaps not too far off, or in the scullery of a cargo ship bound for the Aegean, fleeing stateside insolvency by means barely licit.

Michelle Cushing has lofty goals – she wants her writing to ignite like flint against steel, taking readers on a lively journey. Her favorite writer is Tennessee Williams, and like Williams, she is only “really alive” when writing. She was born and raised in Arkansas, but currently lives in LaLaLand. Both places are rich with quirky characters, which influences her prose and screenplays. An avid fan of pug dogs, donuts, silent films, animation, rockabilly hep cats, and Motown soul, she is truly as strange as the characters on her pages. Check out more of her inane ramblings and shameless self-promotion on her blog: michellecushing.wordpress.com

Two lifetimes ago, **Michael Diskint** was a Golden Gloves boxer and Jazz trumpet player. One lifetime ago, he was a classically trained actor. In this life, Michael is a multi-hyphenate writer (screen-stage-lyrics-fiction) who exists mainly in the speculative fiction space, using imagined worlds to reflect and explore the most pressing issues of our current 21st century culture. Michael has two cats, two dogs, two children, and a mortgage. Will write for money.

Brian Ffrench is a musician and writer from San Diego, California.

Charlie Fry is an aspiring screenwriter for animated television, with a focus on fantasy elements and queer themes, as well as the intersection of storytelling and politics. They are inspired presently by the anarchistic need to shake Hollywood, and its systems of power, to its core. Hailing from Smyrna, Georgia, they fell in love with writing at a young age, and ever since they experienced the first thrill of writing something that they truly liked, they've been unable to put the pen down. Determined to take the world by storm, they're here to find beauty in things that don't always feel so beautiful, and then help the world see how wonderfully those things might shine, if we only give them a chance. Love conquers all, and all that sweet, fuzzy feelings jazz!

Andrew Hubbell writes fiction. For most of a decade, he's been accumulating various non-utilitarian degrees. He thinks these legitimize him somehow. He's working on another one (where will it end?). Though he has never been published, his narcissism is such that he feels threatened by having to nail down his identity via text or a photograph. He fears misrepresentation, so he takes refuge in irony. A certain desperation oozes from his pores, giving him a very particular odor that most find quite objectionable. I wouldn't vote for him.

William Lockwood is trying to survive the quagmire called the United States of America. He currently resides in the city of Los Angeles, where he is at work on a novel and a collection of short stories.

Jamiah Lincoln is an interdisciplinary creator, teacher, and vessel for change from Los Angeles, California. They use creation – writing, filmmaking, music making, sewing, graphic design, and more – to explore Black temporalities, histories, and ways of being. With a practice rooted in spoken word and slam poetry, Jamiah's work is centered in performance and splatters into visual arts. Their work can be found in the anthology *Get Lit Rising* (2016), or online through platforms such as *Teen Vogue* (2016), *Huff Post* (2017), *Button Poetry* (2017), and *the eel!* (2022).

Paola Parreno-Merino is a fan of many things, particularly music and romance, informing her writing through obsessively-curated playlists and inspired daydreams. Her novel, *Rivers May Run*, is a musical tale of prophecies fulfilled, curses broken, and love triumphant. She's got a BFA in Communication and a Pre-Law Certificate from Florida International University, and as of May 2023, a goddamn Master's degree, too. Follow her journey on instagram @paola.vanessa1

Lemiaye Miyazaki-Taylor is a British Japanese writer and filmmaker with a passion to create human stories that amplify multi-cultural voices and inspire a better world. She draws upon her international life experiences to focus her stories on identity, belonging and endeavour. From this lens, she likes to uncover what unites us; the connections between our past and present; and inspire possibilities for change and reinvention. As a storyteller, she works to combine her written and visual work as a force for good to shape a more inclusive, and sustainable future.

Jennie Park is a South Korea-born and Southern California-based American immigrant artist, writer and curator interested in interdisciplinarity and integrated approaches to honesty. (In)visibility and (in) vulnerability, and world-generating dynamics of entanglement and truthful paradox, recur as practices, tools or puzzles she explores through her multimedia, project-based work. Her most recent body of work explores the erotic (Audre Lorde), Neutral (Roland Barthes) and generic as substitutional, competing or coarticulating vortices of comfort, belonging and liberation.



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