



The Loft Literary Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The Loft Literary Center Announces Recipients of the 2023 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers

Four Minnesota Creative Prose Writers, and One Children's Literature Author Receive \$25,000 Each

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2023 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Creative Prose and Loft Award in Children's Literature (Older Children). Since 1982, the Loft has partnered with the McKnight Foundation to offer substantial fellowships to Minnesota writers.

The fellowships are judged by prominent American authors and editors, and the winners, all from Minnesota, are awarded \$25,000 each. The judges this year were Alexander Chee in creative prose and Aida Salazar in children's literature.

The Loft received 44 qualified applications in children's literature and 87 qualified applications in creative prose. This year's recipients are children's writer **Art Coulson** (Apple Valley) and creative prose writers **Naomi Cohn** (Saint Paul), **Gen Del Raye** (Minneapolis), **Hilal Isler** (Saint Paul), and **Kao Kalia Yang** (Saint Paul).

The honorable mentions in children's literature are Brita Sandstrom (Minneapolis), TiArra Shepherd (Minneapolis), Catherine Thimmesh (Eden Prairie) and Laura Zimmermann (Minneapolis). The honorable mentions in creative prose are Lesley



Arimah (Minneapolis), Zibiquah Denny (Minneapolis), Otis Roffman (Minneapolis), and Aurelia Wills (Saint Paul).

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Children's Literature/Middle Grade and Young Adult: 2023 Recipient

Art Coulson is a writer of Cherokee, English and Dutch descent. He is the author of more than a dozen books, graphic novels and plays, including the middle grade novel, *Chasing Bigfoot* (2022), *The Reluctant Storyteller* (2020), and *Look, Grandma! Ni, Elisi!* (2021). *The Reluctant Storyteller* was named a best book of 2020 by Bank Street and American Indians in Children's Literature. *Look, Grandma! Ni, Elisi!* was named a best STEM children's book by the National Science Teaching Association in 2021 and featured on the inaugural broadcast of Reading Rainbow Live!

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Creative Prose: 2023 Recipients

Naomi Cohn is a writer and teaching artist. Her past includes a childhood among Chicago academics; involvement in a guerrilla feminist art collective; and work as an encyclopedia copy editor, community organizer, and therapist. Her poetry and essays have appeared in *Baltimore Review*, *Hippocampus*, *Terrain*, and *Poetry*, among other places. Other recognition includes: Best of the Net Finalist, two Pushcart nominations, and broadcast on NPR. Red Dragonfly Press published her chapbook, *Between Nectar & Eternity*. *The Braille Encyclopedia*, a memoir in linked flash prose, is forthcoming (2024) from Rose Metal Press. She makes her home in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Gen Del Raye is half Japanese and was born and raised in Kyoto, Japan. His debut story collection, *Boundless Deep & Other Stories*, won the 2022 Raz-Shumaker Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Fiction and is forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press. His work has appeared or is forthcoming from *The Gettysburg Review* and *Poetry Northwest*, and was anthologized in *The Best Small Fictions 2017* and *The Best New Poets 2019*. He received his MFA from Hamline University and is based in Minneapolis, MN.



Hilal Isler's writing has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *Baltimore Review*, *Lithub*, *Electric Literature*, *NY magazine*, *LA Review of Books* online, and in *McSweeney's*. She has been awarded residency at Yaddo & MacDowell, and was a 2019 Roxane Gay writing fellow with the Jack Jones Literary Arts Association. This year she is a Periplus fellow, under the mentorship of Ms. Dina Nayeri. Hilal is a staff reader for the literary journal *Ploughshares*. Her doctorate is from the University of Pennsylvania, and she is founding editor of the *Hennepin Review*.

Kao Kalia Yang is a Hmong American author for both adults and children. Her adult works include: *The Latehomecomer*, *The Song Poet*, and *Somewhere in the Unknown World*. She co-edited the ground-breaking collection, *What God is Honored Here?: Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss By and For Native Women and Women of Color*. Her children's books include: *A Map Into the World*, *The Shared Room*, *The Most Beautiful Thing*, *Yang Warriors*, and *From the Tops of the Trees*. Yang's work has been recognized by the Minnesota Book Awards, National Book Critics Circle Award, the Dayton's Literary Peace Prize, the PEN USA Literary Awards, and others. Yang is a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship.

McKnight Award Judging

McKnight Award judges were selected in the fall of 2022. The identities of the judges are not known to the applicants during the application process, and applicant identities are kept confidential from the judges until they make their selections.

2023 Children's Literature Judge

Aida Salazar is an award-winning author, arts activist, and translator whose writings for adults and children explore issues of identity and social justice. She is the author of the critically acclaimed middle grade verse novels, *THE MOON WITHIN* (International Latino Book Award Winner); *LAND OF THE CRANES* (Américas Award, California Library Association Beatty Award, Northern CA Book Award, NCTE Charlotte Huck Honor, Jane Addams Peace Honor, International Latino Book Award Honor); as well as *A SEED IN THE SUN* (Tomás Rivera Children's Book Award, ALA RISE Feminist Book Project Top 10 Book, NCTE Notable Poetry/ Verse Novel Honor, Jane Addams Peace Award Finalist). Her other works include the picture book anthology, *IN THE SPIRIT OF A DREAM: 13 Stories of Immigrants of Color*; the bio



picture book JOVITA WORE PANTS: The Story of a Mexican Freedom Fighter; and the anthology CALLING THE MOON: Period Stories by BIPOC Authors. Aida is a founding member of LAS MUSAS - a Latinx kidlit author collective. Her story, *By the Light of the Moon*, was adapted into a ballet production by the Sonoma Conservatory of Dance and is the first Xicana-themed ballet in history. She lives with her family of artists in Oakland, CA.

2023 Creative Prose Judge

Alexander Chee is the best selling author of the novels [*Edinburgh*](#) and [*The Queen of the Night*](#), and the essay collection *How To Write An Autobiographical Novel*, all from Mariner Books. A 2021 Guggenheim Fellow and a 2021 United States Artists Fellow, he is a recipient of a Whiting Award and a NEA Fellowship in Prose, as well as residencies from MacDowell, Civitella Ranieri and the VCCA. His stories and essays have appeared recently in *T Magazine*, *Harpers*, and *The New Republic*. He was the guest editor for *Best American Essays 2022*. He teaches as an associate professor of English and Creative Writing at Dartmouth College, and lives in Vermont.

About the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers

Now in its 42nd year, the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers provide Minnesota writers of demonstrated ability with an opportunity to work on their writing for a concentrated period of time. Five \$25,000 fellowships are awarded. One Award in Children's Literature alternates annually between writers for children under the age of eight and writers for older readers. Four fellowships alternate annually between writers of poetry/spoken word poetry and writers of creative prose. Writers must have either published a book in the genre in which they are applying, have been featured as a performer for a significant amount of readings and performances, or have a significant number of publications in literary magazines. The Loft McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers are supported by the McKnight Foundation.

Previous McKnight recipients are too numerous to list, but they include Heid E. Erdrich, Taiyon Coleman, Robert Bly, Patricia Hampl, Margaret Hasse, Jim Moore, Sun Yung Shin, Cary Waterman, Sandra Benitez, Deborah Keenan, Jack El-Hai, Leslie Adrienne Miller, Patricia Weaver Francisco, Barrie Jean Borich, Lorna Landvik, Kate DiCamillo, Molly Beth Griffin, Danez Smith, Kelly Barnhill, Ray Gonzalez, Dobby



Gibson, Ed Bok Lee, Heather Bouwman, Khary Jackson, David Mura, Shannon Gibney, and Anne Ursu.

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Incorporated in 1975, The Loft Literary Center is one of the nation's leading independent literary centers. The Loft advances the artistic development of writers, fosters a thriving literary community, and inspires a passion for literature. Learn more: loft.org