



2021–22 LOFT MENTOR SERIES

Poetry and Creative Prose Guidelines

The Loft Literary Center invites poets, fiction, and nonfiction writers to apply to the 2021–2022 Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose. This program offers advanced criticism and professional development opportunities to 12 writers: four each in the genres of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

THE PROGRAM

Twelve early career* writers are selected through a competitive judging process to work intensively with six nationally acclaimed writers of prose and poetry. Three of the mentors spend an extended period of time working with the entire group and conducting genre-specific workshops with the four writers in their genres. The other three mentors come in for intensive weekends of craft seminars with the full group and individual manuscript conferences with the writers in their genre. All participants are featured in a public reading—four fellows with two mentors—throughout the course of the year.

*Please see the Jerome Foundation's definition of early career [here](#).

Eligibility

- Work must be in the genres of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. Nonfiction may include memoir, personal essay, literary journalism, and biography. It does not include reportage, blogs, or opinion pieces.
- You may apply in more than one genre, but can only win in one. If you are applying in both fiction and nonfiction, you must submit different work samples.
- You must be a resident of Minnesota for a minimum of 12 months on the date of your application.
- You must not have published (traditional or self-published) more than one book in any genre.
- You may submit work previously published in magazines, journals, or anthologies.
- You must not be an enrolled student in a degree-granting program (including K-12, college, graduate, or postgraduate studies) at the time of application and/or during the Mentor Series fellowship period.
- Mentor Series fellowship alumni are eligible to re-apply to the Mentor Series after ten years have passed since their fellowship year.
- Board and staff members of the Loft and the Jerome Foundation are ineligible to apply.

Fellows are selected on the basis of the strength of their manuscripts and project plans and will receive an award of \$1,000 to defray the costs of program participation (book purchases, child care, etc.). Fellows are required to prepare for

and attend all program-related meetings, seminars, readings, workshops, manuscript conferences, and social activities. These activities may be virtual or in-person depending on mentors' and fellows' comfort level and public health guidelines.

All program dates are tentative and subject to change. Orientation for fellows is currently scheduled for September 11, 2021.

If you have questions about eligibility, please call program specialist Marion Gomez at 612-215-2578 or email her at mgomez@loft.org. More information, including answers to frequently asked questions, is available on our website: www.loft.org.

The Loft is unable to answer questions during the week of the application deadline, so please contact us in advance of July 2nd. **The deadline to apply is Friday, July 9th, at 11:59 p.m.**

Judging Process

A panel of preliminary readers composed of recent Mentor Series fellows who are ineligible to apply for the program will review the initial manuscripts received to the competition. From these, they will select 20 finalists in each genre which will be forwarded to the respective mentors for final decisions. The two mentors in each genre will confer and select four winners and two honorable mentions.

THE MENTORS

Fiction

Poupeh Missaghi



Poupeh Missaghi is a writer, a translator both into and out of Persian, an editor, and an educator. She holds a PhD in English and creative writing from the University of Denver, an MA in creative writing from Johns Hopkins University, and an MA in translation studies. Her debut novel [*trans\(re\)lating house one*](#) was published by Coffee House Press in February 2020. Her nonfiction, fiction, and translations have appeared in numerous journals, and she has several books of translation published in Iran. [*'ll Be Strong for You*](#), her translation of Iranian author Nasim Marashi's novel, is forthcoming in spring 2021. As an editor,

she worked for many years with *Asymptote* and is co-editor of *Matters of Feminist Practice* from Belladonna* Collaborative. She is currently a visiting assistant professor at the Department of Writing at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, a faculty mentor at the low-residency MFA of Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, as well as a writing consultant at Baruch College, CUNY, NY.

Fiction

Shannon Gibney



Shannon Gibney is a writer, educator, activist, and the author of *See No Color* (Carolrhoda Lab, 2015), and *Dream Country* (Dutton, 2018) young adult novels that won Minnesota Book Awards in 2016 and 2019. Gibney is faculty in English at Minneapolis College, where she teaches writing. A Bush Artist and McKnight Writing Fellow, her new novel, *Botched*, explores themes of transracial adoption through speculative memoir (Dutton, 2022). In October 2019, University of Minnesota Press released *What God is Honored Here?: Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss By and For Native Women and Women of Color*, which she co-edited with writer Kao Kalia Yang.

Creative Nonfiction

Kiese Laymon



Kiese Laymon is a Black southern writer from Jackson, Mississippi. Laymon is the author of the genre-bending novel, *Long Division* and the essay collection, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*. Laymon's bestselling memoir, *Heavy: An American Memoir*, won the 2019 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, the 2018 Christopher Isherwood Prize for Autobiographical Prose, the Austen Riggs Erikson Prize for Excellence in Mental Health Media, and was named one of the 50 Best Memoirs of the Past 50 Years by *The New York Times*. The audiobook,

read by the author, was named the Audible 2018 Audiobook of the Year. Laymon is the recipient of 2020-2021 Radcliffe Fellowship at Harvard. Laymon is at work on several new projects, including the long poem, *Good God*, the horror comedy, *And So On*, the children's book, *City Summer, Country Summer* and the film *Heavy: An American Memoir*. He is the founder of "The Catherine Coleman Literary Arts and Justice Initiative," a program aimed at getting Mississippi kids and their parents more comfortable reading, writing, revising and sharing.

Creative Nonfiction

Anika Fajardo



Anika Fajardo was born in Colombia and raised in Minnesota. Her memoir about that experience, *Magical Realism for Non-Believers: A Memoir for Finding Family*, was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award and named Best Book (Nonfiction) 2020 by City Pages. Her debut middle-grade novel, *What If a Fish*, was published in 2020 by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. She has earned

awards from the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Jerome Foundation, and The Loft Literary Center. Anika teaches at the Loft and in Augsburg University's low-residency MFA program. She also creates websites for writers, artists, and other creatives. <https://www.anikafajardo.com>

Poetry

Tiffany Midge



Tiffany Midge, a citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux, is the author of the essay collection “Bury My Heart at Chuck E. Cheese’s,” a finalist for a Washington State Book Award. Her poetry collections include “The Woman Who Married a Bear” (University of New Mexico Press, winner of the *Kenyon Review* Earthworks Indigenous Poetry Prize); “Outlaws, Renegades & Saints: Diary of a Mixed-up Halfbreed” (Greenfield Review Press, winner of the Diane Decorah Memorial Poetry Prize), and “Horns,” (forthcoming,

Scablands Books). Midge’s other honors include a Pushcart Prize, a Simons Public Humanities Fellowship, a Western Heritage Award, and an Eliza So Fellowship. Her work has appeared in *World Literature Today*, *First American Art Magazine*, *McSweeney’s*, *Waxwing*, *GAY Magazine*, *Massachusetts Review*, *YES! Magazine*, and more. A former columnist for *Indian Country Today*, she taught writing for Northwest Indian College, and resides on the eastern edge of the Palouse region of north central Idaho, in the Columbia River Plateau, homelands of the Nimiipuu. Visit her website: <https://tiffanymidge.wixsite.com/website> (Photo credit Jay Dearien)

Poetry

Chris Santiago



Chris Santiago is the author of *Tula*, selected by A. Van Jordan as the winner of the 2016 Lindquist & Vennum Prize for Poetry and published by Milkweed Editions. A 2018 McKnight Writing Fellow, he has new work forthcoming in *Copper Nickel*, *Interim*, *Couplet Poetry*, and *Action, Spectacle*. He has also received fellowships from Kundiman and the Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies, and was a finalist for the 2017 Minnesota Book Award. An

Associate Professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, he received his PhD from the University of Southern California. In February 2019, *Say Home*, his collaboration with composer Lembit Beecher and ethnographer Todd Lawrence, received its world premiere by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He teaches creative writing, worldbuilding, and Asian American literature.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- All entries must be submitted through Submittable. Incomplete entries or entries that do not comply with the guidelines will not be considered.
- A complete application will include:
 - A completed form in Submittable, including the biographical statement (written in third person).
 - An upload of a one-page goal statement detailing what you hope to achieve in the program as part of your application.
 - An upload of a 200-word statement about your Contribution to the Literary Landscape. The Loft Literary Center believes equity benefits everyone and the Loft

Mentor Series is committed to inclusion. Our most recent strategic framework states “We encompass a broad spectrum of voices, literary expression, and artistic endeavor. We respect all constituents, readers, and writers at every stage of their development. We believe language connects us; that through our shared love of reading, writing, and spoken word, we embrace and transcend our differences.” In 200 words, describe how your point of view and background (social, racial/ethnic, religious, gender identity, sexual identity, ability/disability) will contribute to the literary landscape of Minnesota and beyond our state.

- An upload of a 100-word statement answering the following question: *Is your work innovating, changing or challenging genre, form or the literary landscape at large? If so, how?*
- A work sample (see below)

WORK SAMPLE GUIDELINES

- You may submit one manuscript in each genre but may win in only one category. Each submission will require a separate Submittable entry; (e.g. you may not submit a poetry and a nonfiction manuscript with one entry).
- Your name may appear on the manuscript. Your submission will not be judged blind.
- If your work sample contains multiple pieces, title your entire work sample with the title of your first piece in the work sample. If your first work sample is untitled, please use the first line of the first piece as the title.
- **PAGE LIMITS:**
 - ⇒ Poets must submit 15–18 pages of poetry, with no more than one poem per page (poems longer than one page should be continued on subsequent pages). Pages must be consecutively numbered, one through 15 to 18.
 - ⇒ Prose writers must submit 12–20 double-spaced pages, with margins of no less than one inch on all sides. If you are submitting sections of a book-length project, you may include a one-page synopsis as part of your page limit. If you are submitting several short pieces, all pages must be numbered consecutively, one through 12 to 20.
 - ⇒ Exceeding the page limit will render your application ineligible.

DEADLINE:

- ⇒ All entries must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on July 9, 2021.
- ⇒ Winners will be notified by September 3, 2021 by phone. All other applicants will receive an email. Please be certain to include your contact information for summer if it is different from your current address.

The Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose is made possible through the support of the Jerome Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Loft Members.