



The Loft Literary Center

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**The Loft Literary Center Announces Recipients of
the 2019 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers**

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

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2019 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Creative Prose and Loft Award in Children's Literature (Older Children). 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 Cristina García in creative prose and Ibi Zoboi in children's literature. Cristina García will appear at the Loft on September 28, 2019. Ibi Zoboi will join the Loft to take part in Wordsmith, November 1–3, 2019.

The Loft received 49 qualified applications in children's literature and 130 qualified applications in creative prose. This year's recipients are children's writer Alison Behnke (Minneapolis) and prose writers John Jodzio (Minneapolis), Bronson Lemer (Saint Paul), Emily Strasser (Minneapolis), and Troy Wilderson (Minneapolis).

The honorable mentions in children's literature are Swati Avasthi (Minneapolis), Loretta Ellsworth (Lakeville), Lisa M. Bolt Simons (Faribault), Artika Tyner (Saint Paul). The honorable mentions in creative prose are Elizabeth Horneber (Mankato), Pallavi Dixit (Minneapolis), Chris McCormick (Mankato), Michael Torres (Mankato).



McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Children's Literature/Children Older Than Eight: 2019 Recipient

Alison Marie Behnke is an author and editor who has written more than 40 books for young people. Like many writers, she has an inordinate fondness for cats and coffee. She is also a fine-art photographer with a weakness for vintage cameras. She lives in Minneapolis, MN.

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Creative Prose: 2019 Recipients

John Jodzio's work has been featured in a variety of places including *This American Life*, *McSweeney's*, and *One Story*. He's the author of the short story collections, *Knockout*, *Get In If You Want To Live*, and *If You Lived Here You'd Already Be Home*. He lives in Minneapolis.

Bronson Lemer is the author of *The Last Deployment: How a Gay, Hammer-Swinging Twentysomething Survived a Year in Iraq* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2011). His work has appeared in *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, & *Twentysomething Essays by Twentysomething Writers* (Random House, 2006). He lives in St. Paul.

Emily Strasser's essays have appeared in *Catapult*, *Ploughshares*, *Guernica*, *Colorado Review*, *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, and *Tricycle*, and twice listed as notable by Best American Essays. She was a winner of the 2015 Ploughshares Emerging Writer's Contest, and a 2016 AWP Intro Award. Her writing and research have been supported by the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Jerome Foundation, the W.K. Rose Fellowship from Vassar College, the Olive B. O'Connor Fellowship from Colgate University, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, and the Camargo Foundation. She received her MFA from the University of Minnesota, and she'll be teaching creative writing there this fall.

T. E. Wilderson is a Midwestern writer who also works as a graphic designer, copywriter, and senior prose editor for *Typehouse* magazine. Wilderson's work has appeared in *Crack the Spine* and its latest anthology, the *Roanoke Review*, *The*



Louisville Review, the *Notre Dame Review*, and is forthcoming in *The Tishman Review*. A graduate of Spalding University's MFA writing program, Wilderson is at work on a short story collection and a novel.

McKnight Award Judging

McKnight Award judges were selected in the summer of 2018. 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.

2019 Children's Literature Judge

Ibi Aanu Zobi was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and is a graduate of the Clarion West Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop. Her short story, "Old Flesh Song", is published in the award-winning *Dark Matter: Reading the Bones*, a collection of African American speculative fiction. Ibi received an award from the Women Writers of Haitian Descent for her short story "At the Shores of Dawn", which was published in *One?Respe!* literary journal. She won a "Tricky Talker of the Year" an annual tall-tale contest presented by the Afrikan Folk Heritage Circle.

Her children's fable, "Mama Kwanzaa & Her Seven Children", was published in *African Voices Magazine*. She designed and taught a course on female archetypes in world mythology to the young women of the Sadie Nash Leadership Project where she also taught creative writing and leadership classes and she's been a volunteer mentor with Girls Write Now, Inc. Ibi presented a paper entitled, "Oya's Brood: Mythology and the African American Woman" for a symposium on Octavia Butler at the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College.

She is a recipient of a grant from the Brooklyn Arts Council for her original program, the Daughters of Anacaona Writing Project, partnering with local organizations Dwa Fanm, Inc. and Haiti Cultural Exchange in Brooklyn, and Fondasyon Felicite in Haiti to conduct a 3-day workshop with teen girls in Port-au-Prince. Ibi has completed a teen fantasy novel based on Haitian myth and folklore. Her short story "The Harem" is recently published in *Haiti Noir*, edited by Edwidge Danticat.



She's a recent winner of the Gulliver Travel Grant given annually by the Speculative Literature Foundation and holds an MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Ibi lives in Brooklyn with her husband, visual artist and educator Joseph Zoboi, and their three young children.

Her debut novel, *American Street*, was published by Balzer + Bray, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers was a finalist for the National Book Award and has received five starred reviews. Under the same imprint, her latest YA novel, *Pride*, was released this Fall, and, *Black Enough*, a collection of stories about what it's like to be young and black in America, will debut in January of 2019. Her middle grade debut, *My Life as an Ice-Cream Sandwich*, is forthcoming from Dutton/Penguin Books.

2019 Creative Prose Judge

Cristina García is the author of seven novels: *Here in Berlin: A Novel* (2017), *King of Cuba* (Scribner, 2013), which was adapted into a play in the summer of 2018 at Central Works Theater in Berkeley, *The Lady Matador's Hotel*, (Scribner, 2010); *A Handbook to Luck* (Knopf, 2007); *Monkey Hunting* (Knopf, 2003); *Agüero Sisters* (Knopf, 1997), winner of the Janet Heidiger Kafka Prize; and *Dreaming in Cuban* (Knopf, 1992), finalist for the National Book Award. *Elle Magazine* called *King of Cuba*, "Darkly hilarious....With a fine balance of wry absurdity and existential poignancy, García builds not just a tale of the end of days but a snapshot of the past impact and future reverberations of Cuba's revolution—a theme more fascinating than ever as the once-isolated island nation opens itself to the world."

García has edited two anthologies, *Bordering Fires: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Mexican and Chicano/a Literature* (2006) and *Cubanísimo: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Cuban Literature* (2003). She is also the author of three works for young readers, *Dreams of Significant Girls* (2011), a young adult novel set in a Swiss boarding school in the 1970s; *The Dog Who Loved the Moon*, illustrated by Sebastia Serra, (Atheneum, 2008); and *I Wanna Be Your Shoebox* (Simon and Schuster, 2008). A collection of poetry, *The Lesser Tragedy of Death* (Akashic Books), was published in 2010.



García was born in Havana to a Guatemalan father and Cuban mother. In 1961, when she was two years old, her family was among the first wave of people to flee Cuba after Fidel Castro came to power. They settled in New York City where she was raised in Queens, Brooklyn Heights, and Manhattan, in predominantly Irish, Italian, and Jewish neighborhoods. Her family, however, communicated at home in Spanish and shared many stories about Cuba during her youth; and she says that she has always thought of herself as Cuban.

García was a reporter for the Knoxville Journal before she was hired in 1983 by Time Magazine. Beginning there as a reporter and researcher, she became the publication's San Francisco correspondent in 1985, and its bureau chief in Miami for Florida and the Caribbean region in 1987. In 1988 she was transferred to Los Angeles. She left *Time* to write fiction full-time in 1990.

García holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Barnard College, and a Master's degree in International Relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Her work has been nominated for a National Book Award and translated into 14 languages. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Whiting Writers' Award, a Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University, and an NEA grant, among others. García has been a Visiting Professor at the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas-Austin and The University of Miami. She has served as Professor and University Chair in Creative Writing at Texas State University-San Marcos from 2012-14.

García is also the founder and artistic director of Las Dos Brujas Writers' Workshops. She currently lives in northern California.

About the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers

Now in its 38th 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, 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 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