



The Loft Literary Center

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The Loft Literary Center Announces Recipients of the 2022 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers

Four Minnesota Poets, Spoken Word Artists, and One Children's Literature Author Receive \$25,000 Each

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2022 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Poetry, Spoken Word, and Loft Award in Children's Literature (Younger 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 Ilya Kaminsky in poetry, Beau Sia in spoken word, and Meg Medina in children's literature. The Loft is carefully monitoring gathering advice from the CDC, but our hope is that both Ilya Kaminsky and Meg Medina will visit the Loft for a public reading in September of 2022 and spring of 2023, respectively. Beau Sia visited the Loft on April 2, and the Fellow and Honorables had the chance to meet him.

The Loft received 94 qualified applications across all three categories this cycle. This year's recipients are children's writer Dr. Artika Tyner (Saint Paul); spoken word artist K.W. Jackson (Saint Paul); and poets Douglas Kearney (Saint Paul), Preeti Kaur Rajpal (Minneapolis), and Chavonn Shen (Saint Paul).



The honorable mentions in spoken word are Jeffrey Skemp, Miss Mari, and Tatyana (Peuo) Tuy.

The honorable mentions in children's literature are Barbara DaCosta, Martin Cozza, Stephen Shaskan, and Art Coulson.

The honorable mentions in poetry are Katharine Rauk, Chelsea DesAutels, Halee Kirkwood, and Marlin M. Jenkins.

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Children's Literature/Picture Books: 2022 Recipient

Dr. Artika Tyner is a passionate educator, award-winning author, sought-after speaker, and advocate for justice. She is committed to training students to serve as social engineers who create new inroads to justice and freedom. Dr. Tyner manages Planting People Growing Justice Press and Bookstore, which promotes literacy, cultural awareness, and leadership development. She has written and published *Justice Makes a Difference*, *Amazing Africa: A to Z*, with Habia, and *Joey and Grandpa Johnson's Day in Rondo* and *Kofi Loves Music*.

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Spoken Word: 2022 Recipient

Khary Jackson is a writer, dancer and musician. Khary has written several plays, one of which (*Water*) was produced in 2009 at Ink and Pulp Theatre in Chicago. In 2020–2021, Khary co-composed a MNiatures commission with the Minnesota Opera. As a hip hop/street dancer, Khary was fortunate to create and perform a piece at the 2018 Choreographers' Evening at Walker Arts Center. Khary has been a recipient of several generous grants, including the 2019 Jerome Artist Fellowship, the 2016 McKnight Artist Fellowship in Writing, the Minnesota State Arts Board's 2012 Cultural Community Partnership Grant, and 2010 Artist Initiative Grant for Poetry. Khary is an alumnus of Cave Canem, the esteemed writing fellowship for



Black writers. Khary's poetry book, *Any Psalm You Want*, was published with Write Bloody Publishing in the spring of 2013.

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Creative Poetry: 2022 Recipients

Chavonn Williams Shen was a first runner-up for the Los Angeles Review Flash Fiction Contest and a Best of the Net Award finalist. She was also a Pushcart Prize nominee, a winner of the Loft Literary Center's Mentor Series, and a fellow with the Givens Foundation for African American Literature. A Tin House and VONA workshop alum, her writing has appeared in *Diode*, *Anomaly*, *Yemassee*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, and others.

Douglas Kearney has published seven collections, including the National Book Award-finalist *Sho* (Wave Books, 2021); the award-winning poetry collection *Buck Studies* (Fence Books, 2016); libretti *Someone Took They Tongues* (Subito, 2016); and criticism *Mess and Mess and* (Noemi Press, 2015). *WIRE Magazine* calls *Fodder*, a live album featuring Kearney and frequent collaborator Val-Inc., "Brilliant." Douglas Kearney is the 2021 recipient of OPERA America's Campbell Opera Librettist Prize, created and generously funded by librettist/lyricist Mark Campbell and co-librettist of *Sweet Land*, the Music Critics of North America's Best Opera of 2021. A Whiting Writer's and Foundation for Contemporary Arts Cy Twombly awardee with residencies/fellowships from Cave Canem, The Rauschenberg Foundation, and others, Kearney is a McKnight Presidential Fellow and associate professor of creative writing/English at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. Born in Brooklyn, raised in Altadena, CA, he lives in Saint Paul with his family.

Preeti Kaur Rajpal first began writing as a student of June Jordan in her Poetry for the People program at UC Berkeley. Preeti's work can be found in *The Sikh Review*, *Spook*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *The Lantern Review*, and other publications. Her poems are anthologized in *The World I Leave You: Asian American Poets Speak on Faith and Spirit* and the forthcoming *They Rise Like a Wave: An Anthology of Asian American Women Poets*. She has been a fellow with Loft Literary Center's Mentor Series, Poetry Foundation and Crescendo Literary's Emerging Poet's Incubator, Writing by Writers, Tin House Summer and Winter Workshops, Fine Arts Work Center's Workshops,



Mendocino Coast Writers Conference, and Kearny Street Workshop. Her work is supported by the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Jerome Foundation. Preeti was a 2019–2020 inaugural Jerome Hill Artist Fellow in Literature. She was a 2021 Storyknife and Anderson Center Writer-in-Residence and will be a Djerassi Artist Resident in 2022. She writes through post-memory in the shadow of historic India's Partition and the racialization of Sikhs in the post-9/11 Global War on Terror era. Her debut poetry book, *membership*, explores issues of belonging, to both family and the nation-state, and will be published by Tupelo Press.

McKnight Award Judging

McKnight Award judges were selected in the summer of 2021. 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.

2022 Children's Literature Judge

Meg Medina is an award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling author who writes picture books as well as middle grade and young adult fiction. Her works have been called "heartbreaking," "lyrical," and "must haves for every collection." Her titles include *She Persisted: Sonia Sotomayor*, with Chelsea Clinton; *Merci Suárez Can't Dance*, one of the 50 most anticipated novels of 2021, according to Kirkus; *Evelyn del Rey is Moving Away / Evelyn del Rey se muda*, 2020 Jumpstart's Read for the Record Selection, winner of the Margaret Wise Brown Prize in Children's Literature; 2021 Crystal Kite Award *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*, 2019 John Newbery Medal winner, and 2019 Charlotte Huck Honor Book; and *Burn Baby Burn*, long-listed for the 2016 National Book Award, short-listed for the Kirkus Prize, and a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize.

When she's not writing, Meg works on community projects that support girls, Latino youth, and/or literacy. She is a faculty member of Hamline University's Masters of Fine Arts in Children's Literature and lives with her family in Richmond, Virginia.



2022 Spoken Word Judge

Beau Sia is a Tony Award-winning poet and the author of *Well Played*. He was featured on all seasons of HBO's *Def Poetry* and the film *Rachel Getting Married*. Currently, he is developing the next era of stories, including G Yamazawa's first film.

2022 Poetry Judge

Ilya Kaminsky was born in Odessa, former Soviet Union, in 1977 and arrived in the United States in 1993, when his family was granted asylum by the American government. He is the author of *Deaf Republic* (Graywolf Press) and *Dancing In Odessa* (Tupelo Press) and co-editor and co-translator of many other books, including *Ecco Anthology of International Poetry* (Harper Collins) and *Dark Elderberry Branch: Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva* (Alice James Books).

His work won the Los Angeles Times Book Award, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, the National Jewish Book Award, the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Whiting Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Metcalf Award, Lannan Fellowship, Academy of American Poets' Fellowship, NEA Fellowship, and Poetry Magazine's Levinson Prize and was also shortlisted for the National Book Award, National Book Critics Circle Award, Neustadt International Literature Prize, and T.S. Eliot Prize (UK).

Deaf Republic was the New York Times' Notable Book for 2019 and was also named Best Book of 2019 by dozens of other publications, including *Washington Post*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Telegraph*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Guardian*, *Irish Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *Lithub*, *Library Journal*, and *New Statesman*. His poems have been translated into over twenty languages, and his books are published in many countries, including Turkey, the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, France, Mexico, Macedonia, Romania, Spain, and China, where his poetry was awarded the Yinchuan International Poetry Prize. In 2019, Kaminsky was selected by the BBC as "one of the 12 artists that changed the world."

About the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers



Now in its 41st 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 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, 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