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Announcing the 2014 Minnesota Emerging Writers’ Grant Winners

The Minnesota Emerging Writers' Grant is run by The Loft Literary Center (loft.org) and provides Minnesota writers with financial support and professional assistance to develop and implement multifaceted plans to further their artistic careers. The Minnesota Emerging Writers’ Grant program is directly supported by a grant from the Jerome Foundation.

2014 MINNESOTA EMERGING WRITERS’ GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Loft received 269 qualified entries to the 2014 Minnesota Emerging Writers’ Grant competition. A panel of five teaching artists from Hugo House, an independent center for creative writing in Seattle, Washington, reviewed the applications. The panel narrowed the field down to 20 finalists. From those 20, they selected six writers for the awards as well as seven honorable mentions.

Grants were awarded to:
- novelist Romelle Adkins of Stillwater
- poet Amir Hussain of Minneapolis
- short story writer John Jodzio of Minneapolis
- poet Gretchen Marquette of Minneapolis
- poet Hieu Minh Nguyen of Saint Paul
- prose writer Mary Stein of Minneapolis

Honorable mentions went to fiction writer Alicia Conroy of Minneapolis; creative prose writer Jason Darcy of Mankato; creative prose writer Pallavi Sharma Dixit of Saint Paul; essayist Jennifer Bowen Hicks of Saint Paul; young adult fiction writer Tristan Poehlmann of Minneapolis; poet Amy Schmidt of Hovland; and poet Lee Colin Thomas of Minneapolis.
THE WINNERS

Romelle Adkins received $3,500 so that she can consult with mentor Susan Power, and send out a draft to be professionally edited in order to complete her coming-of-age novel and shop it out to potential agents and publishers.

Romelle Adkins was born and raised in Saint Paul, MN. She is married and the mother of nine children, homeschooling them for sixteen years. Three years ago, she began taking classes at the Loft. Once she discovered her passion for writing, she never looked back. She has gone on to win the 2012-2013 Loft Mentor Series in Fiction, the Intermedia Arts' Beyond the Pure fellowship, a 2014 Jerome Travel and Study Grant, and the Givens Black Writers Collaborative Retreat Program.

Amir Hussain was awarded $6,607 to develop his practice as a poet through the writing of a series of poems about tanneries in Bangladesh, a self-designed writing retreat in Montana, and a writer's conference in Vermont.

Amir Hussain is a Minneapolis-based poet, writing at the crossroads of natural and social environments. He studied at the University of Minnesota (MFA in Creative Writing) and at the University of Pittsburgh (BA in Writing and Environmental Studies). His poems have appeared in various literary journals, including *Fugue*, *Mizna*, *Water~Stone Review*, *Midway*, and *Faultline*. His poem "Anhinga" was winner of the Big Cypress National Preserve 2014 Annual Poetry Contest. And his poetry manuscript "Pastorical" was recently selected as a finalist for the *New Rivers Press* Many Voices Project Prize.

John Jodzio was awarded $8,000 to take a sabbatical from his administrative job to focus on the completion of his short story collection.

John Jodzio’s short stories have appeared in *McSweeney’s*, *One Story*, *Tampa Review*, and numerous other places in print and online. He is the author of two short story collections, *If You Lived Here You’d Already Be Home*, and *Get In If You Want To Live.*

Gretchen Marquette was awarded $7,492 so that she may take time and mental space to write her second book, as well as to honor her obligations around the publication of her first book.

Gretchen Marquette has served as the assistant poetry editor for *Water~Stone Review*, and as a first reader for the National Poetry Series. Her work has appeared in places such as *Paper Darts*, *Harper’s*, and the *Paris Review*. Her first book, *May Day*, is forthcoming from Graywolf Press. She currently lives in the Powderhorn neighborhood in South Minneapolis, and teaches at various colleges and universities in the Twin Cities.
The Loft Literary Center

Hieu Minh Nguyen was awarded a grant of $7,108 to fund a five-month-long book tour, and promotion of his debut collection of poetry, *This Way to the Sugar*.

Hieu Minh Nguyen was born and raised in Saint Paul, Minnesota, by a single, Vietnamese-American, mother. He is the author of *This Way to the Sugar* (Write Bloody Press, 2014). He is a curator for "Inside Voices" a reading series presented by Button Poetry, an organization dedicated to publishing, producing, and promoting poetry. His work has also appeared or is forthcoming in publications such as *The Journal*, *PANK*, *Anti-*, *Muzzle*, *decomP*, *Indiana Review*, and other journals. He also works at a haberdashery.

Mary Stein was awarded $5,050 to attend three seasonal writing retreats over the year to generate material for a first novel.

Mary Stein lives in Minneapolis where she’s an assistant editor of *Conduit* literary magazine and works as a teaching artist through the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop. Her fiction has appeared in *Caketrain*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Dr. T.J. Eckleburg Review*, and *Spartan Lit*. Her work has been nominated for *New Stories from the Midwest*, and she recently received a Loft Mentor Series Award. She holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

THE JUDGES

The five judge panel came from Hugo House (hugohouse.org). Located in Seattle, WA, and named after noted Northwest poet and creative writing instructor Richard Hugo, Hugo House has provided classes, events, and residencies for emerging and established writers since 1996.

Elissa Washuta, a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, is the author of *My Body Is a Book of Rules*, a memoir forthcoming from Red Hen Press. Her work has appeared in *Salon*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Filter Literary Journal*, and *Third Coast*. She recently received a Potlatch Fund Native Arts Grant, an Artist Trust GAP Award, and a 4Culture Grant. In 2012, she was named an inaugural fellow in the Made at Hugo House program. She serves as adviser and lecturer for the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Washington and teaches in the MFA program at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Elissa is currently working on a second memoir tentatively titled *Starvation Mode*, concerning health obsession, her Native American and Pennsylvania Coal Region lineage, the way stress and famine rattle a body down to the DNA, and the inheritance of muffled desire in the New World. She teaches writing at Richard Hugo House and regularly reads her work around Seattle.

Jane Wong's poems have appeared in journals and anthologies such as *Mid-American Review*, *Eleven Eleven*, *The Volta*, *Meridian*, *CutBank*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Salt Hill*, *Sixth Finch*, *Best New Poets 2012*, and others. She holds an MFA from the University of Iowa and is the recipient of fellowships from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Kundiman, Squaw Valley, the Fine Arts Work Center, and the U.S. Fulbright Program.
Her most recent chapbook is *Kudzu Does Not Stop*. She lives in Seattle and teaches at the University of Washington and the Richard Hugo House.

**Peter Mountford’s** debut novel *A Young Man’s Guide To Late Capitalism* won the 2012 Washington State Book Award in fiction. His second novel *The Dismal Science* was published by Tin House Books in early 2014, and was named an editor's choice by *the New York Times*. His work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly, Best New American Voices 2008, Southern Review, Zyzzyva, Conjunctions, Boston Review, Granta,* and *The New York Times Magazine*. He is the event curator at Hugo House, and is on the faculty at Sierra Nevada's low-residency MFA program.

**Ed Skoog** is the author of two poetry collections, *Rough Day* and *Mister Skylight*, both published by Copper Canyon Press. He lives in Seattle.

**Karen Finneyfrock** is a poet and novelist in Seattle, WA. She is the author of two young adult novels: *The Sweet Revenge of Celia Door* and *Starbird Murphy and the World Outside*, both published by Viking Children’s Books. She is one of the editors of the anthology *Courage: Daring Poems for Gutsy Girls* and the author of *Ceremony for the Choking Ghost*, both released from Write Bloody Press. She is a former Writer-in-Residence at Richard Hugo House in Seattle and teaches for Seattle Arts and Lectures’ Writers-in-the-Schools program.

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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.