

12-2009

Spring 2010 New Writing Series

English Department

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November 24, 2009

Dear Members of the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series Committee,

I write to request the Committee's support for the spring 2010 New Writing Series, an innovative literary arts program sponsored by the English Department and the National Poetry Foundation. The Series marks its tenth anniversary this academic year and our spring programming builds upon a very successful fall slate that benefited from the Committee's generous support.

The amount we request, **\$3,900**, is less than one-half of the projected operating budget for the spring Series of **\$8,920**. The majority of the financial support for the Series will be provided by the English Department through its Elliott fund (\$4020). The Honors College has generously agreed to provide co-sponsoring support for one event (\$1000, for Donald Revell's reading). The detailed budget appended to this letter provides an overview of projected expenses and revenue sources.

The spring Series will feature six writers in five CA/DLS-supported events. Three additional events—featuring UMaine Creative Writing faculty and students—will require no financial support. Poets Donald Revell, Sharon Mesmer, William Corbett, and Eileen Myles are slated for solo readings and the husband-and-wife team of Laird Hunt (fiction) and Eleni Sikelianos (poetry) round out the schedule. These writers have all earned national, and in some cases international, recognition for multifaceted careers that blend poetry, fiction, memoir, translation, art writing, and small-press publishing. Their presence on campus promises to increase the linguistic, artistic, sexual, and social diversity of our community. Brief biographies of the featured writers may be found below.

New Writing Series programming has always been guided the principles of innovation, collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and diversity. From the start we have also worked hard to maximize the impact of real-time events within the rapidly-changing new media context. For example, the NWS blog has received 33,000 page views since its creation in fall 2006. Our Facebook groups, created in the fall of 2007, have nearly one hundred members and reach many more people with event and Series information. The Flickr page on which we document events has received more than 2000 views. And we have been making NWS content (sound and video files) available both through our blog and through UMaine's iTunes U since April of 2008. (A list of the URLs for these projects is appended to this application.) The real-time event in front of a live audience remains our Series' anchor point, but using the web to extend brief visits into lasting on-line presences is an effective way of maximizing the return on the investment it takes to bring people to campus.

Some other reasons for supporting the NWS:

- **A cutting-edge research university with an institutional commitment to innovation deserves literary arts programming that is diverse, daring, and**

original. The New Writing Series is such a program. While all modes and methods of writing fall within its ambit of curiosity, we take care to ensure that writers whose work departs from, and perhaps even challenges, dominant commercial and aesthetic assumptions are given a fair hearing. Our programming is consistently among the most diverse on the campus (and by extension in the region), foregrounding ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and sexual diversity (see the appended document "About the New Writing Series" for details). And our programming is original: no other institution in Maine, and only a few others in the country, have shown the kind of commitment the New Writing Series has toward the full-range of contemporary literary practice. We seek to confer recognition with our programming, not just to ratify judgments made somewhere up the literary food chain.

- **The New Writing Series does a lot with a little.** For what would be a modest honorarium if paid in a lump sum to a single celebrity on campus for one evening, the New Writing Series creates a coherent sequence of events that adds a distinctive dimension to the intellectual and artistic climate on campus and in the region. The honoraria we offer are low (between \$250 and \$1000) and we economize in every way we can on other expenses (see appended budget). Because the Series has an established identity—in terms of time (Thursday afternoons), place (the Soderberg Center Auditorium), and "look" (MaJo Keleshian's bold designs, echoed in our electronic publicity)—we get more out of each individual event. This has been a key to our successful audience development. Inertia is the enemy of artistic creation: the New Writing Series creates momentum around the act of literary creation, stirring up lively conversations that resonate beyond the cube-like walls of the Soderberg Auditorium.

- **The New Writing Series has a strong local audience, but it also brings national visibility to the University of Maine.** The off-campus publicity for the New Writing Series always spotlights UMaine (rather than the English Department or the NPF): our goal is to keep Orono on the national map when it comes to the literary arts, and to emphasize that the UMS flagship campus is at the leading edge of literary artistic practice. No other college in the state or campus in the UM system can demonstrate the depth of commitment and ongoing excellence that the New Writing Series, with the Committee's support, has achieved.

- **Literary culture is an important piece in the "creative economy" puzzle.** A university campus that fails to stay in touch with contemporary literary practice is depriving itself of access to the fresh thinking that writers, often in advance of their colleagues in other disciplines, bring to the world around us. The literary arts are essential to the creation of an atmosphere of free exploration of any and all aspects of contemporary existence, an atmosphere as decisive in the sciences as in the humanities.

• **The "New" in New Writing Series.** We have been fortunate to receive Committee support for the NWS in the past and we are deeply grateful for it. But the enduring institutional framework of the Series should not mask the fact that we bring new voices and visions to campus with every fresh season of the NWS. We are, in other words, offering "new programming" for the Committee's consideration, programming that will disappear from the cultural calendar without your support.

I have included an itemized budget (using an Excel spreadsheet in lieu of the standard form) for the spring 2010 New Writing Series. In keeping with CA/DLS policy, we strive to offer the lowest honoraria compatible with a writer's reputation and standard fee. I will note that our typical "ceiling" of \$1000 (being offered to just one writer in the spring) is well below what most successful fiction writers (and their agents) will consider. Our travel policy allots to invited writers "up to \$500 for travel" and we work with individuals to minimize that expense whenever possible. Accommodations are provided by University Inn in Orono and are estimated at the appropriate seasonal rates. Meal and reception expenses **do not** factor into our request for Committee support: they are included here for informational purposes only. In those cases where scheduling or other difficulties preclude a proposed writer from participating in the Series, we seek replacements of comparable rank and reputation to fill the slot.

The proposal you are considering has received unanimous approval from the English Department's Speakers and Special Events Committee and is fully supported by Department Chair Naomi Jacobs. I believe that the other items should be self-explanatory, but I am more than happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Steve Evans

Associate Professor of English
New Writing Series Coordinator
Graduate Program Coordinator
National Poetry Foundation

Brief biographical and bibliographical profiles (in alphabetical order)

William Corbett is the Boston-based author of more than a dozen books of poetry, including most recently *Opening Day* (2008), as well as several monographs devoted to New England literary history and individual artists and poets like Philip Guston and James Schuyler. Corbett was for many years Writer-in-Residence in the Program of Writing and Humanistic Studies at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he taught classes focusing on the craft of the personal essay and the creation of poetry. He continues at MIT in his capacity as Director of Student Writing Activities. He is editor of the small publishing house Pressed Wafer, which specializes in poetry broadsides, chapbooks and books. He also runs the literary program at CUE Art Foundation, a non-profit gallery in New York City's Chelsea.

Novelist **Laird Hunt**, former United Nations press officer and current faculty member at Denver University, has lived in Singapore, Tokyo, London, The Hague, and Paris, where he studied at The Sorbonne. Hunt holds an MFA in Writing and Poetics from Naropa University, as well as a black belt in tae kwon do. He and his wife, the poet Eleni Sikelianos, and daughter, Eva Grace Sikelianos Hunt, live in Boulder, Colorado, USA. Hunt is the author of five books, including a short story collection and three novels: *The Impossibly*; *Indiana, Indiana*; and *The Exquisite*, which have received great reviews. His fourth novel, *Ray of the Star* was published by Coffee House Press in fall 2009.

Sharon Mesmer was born in Chicago. In the 1980s she was active in that city's literary scene, co-founding and -editing the publications B City and letter eX. Since making New York her home in 1988, she received a MacArthur Scholarship from Brooklyn College (by recommendation of Allen Ginsberg), and was a featured performer in "Words In Your Face," the 1991 season premiere of the public television series *Live From Off Center*. A chapbook, *Crossing Second Avenue*, was published in Japan in 1997, coinciding with her reading tour of three cities there. During two residencies at the MacDowell Colony and one at Hawthornden Castle, Scotland, she completed her first novel. In 1998 she collaborated with Prix de Rome-winning composer Barbara Kolb on an a capella libretto (in Latin) for the Indiana University of Pennsylvania's festival honoring the 900th birthday of medieval composer Hildegard von Bingen. Currently, she teaches fiction writing and literature at the New School in Manhattan and is English language editor of the Japanese literary magazine *American Book Jam*. Her first collection of poetry, *Half Angel, Half Lunch* was published by Hard Press; a collection of stories, *The Empty Quarter* appeared with Hanging Loose Press. Her most recent title is *The Virgin Formica* (Hanging Loose, 2008). Recent work appears in *Poetry*, *New American Writing*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Traffic*.

Eileen Myles has written thousands of poems since she gave her first reading at CBGB's in 1974. She's read to audiences at colleges, performance spaces, and bookstores across America as well as in Europe, Iceland, and Russia. In 1992 she conducted an openly female write-in campaign for President of the United States. She's toured with Sister Spit's Ramblin' Road Show. Her books include *The Importance of Being Iceland* (2009), *Sorry, Tree* (2007), *Skies* (2001), *on my way* (2001), *Cool for You* (a novel,

2000), *School of Fish* (1997), *Maxfield Parrish* (1995), *Not Me* (1991), and *Chelsea Girls* (stories, 1994). In 1995, with Liz Kotz, she edited *The New Fuck You / adventures in Lesbian Reading* for Semiotext(e).

Donald Revell was born in the Bronx in 1954. A graduate of SUNY-Binghamton and SUNY-Buffalo, he has taught at the Universities of Tennessee, Missouri, Iowa, Alabama, and Denver. Since 1994, he has been a Professor of English at the University of Utah, where he now serves as Director of Creative Writing. Editor of *Denver Quarterly* from 1988-94, he has been a poetry editor of *Colorado Review* since 1996. Revell is the author of eight collections of poetry: *My Mojave* (Alice James, 2003); *Arcady* (Wesleyan, 2002); *There Are Three* (Wesleyan, 1998); *Beautiful Shirt* (Wesleyan, 1994); *Erasures* (Wesleyan, 1992); *New Dark Ages* (Wesleyan, 1990); *The Gaza of Winter* (University of Georgia Press, 1988); and *From the Abandoned Cities* (Harper & Row, 1983). He has also translated two volumes of the poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire: *Alcools* (1995) and *The Self-Dismembered Man: Selected Later Poems* (2004), both from Wesleyan. His honors include a Pushcart Prize, the Shestack Prize, the Gertrude Stein Award, the PEN Center USA Award for poetry, as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Ingram Merrill and John Simon Guggenheim Memorial foundations. Revell lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, with his wife, poet Claudia Keelan, and their son, Benjamin.

Eleni Sikelianos, the great granddaughter of the Nobel-nominated Greek poet Angelos Sikelianos, was briefly a biology student in her undergraduate career, drawn to oceanography and microbiology. Although those formal studies were abandoned, the language of wild oceanaria and cellular activity continues to inform her writing. As a young woman, Sikelianos spent nearly two years traveling (often by thumb) through Europe and Africa (from London to Ankara, and from Haifa to Dar-es-Salaam). She has lived in Paris, San Francisco, New York, Athens, and now, Boulder. In addition to *The Body Clock* (Coffee House, 2008), her two most recent books are a long poem in and around the history and sites of her home state, *The California Poem* (Coffee House, 2004); and a hybridized memoir about her father, heroin, and homelessness, *The Book of Jon* (Nonfiction; City Lights, 2004). Earlier books include *The Monster Lives of Boys & Girls* (Green Integer, National Poetry Series prize, 2003), *Earliest Worlds* (Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, MN: April 2001), *The Book of Tendons* (Post-Apollo) and *To Speak While Dreaming* (Selva Editions). She has been received numerous awards for her poetry, nonfiction and translations, including the National Poetry Series, residencies at Princeton University as a Seeger Fellow, at La Maison des écrivains étrangers in Brittany, and at Yaddo, a Fulbright Writer's Fellowship in Greece, a New York Foundation for the Arts Award in Nonfiction Literature, the James D. Phelan Award, two Gertrude Stein Awards for Innovative American Writing, the New York Council for the Arts Translation Award, and a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship in Poetry. She currently lives in Colorado with her husband, the fiction writer Laird Hunt, and teaches in the MFA program at Naropa in Boulder, and in the Creative Ph.D. program at the University of Denver.

About the New Writing Series — A Brief History

The New Writing Series was formally inaugurated in the spring of 2000 when a proposal drafted by Steve Evans in consultation with Benjamin Friedlander and Burton Hatlen received unanimous approval from the English department's Speaker and Special Events Committee, then chaired by Welch Everman. In the eighteen semesters of its existence, it has served as an instrument for investigating the state of contemporary writing here in Maine, in the U.S. and Canada more broadly, and to some extent the world (Nigerian, Australian, Jamaican, English, Chilean, and other writers have come to Orono through the Series). The Series receives primary funding through the English Department's Lloyd H. Elliott fund and has received consistent administrative support from the National Poetry Foundation, matching funds through the Cultural Affairs Committee, and co-sponsorships from a wide variety of departments and programs (the Honors College, Art, Multicultural Programs, Women in the Curriculum, Wilde Stein, Modern Languages & Classics, and others).

The primary objectives of the New Writing Series are (i) to make contemporary poetry and fiction a valued part of the cultural life at the University of Maine, (ii) to broaden the University's local, national, and international reputation as a site of vibrant cultural exchange and creativity, and (iii) to cultivate links within the University as well as between the University and area secondary schools that foster imaginative approaches to thinking about contemporary literary practices. Whereas developing an audience for individual events can be difficult, a Series creates an ongoing context for the exploration of contemporary writing and signals a more serious level of commitment to the inclusion of the literary arts in the cultural repertoire of campus and community life.

Since 2000, the Series has hosted more than 130 events, featuring more than 160 individual writers, and it has earned a loyal local audience (typical event attendance ranges between 40 and 150 people) as well as a strong national reputation. Extended residencies by Robert Creeley (between 2000-2003) and Alice Notley (2004) have been coordinated in conjunction with the Series, as has a Libra Professorship that brought four African American poets—Jay Wright, Jayne Cortez, Lorenzo Thomas, and Amiri Baraka—to campus in 2001.

A Series weblog was created in the fall of 2006 and a substantial archive of materials of research and pedagogical value (countless hours of sound recordings, videotapes of live readings, forty professional quality digital-video "Poet Profiles" of NWS participants) has been carefully gathered and organized over the years.

The New Writing Series on the Web

The New Writing Series blog (main source for NWS news)

<http://nwsnews.wordpress.com/>

The New Writing Series on Facebook (registration required)

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2511086192>

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2384569801>

The New Writing Series on Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/thirdfactory/>

The New Writing Series on UMaine's iTunes U

<http://www.umaine.edu/itunesu/>

(click "Open Umaine on iTunes U" in upper right, then scroll to
"Courses—English—New Writing Series")

The New Writing Series on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/user/npfvideo>

The New Writing Series on LibraryThing Local

<http://www.librarything.com/venue/18404/UMaine-New-Writing-Series>

I	Event Expenses		travel by	travel from	trav allotment	accommod	meals	
	writer	honorarium						
	Donald Revell	\$1,000	air	Las Vegas	\$500	\$160	\$50	\$1,710
	William Corbett	\$500	surface	Boston	\$500	\$160	\$50	\$1,210
	Eileen Myles	\$500	air	Montana	\$500	\$160	\$50	\$1,210
	Laird Hunt	\$500	air	Denver	\$500	\$90	\$50	\$1,140
	Eleni Sikelianos	\$500	air	Denver	\$500	\$90	\$50	\$1,140
	Sharon Mesmer	\$500	air	Manhattan	\$500	\$160	\$50	\$1,210
		\$3,500			\$3,000	\$820	\$300	\$7,620
II	Fixed Expenses		agent	expense				
	MaJo Keleshian	\$225	Poster Design					
	Furbush-Roberts	\$225	Poster Printing					
	University Relations	\$600	Digital Videotaping					
	Pulp & Paper Foundation	donated	Room Rental	(\$300 value)				
	Facebook	\$250	Advertising					
		\$1,300						
III	Total Series Expenses							
	Event Expenses	\$7,620						
	Fixed Expenses	\$1,300						
	Total Expenses	\$8,920						
IV	Overview							
	Elliott Commitment	\$4,020	English Department					
	Collaborating Commitments	\$1,000	Honors College					
	Cultural Affairs Request	\$3,900						

Cultural Affairs Committee
and
Distinguished Lecture Series
c/o Wanda Madden-Carr
201 Alumni Hall
University of Maine

December 16, 2009

To: Steven Evans

From: Dorothy Croall & Dan Sandweiss, Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Cultural Affairs Committee and Distinguished Lecture Series, it gives us great pleasure to inform you that your proposal Spring 2010 New Writing Series, has been awarded \$3,900.00

Please contact Wanda Madden-Carr at 1-1516 to discuss the procedures in place for the submission of financial expenses related to this award at your earliest convenience.

The following acknowledgement is required on ALL promotional material: *This event was supported in part by a grant from the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series.*

Attached is a form for your use to summarize the benefits derived from this grant. This form should be submitted within 30 days after the conclusion of the event. Timely submission of your summary will be considered as part of any future funding requests.

The Cultural Affairs Committee members congratulate you and wish you much success on this project.

cc: Stella Santerre

CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES
GRANT REPORT FORM
New Writing Series Fall 2009

The UMaine New Writing Series received \$4500 in support from the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series Committee for literary programming in the fall semester of 2009.

In its tenth anniversary year, the NWS hosted seven events featuring seven writers—poets Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Rae Armantrout (who went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in the spring of 2010), Bill Berkson, Elizabeth Willis, Dan Beachy-Quick, and Dougals Rothschild, plus fiction writer Selah Saterstrom—and attracted a cumulative audience of 365 people to campus (individual event audiences ranged from 35 to 65; the event average was 52 people). All events were documented on digital videotape and will continue to reach interested members of the local and national community through on-line archiving.

Two writers named in our application—fiction writer George Saunders and poet-translator David Melnick—declined our invitations, the former because the honorarium we offered was too far beneath the standard asking fee set by his literary agent, and the latter due to health concerns. Poet Douglas Rothschild was added to the roster in partial compensation for these two declines.

The total operating costs for the fall 2009 season came in under budget at \$9525. The \$4257 contributed by CA/DLS accounted for just under fifty percent of eligible (i.e. non-meal, non-reception) expenses, with the English Department's Elliot and Ellis Funds contributing \$4268 and the Honors College contributing \$1000.

Detailed event information is archived for public access on the NWS blog at

<http://nwsnews.wordpress.com/category/events/>

Respectfully and gratefully submitted by Steve Evans, Associate Professor of English and NWS Coordinator.

NWS Fall 09 Expenses

Account	Class	Date	Posted	Line Descr	Amount	Cultural Affairs Allowable Expenses	Funding Source	Event Details
51012	01	9/30/2009	9/30/2009	Payroll Entry - Monthly	225.00	225.00	Elliott	Majo Poster Design
54810	01	9/30/2009	10/2/2009	BENEFITS ADJUSTMENT	19.13	19.13	Elliott	Majo Benefits
60004	01	9/14/2009	9/15/2009	MEI-MEI BERSSENBRUGGE	500.00	500.00	Elliott	MEI-MEI BERSSENBRUGGE Honorarium
60006	01	9/16/2009	9/17/2009	ADJ NON-EMPL TRAVEL	697.90	697.90	Elliott	Rae Armantrout Travel
60600	01	9/29/2009	9/30/2009	FURBUSH-ROBERTS PRINTIN	204.50	204.50	Elliott	NWS Fall 09 Posters
60004	01	10/9/2009	10/10/2009	RAE ARMANTROUT	500.00	500.00	Elliott	Rae Armantrout Honorarium
60004	01	10/26/2009	10/27/2009	SELAH SATERSTROM	350.00	350.00	Elliott	Selah Saterstrom Honorarium
60006	01	10/15/2009	10/16/2009	BANGOR TRAVEL SERV	503.90	503.90	Elliott	Daniel Beachy-Quick Travel
60006	01	10/26/2009	10/27/2009	BANGOR TRAVEL SERV	175.00	175.00	Elliott	Daniel Beachy-Quick Travel - Modification
60006	01	10/29/2009	10/31/2009	Kress,David	464.40	464.40	Elliott	Selah Saterstrom Travel
60122	01	10/29/2009	10/30/2009	UNIVERSITY INN ACADEMIC	164.00	164.00	Elliott	Elizabeth Willis Lodging
60122	01	10/21/2009	10/22/2009	UNIVERSITY INN ACADEMIC	164.00	164.00	Elliott	Rae Armantrout Lodging
61026	01	10/29/2009	10/31/2009	Kress,David	17.95	17.95	Elliott	Selah Saterstrom Meal
61026	01	10/7/2009	10/8/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	119.64	119.64	Elliott	Mei Mei Berssenbrugge Meals
61026	01	10/29/2009	10/30/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	191.40	191.40	Elliott	Bill Berkson Meals
61026	01	10/21/2009	10/22/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	119.00	119.00	Elliott	Rae Armantrout Meals
61026	01	10/21/2009	10/22/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	-3.64	-3.64	Elliott	Tax Adjustment-Mei Mei Berssenbrugge Meals
61026	01	10/21/2009	10/22/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	104.00	104.00	Elliott	Selah Saterstrom Meals
60004	01	11/5/2009	11/6/2009	BILL BERKSON	1000.00	1000.00	Ellis	Bill Berkson Honorarium
60004	01	11/23/2009	11/24/2009	ELIZABETH WILLIS	1000.00	1000.00	Elliott	Elizabeth Willis Honorarium
60004	01	11/23/2009	11/24/2009	DANIEL BEACHY-QUICK	500.00	500.00	Elliott	Daniel Beachy-Quick Honorarium
60006	01	11/5/2009	11/6/2009	BANGOR TRAVEL SERV	402.70	402.70	Elliott	Douglas Rothschild Travel
60122	01	11/9/2009	11/11/2009	UNIVERSITY INN ACADEMIC	182.00	182.00	Elliott	Bill Berkson Lodging
60122	01	11/9/2009	11/11/2009	UNIVERSITY INN ACADEMIC	164.00	164.00	Elliott	Selah Saterstrom Lodging
60122	01	11/24/2009	11/25/2009	UNIVERSITY INN ACADEMIC	237.00	237.00	Elliott	Daniel Beachy-Quick Lodging
61026	01	11/12/2009	11/13/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	182.40	182.40	Elliott	Elizabeth Willis Meals
61026	01	11/24/2009	11/25/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	112.75	112.75	Elliott	Daniel Beachy-Quick Meals
60004	01	12/1/2009	12/2/2009	DOUGLAS ROTHSCHILD	500.00	500.00	Elliott	Douglas Rothschild Honorarium
60122	01	12/1/2009	12/2/2009	UNIVERSITY INN ACADEMIC	174.00	174.00	Elliott	Douglas Rothschild Lodging
61026	01	12/1/2009	12/2/2009	LUNA BAR & GRILL	168.40	168.40	Elliott	Douglas Rothschild Meals
61008		12/28/2009	12/29/2009	FALL 09 NEW WRITING VIDEOS	385.00	385.00	Elliott	Event Videotaping
				TOTAL	\$9,524.43	\$8,512.53		
Amount Submitted to Cultural Affairs for Reimbursement @ 50%:						\$4,256.27		