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Hugo House Releases Literary Series Lineup for 2015-2016

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SEATTLE, WA—Hugo House announced the 2015-16 Hugo Literary Series today, featuring **Dinaw Mengestu, Leslie Jamison, D. A. Powell, Andrew Sean Greer, Jenny Offill**, and others.

Three writers and one artist per event are commissioned to write a new piece or create a work on a particular theme. This year, the Hugo event staff decided on an overarching theme: **to deconstruct, work against, or follow clichés**. In a change from previous years, the headlining writers were asked to choose the clichés for their respective evenings.

“In writing circles, if nowhere else, clichés are pretty avidly reviled,” events curator **Peter Mountford** said. “But as Leslie Jamison noted in an essay defending clichés for the *New York Times*: ‘They privilege commonality over singular self-expression. They humble us toward one another.’ We’ve asked headliners this year this year (including Leslie Jamison!) to explore a cliché that they were eager to destroy or embrace—a cliché that spoke to them in some meaningful way.”

Each performer is apt to put a wildly different spin on the topic, making for an entertaining night. Past Lit Series writers have gone on to have their commissioned pieces published or anthologized in publications such as the *New Yorker* and the *Iowa Review*.

Each series writer will also teach a class—on a topic of their choice—on the day following the Lit Series event in which they read.

The bar will be open, and books will be for sale by Elliott Bay Book Company at each event. Seating begins at 7 p.m. and the events begin at 7:30 p.m.

Quick Look

The 2015-2016 season begins on **Sept. 11, 2015** with writing based on the cliché “**Beating a Dead Horse.**” The event features novelist and reporter **Dinaw Mengestu**; fiction writer **Alissa Nutting**; and poet and Seattle native **Sarah Galvin**. The Foghorns, a rock-bluegrass band, will provide the music.

On **Nov. 20, 2015**, the writing is based on the cliché “**Beggars Can’t Be Choosers**” and features award-winning author of *The Empathy Exams* **Leslie Jamison**; poet and author of *King Me* **Roger Reeves**; and Portland-based novelist **Alexis Smith**, whose second novel *Marrow Island* comes out from Houghton Mifflin in 2016. Music will be provided by Yves.

The new year will begin with “**What Goes Around Comes Around**” on **Feb. 12, 2016**, featuring poet **D. A. Powell**; author and co-editor of *The Believer* literary magazine **Heidi Julavits**; and poet and performer **Sierra Nelson**. OCnotes will provide the music.

On **April 15, 2016**, “**All’s Fair In Love and War**” will be the theme. The event features novelist **Andrew Sean Greer**; Story Prize-winning writer **Claire Vaye Watkins**; and New York-born poet and spoken-word performer **Roberto Ascalon**. Alex Osuch will perform experimental electronic music.

The final Lit Series event, on **May 20, 2016**, is “**The Writing’s On the Wall.**” The night features bestselling novelist and author of *Department of Speculation* **Jenny Offill**; fiction writer **Laura van den Berg**, whose second book *The Isle of Youth* was named a “Best Book of 2013” by more than a dozen outlets; and Egyptian-American poet, translator, and performer **Maged Zaher**. Visual artist Dawn Cerny will exhibit work.

NOTE: Please email Kristen Steenbeeke at kristens@hugohouse.org to request press passes to any of the events.

About the Authors

Dinaw Mengestu received a BA from Georgetown University and an MFA from Columbia University. His journalism and fiction have appeared in

such publications as the *Iowa Review*, *Granta*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New Yorker*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Alissa Nutting is the author of the novel *Tampa* and the short story collection *Unclean Jobs for Women and Girls*, which won the Starcherone Prize for Innovative Fiction. Her fiction has appeared in *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, *Tin House*, *Bomb*, and *Conduit*; her essays have appeared in *Fence*, the *New York Times*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, and other venues.

Sarah Galvin is a poet and author of *The Three Einsteins*. Her blog, *The Pedestretarian*, is devoted to reviews of food found on the street. She has an MFA in poetry from University of Washington. In addition to poetry and discarded food, her interests include demolition derbies, food that isn't discarded, and confetti cannons. She has a recurring nightmare about a sentient house. She is widely known as "The Champagne of Queers." Her poems and essays can be found in *io*, *New Ohio Review*, *Pleiades*, *Pinwheel*, *Vice Magazine*, and *The Stranger*

Leslie Jamison is the author of the novel *The Gin Closet* and a collection of essays, *The Empathy Exams*, which won the Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize and garnered praise in a number of publications, including the *New York Times* and a place on *Entertainment Weekly's* "Must List." Her work has appeared or will appear in places like *Harper's*, *Oxford American*, *A Public Space*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and the *Believer*. She's a columnist for the *New York Times Book Review* and is currently finishing a doctoral dissertation at Yale about addiction narratives. She lives in Brooklyn.

Roger Reeves is the author of *King Me*, a book of poetry out from Copper Canyon Press. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *American Poetry Review*, and *Tin House*, among others. He has been awarded an NEA Fellowship, the Ruth Lilly Fellowship by the Poetry Foundation, two Bread Loaf Scholarships, an Alberta H. Walker Scholarship from the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, and two Cave Canem Fellowships.

Alexis M. Smith was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest. Her debut novel, *Glaciers* (Tin House), has been translated into Spanish and Italian. It was a finalist for the Ken Kesey Award for Fiction and a World Book Night 2013 selection. Alexis attended Mount Holyoke College and Portland State University, and she holds an MFA from Goddard College. Her interests include trail-running, beach-combing, bird-watching, and jam-making. In 2015 she received a grant from Regional Arts & Culture Council

and a fellowship from the Oregon Arts Commission. She lives with her son in Portland, Oregon.

D.A. Powell is the author of the trilogy of books *Tea, Lunch, and Cocktails*—which was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His poetry collection *Chronic* received the Kingsley Tufts Award and was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award.

Heidi Julavits is the author of four novels, including the critically acclaimed *The Mineral Palace*. She is the managing editor of the *Believer* and co-edited *Women in Clothes* with Sheila Heti, which featured 639 women’s voices from around the world reflecting on the meaning of their clothes.

Sierra Nelson, author of *I Take Back the Sponge Cake*, has poems in *Crazyhorse*, *DIAGRAM*, and *Poetry Northwest*. She earned her MFA from UW in 2002 and is a MacDowell Colony Fellow, Seattle City Artist Project Grant winner, and Vis-à-Vis Society co-founder.

Andrew Sean Greer is an American novelist and short-story writer. His second novel *The Confessions of Max Tivoli* earned him comparisons to Proust and Nabokov from critic John Updike. His stories have appeared in *Esquire*, *The Paris Review*, *The New Yorker*, and other national publications.

Claire Vaye Watkins has appeared in *Granta*, *One Story*, *The Paris Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Glimmer Train*, *Best of the West 2011*, *New Stories from the Southwest 2013*, the *New York Times*, and elsewhere. She was named one of the National Book Foundation’s “5 Under 35.”

Roberto Ascalon is a poet, writer, arts educator, and spoken-word performance artist who lives in the historic Youngstown/Cooper School in West Seattle. The recent recipient of the 2013 Rattle Poetry Prize, Ascalon has taught at Nova High School and participated in Seattle Arts and Lectures’ Writers-in-the Schools program. He currently works as a teaching artist and mentor for Arts Corps, Youth Speaks Seattle, and the Service Board.

Jenny Offill is a novelist, the co-editor of two anthologies of essays, and the author of several children’s books. Her second novel, the acclaimed *Dept. of Speculation*, was named one of the 10 Best Books of 2014 by the New York Times Book Review.

Laura van den Berg's first collection of stories, *What the World Will Look Like When All the Water Leaves Us*, was a Barnes & Noble "Discover Great New Writers" selection and shortlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Award. Her second collection of stories, *The Isle of Youth*, won the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts & Letters.

Maged Zaher is the author of *Thank You for the Window Office*, *The Revolution Happened and You Didn't Call Me*, and *Portrait for the Poet as an Engineer*. His translations of contemporary Egyptian poetry have appeared in Jacket magazine and Banipal.

About Hugo House

Hugo House is for writers—from their first words to their last. It's a place to read words, hear words, and make your own words better.

HH is a center for and ally to writers providing creative-writing classes, residencies, and events.

More Info

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Open hours: Monday through Saturday, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.