



MaxLiteracy Legacy

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CREATING A NETWORK FOR CREATIVE WRITERS AND WRITING IN THE VISUAL ARTS

Context

Over the last year, MaxLiteracy programme partners have supported a pilot network for Creative Writers inspired by and working with the Visual Arts.

Based on experience and learning from the MaxLiteracy Award project with Bristol Museum and Art Gallery in the 2018-19 round, network founder and Creative Writer, Caleb Parkin and Sonya Hundal, have programmed a series of network sessions. These sessions combine opportunity for open dialogue around current discourse and debate within creative writing and the visual arts and through the work of guest speakers in the visual arts and creative writing, which embed practical activity.

The network was intended as a way to connect and strengthen the sharing of skills in this specialism of writing in museum and gallery settings. For Caleb, this was about building on the momentum of an MSc (in

Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes) dissertation focused on these spaces. But over the last two years, with many museums and galleries closed, it felt even more important to find ways to celebrate the potential and nuances of writing inspired by objects, artworks and exhibitions. The Network has welcomed educators, writers, museum and gallery professionals, and other interested parties who have begun forging new connections, internationally.

Meetings

The inaugural network event launched in April and the themes explored have included: Activism and social justice with Carrie Supple, the founder of Journey to Justice, neurodiversity with the artist and writer Sonia Boue and the de-colonisation of the gallery and museum space led by the poet Casey Bailey.

To date, network sessions have been attended by a

national and international audience, from those with an interest in creative writing and the visual arts, teachers, educators, engagement practitioners, gallery, museum professionals and creative writers.

Profile: Caleb and Sonya

Sonya Hundal is a First Story writer-in residence working at a school in Lincolnshire and delivers writing workshops for the over 55s for Writing East Midlands & Transported Arts. Her own creative work focuses on marginal communities and unrecorded histories. Sonya is also a wood-fired baker. Currently published in *The Brown Anthology: Language*, Sofia Amina.

Caleb Parkin, Bristol City Poet 2020 - 22, has poems in *The Rialto*, *The Poetry Review*, *Under the Radar*, *Poetry Wales*, *Magma*, *Butcher's Dog*, *The Guardian* and elsewhere. He tutors for Poetry Society, Poetry School, Cheltenham Festivals, and First Story and holds an MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (CWTP) with a research dissertation focused on museum and gallery settings. Debut pamphlet, *Wasted Rainbow* (tall-lighthouse, Feb 2021), debut collection *This Fruiting Body* is out now with Nine Arches Press.

Programme Partners

The Creative Writing in the Visual Arts Network (CWVAN) was developed in response to the 2018-2019 MaxLiteracy Awards. Supported by the MaxLiteracy programme partners, Network meetings have sat alongside the 2021 MaxLiteracy Awards programme with guest speakers from both the creative writing in the visual arts perspective and MaxLiteracy Award holders. The network has worked as a learning and support mechanism through which participants have been able to connect, develop their skills and share best practice.

Jane Sillis, Director of the National Association of Gallery Education, (Engage) comments:

“The network meetings have brought together visual arts colleagues and creative writers for discussions about writing, the arts and a broad range of issues, including neurodiversity and race. It has been great to share practice from the MaxLiteracy programme with participants. Conversations have been provocative, informative and allowed space for debate. It has been really valuable connecting on line during a period when meeting person is still such a challenge.”

MaxLiteracy Programme Coordinator, Dr Ronda Gowland-Pryde, adds:

“The Creative Writing in the Visual Arts Network developed at a time when opportunities for connectivity amongst the creative and engagement community is even more important. With a passion for creative writing in the visual arts, the network has brought together a series of truly collaborative and insightful events that have undoubtedly been a source of inspiration, learning and reflection amongst peers and those with a general interest.”

About the MaxLiteracy Awards

Funded by the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust, MaxLiteracy offers funding for museums and galleries in England to support a dedicated programme of creative writing and literacy work within learning settings through the visual arts. The Awards are run in partnership with the National Association for Gallery Education (Engage) and the National Association for Writers in Education (NAWE).

In response to the global health emergency the 2021 call out for venues had an adapted focus. The awards invited galleries, museums, and visual arts venues to propose activity that aims to support the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people or young adults through creative writing, literacy and the visual arts.

In the Early Summer of 2021, three venues, Open Eye Gallery, Newark & Sherwood District Council and The Turnpike, were awarded funding to employ a creative writer to work with a local school on a creative writing or literacy project, taking inspiration from the venue's collections, displays or building.

The activities have informed the development of a new resource for each venue, designed to encourage engagement with the venue through creative writing. These will be widely shared within the arts and education sectors to encourage the greater use of galleries, art museums and visual arts venues by schools for creative writing and literacy work.

Network sessions are free to join. Please check the Engage website for further details and booking instructions on the events pages.