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SMC's Fall Creative Writing Reading Series

A Reading Sampler for Lamorinda

By Andrea A. Firth

"People can get their own literary education through our reading series," says Brenda Hillman, the Director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at Saint Mary's College in Moraga. For over 25 years, Saint Mary's College has invited writers from across the country to come to the campus to read their work and share their insights on the writing life as part of the Creative Writing Reading Series. "We have had hundreds of writers read including Pulitzer and Nobel prize winners," says Hillman as she leafs through programs from the past years pointing out the many prominent poets, novelists, and nonfiction writers who have participated.

SMC's Fall Reading series kicks off on October 5th with Bay Area writer Yiyun Li whose writing explores traditional and contemporary Chinese culture. Li, an award-winning short story writer and novelist, was pegged as a remarkable writing talent with the publication of her debut collection *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* in 2005. Her latest book, also a collection of short stories, is called *Gold Boy, Emerald Girl*.

Later in October, San Francisco-essayist Ryan Van Meter will share his memoir-based stories of coming-of-age and coming out. And the third writer among the Fall evening readings is poet and recognized literary translator Clayton Eshleman. "We have some of the finest poets in the country reading here," says Hillman, who is also the Olivia Filippi Professor of Poetry at SMC. "Clayton Eshleman is a dazzling, surrealist poet," she adds.

Hillman encourages area residents to come listen to the visiting writers noting that there is something in the series for every reader. "It's a diverse and dynamic program," she says, "It's the only prominent reading series in the Lamorinda area." Hillman adds that the series makes a great outing for local book clubs and bibliophiles alike and gives them the opportunity to speak directly with the authors they are reading.

In addition to the evening readings, SMC holds "craft conversations" with the visiting writers who talk about the writing process. A highlight of the craft conversations this fall will be poet Richard Moore who published his first book of poetry at age ninety. Formerly known more for his groundbreaking work in public broadcasting and as a filmmaker, Moore will discuss the relationship between poetry and politics.

Three times a year, the graduate students in SMC's MFA in Creative Writing Program read their work. "The students, who concentrate in nonfiction, fiction, or poetry, each read for ten minutes," says Hillman. "It's like a reading tapas. The students' work is amazing."

SMC Creative Writing Reading Series

Readings are held on Wednesdays starting at 7:30 p.m. in the Soda Center on the Saint Mary's College campus in Moraga. The afternoon craft conversations are held at 2:30 p.m. in the Hagerty Lounge at SMC. Both the series and craft conversations are open to the public.

October 5th Yiyun Li

5:30 p.m. Craft Conversation

7:30 p.m. Reading

Li is an award-winning Bay Area fiction writer of short stories and novels. Her craft conversation will focus on the essential nature of storytelling, and what makes a story worth telling.

October 12th Ryan Van Meter

5:30 p.m. Craft Conversation

7:30 p.m. Reading

Van Meter is a San Francisco based essayist whose first book was described as a "coming-of-age and coming out story." Van Meter will discuss voice and authenticity in coming-of-age nonfiction in the craft conversation.

October 26th Readings by SMC graduate students, 7:30 p.m.

November 3rd Clayton Eshleman, 7:30 Reading

Eshleman is an award-winning poet and translator.

November 30th Richard Moore, 2:30 p.m.

Moore will reflect upon the arts and revolutions.

December 7th Readings by SMC graduate students, 7:30 p.m.

The 2012 Spring Series will feature author and poet Judith Claire Mitchell (2/14), poet and filmmaker Shane Book (3/14), and novelist Samina Ali (4/11).

For more information go to <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/schools/school-of-liberal-arts/departments-programs/mfa-creative-writing/reading-series.html>

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