

Accoutrements: an imprint of Avenue 50 Studio

Description

A Humanities For All Quick Grant would support Accoutrements, a series of 16 bilingual chapbook publications curated as accompaniments to poetry readings, visual art exhibits, and interdisciplinary events presented at Avenue 50 Studio. Avenue 50 Studio is an arts organization that promotes and presents Latinx and diverse local artists and poets, and is grounded in the community, geography, history, and struggles of the Northeast/East Los Angeles urban region. 12 of the 16 chapbooks in the 2019 series will consist of no more than 20 pages of poetry and/or prose, curated and designed around the monthly La Palabra poetry reading which is one of the longest held open mic poetry readings in Los Angeles, featuring both emerging and renowned poets of color. Four of the 16 chapbooks will be curated, designed and will respond to the following themes slated for exhibits for 2019 season: 1) the environment, 2) mental health, 3) displacement, and 4) technology, all from the perspective of communities of color. Funding would support the design of covers, design of interior layout, printing, and handcrafted binding costs. 12 chapbooks will be celebrated with a book launch reading on the day of the La Palabra reading on the 4th Sunday of each month (January-December), and six chapbooks will be launched one week after the opening of their respective art exhibit (February, April, June, August, October, November), all 16 events will be held at Avenue 50 Studio. One culminating event sharing all 16 chapbooks will be held at Audubon Center at Deb's Park in December.

Outreach and Engagement.

Participants will include emerging and renowned poets, novelists, and writers of all genres. La Palabra Reading series features four poets every month in addition to featuring one high school student, all of whom will be featured in the chapbook series. We will also feature five poets for each of the six chapbooks accompanying an art exhibit. The reading events and chapbooks will be open and available to the public, and out of consideration for the 69% of the local community of Highland Park who identify as Spanish speaking, the books will be bilingual, translated by language justice collective Antena Los Angeles.

Avenue 50 Studio maintains strong relationships with Poets and Writers, Academy of American Poets, Entropy's Los Angeles Literary Calendar, LatinoLA, as well as other websites and organizations that have positively contributed to the growth of the literary landscape that makes up LA. For purposes of highlighting the themes associated with this series, and promoting the work of the writers, we will continue to market through these channels, in addition to working with media sponsors such as Brooklyn and Boyle, Razorcake, and La Bloga.

Poetry readings at Avenue 50 Studio are free, and have traditionally been attended by 28 to 45 people, with the occasion standing room only, with 75% of attendance being people of color, from throughout the greater Los Angeles area. Out of an effort to not only maintain our diverse attendance, but to help make accessible quality bilingual poetry to our local working-class community, the limited-edition chapbooks will be available free of charge, though donation will be accepted.

Objectives and desired outcomes.

The call for diversity in publishing has been set at an urgent level over the past several years, and the publishing industry has responded with releasing a record-setting number of books containing diverse stories and characters, yet the authors of those books are still predominately white. Here in Los Angeles, where 73% of people identify as non-white, and where the spoken word and poetry community has known to inspire emerging talent on a national level, we have yet to see our demographics reflected in our poetry venues and published in our local presses. Our young writers are thirsty to see themselves reflected in print, on stage, in press, to become inspired and to become aware of the vastness of the Los Angeles literary scene. Our intention with the series was also to use the literary arts to strengthen the voice of visual artist in communicating their concerns and how communities of color have been impacted by the environment, mental health, displacement, and technology.

The outcome will be twofold; sets of 16 chapbooks will be accessible to high school students, families, and neighbors local to the community familiar with Avenue 50 Studio, and the stories and voices of local artists and poets will be archived, documented, and shared with the people who need it most – Los Angeles. Participants and attendees of the events will be provided with comment/suggestion forms during and after events.

Capacity.

The project director is Jessica Ceballos y Campbell, a poet, essayist, and literary program coordinator with over 10 years of experience in the literary arts. She is co-founding producer of the critically-acclaimed annual Latina Writers Conference held at Plaza de la Raza, she is currently the Literary Arts Coordinator at Avenue 50 Studio where she helps to curate over 20 readings a year, connecting with over 200 poets and writers in the process. She has previous experience as a publisher having partnered with Writ Large Press where she was editorial designer and co-curator. It was with Writ Large Press that she co-produced 90 events in 90 days during the summer of 2014. As a writer Jessica has published three poetry chapbooks and has been published in over six anthologies (Tia Chucha Press, PEN America, Further Other Book Works, Silverton, among others), and countless journals and online magazines.

Avenue 50 Studio is an arts organization that promotes and presents Latina/o/x and diverse local artists and poets, and is grounded in the community, geography, history, and struggles of the Northeast/East Los Angeles urban region where we are located. We have been presenting exhibitions since 2000, having organized over 300 exhibits and over 180 literary events, celebrating a variety of artistic media and themes and shown almost 1,100 artists, poets and musicians. Through our commitment to bridge the diverse cultures of the LA area and to represent the unique artistic presence of our largely working class, Latina/o/x neighborhood, we provide a platform for local artists, writers, advocates and local audiences to express and address the complex issues we face in our communities. We present work that constructively and creatively address racial, cultural, and world issues. Our mission engages the arts in an active role to bridge cultures, build community, and empower its members.