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Virginia Commission for the Arts Awards \$20,000 to Virginia Writers

RICHMOND, VA - The Virginia Commission for the Arts is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2011-2012 Artists Fellowships. Fellowships are awarded annually to artists residing in Virginia in recognition of creative excellence and to support their pursuit of artistic excellence. This year, four Virginia artists have been honored in the field of fiction. The awarded artists will each receive fellowships of \$5,000.

Fellowships in fiction were awarded to:

Samar Fitzgerald (Staunton, VA)

Ms. Fitzgerald received her M.F.A. in Fiction from the University of Wisconsin in 2008, and her B.A. in Political Theory from Georgetown University in 1998. Her works have been published in *The New England Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Story Quarterly Online*, *The L Magazine* and *Avery: An Anthology of New Fiction*. She is the winner of the 2008 *Friends of Creative Writing Award* and the *August Derleth Prize in Creative Writing* from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Currently, Ms. Fitzgerald is an instructor of "Studies in World Literature and Creative Fiction Writing" at James Madison University, as well as a creative writing instructor at WriterHouse in Charlottesville, VA.

Kelly Kerney (Richmond, VA)

Ms. Kerney holds an M.F.A. in Fiction-Writing from the University of Notre Dame (2004) and a B.A. *cum laude* in English from Bowdoin College (2002). Her current novel, *Hard Red Spring*, is under contract with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Her first novel, *Born Again*, follows the often hilarious journey of a young Christian fundamentalist as she comes to terms with Darwinism. Published in September 2006 by Harcourt Brace, *Born Again* received excellent reviews from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and the *New York Times*. Ms. Kerney is the winner of several fellowships and awards including the *Nicholas Sparks Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowships* from the University of Notre Dame; *The Academy of American Poets' Prize* and the *Pray Prize for Best English Scholar* from Bowdoin College. She was a *Sarah and James Bowdoin Scholar*, as well as the winner of the *Nathalie Walker Poetry Prize* and *Hawthorne Short Story Prize*.

Marie Potoczny (Richmond, VA)

Marie Potoczny lives in Richmond and completed her M.F.A. in Fiction at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2010. She has had her works of fiction published by *The Denver Quarterly*, *Apalachee Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Lullwater Review*, *The Pinch*, and others. She is originally from Ohio and received her undergraduate degree in Philosophy from Miami University. Awards and Fellowships include: The MacDowell Fellowship, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts Fellowship, First Place--Style Weekly Annual Fiction Contest for *The Museum of Lost Smells*. She teaches creative writing at WriterHouse in Charlottesville and is a full-time content writer for Capital One in Richmond, VA.

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VCA 2011-2012 Fellowship Winners

Page 2

Steve Watkins (Fredericksburg, VA)

Steve Watkins is the author of *What Comes After*, a young adult novel published in spring 2011, and *Down Sand Mountain*, winner of the 2009 *Golden Kite Award for Fiction* from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, both published by Candlewick Press. His young adult novel, *Juvie*, is scheduled for publication by Candlewick in spring 2013. Steve is also author of a short story collection, *My Chaos Theory* (2006, Southern Methodist University Press), which was a finalist for the *Paterson Fiction Prize*, and an Honorable Mention for the Library of Virginia Fiction Award. He also wrote the award-winning non-fiction book *The Black O: Racism and Redemption in an American Corporate Empire*, published in 1997 by the University of Georgia Press, which tells the story of the largest employment discrimination class action lawsuit in U.S. history. *The Black O* won the 1997 *Virginia College Stores Book Award*, was an honorable mention for the *Gustavus Myers Award*, and was a finalist for the Southern Regional Council's Lillian Smith Award for Nonfiction. Steve's fiction, poetry, and non-fiction articles have appeared in numerous publications, including *The Nation*, *Poets & Writers*, *Mississippi Review*, *100 Percent Pure Florida Fiction*, *North American Review* and *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*. A graduate of Florida State University, Steve teaches journalism, creative writing, and Vietnam War literature at the University of Mary Washington. He also teaches Ashtanga yoga, and has worked as an investigator and advocate for abused and neglected children through the child advocacy organization CASA.

The Virginia Commission for the Arts has recognized four other outstanding writers as finalists for the fellowships: Lenore Hart of Franktown, VA; Kristen Paige Madonia Gordon from Charlottesville, VA; Art Taylor from Burke, VA and Irene Zeigler from Richmond, VA.

VCA Artist Fellowships are offered on a rotating basis to Virginia artists in the following disciplines: crafts, photography, sculpture, fiction, music composition, choreography, painting, works on paper (prints and drawing), poetry, playwriting, and filmmaking depending upon the amount of state and federal funding available to the Commission.

The Virginia Commission for the Arts is the state agency that supports the arts through funding from the Virginia General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Commission distributes grant awards to artists, arts and other not-for-profit organizations, educational institutions, educators and local governments, and provides technical assistance in arts management.

For Further Information:

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