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Virginia Commission for the Arts Announces \$30,000 in Artist Fellowship Awards

RICHMOND, VA - The Virginia Commission for the Arts is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2021-2022 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, six Virginia artists have been honored in the field of poetry. Each artist will receive Fellowships of \$5,000.

Fellowships in *Poetry* were awarded to:

Catherine Fletcher (Norfolk) is a writer and editor. Recent work has appeared in *The Inflectionist Review*, *New World Writing*, *The Hopper*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Hopkins Review*, and the concert series Concept Lab. Prior experience includes her role as Director of Poetry Programs at the New York-based organization City Lore. In that position, she produced numerous programs highlighting the city's grassroots poetry and music traditions including the POEMobile series, which paired building-sized poetry projections with live performances in different languages, and curated the nationwide traveling exhibition *Poetic Voices of the Muslim World*. She also served as a contributing editor for *Rattapallax*, specializing in the literature of minority languages.

Ms. Fletcher is the recipient of grants from Queens Council on the Arts, Brooklyn Arts Council, and the AEV Foundation. She has presented her work in Mexico, India, Italy, Poland, and throughout the English-speaking world. She currently serves as Outreach Manager and on the literary advisory board of the Poetry Society of Virginia. She lives in Norfolk, Virginia, USA. For more information, please visit <http://cafletcher.blogspot.com>.

Edison Jennings (Abingdon) earned a BA in English and Political Science from New York Board of Regents while serving active duty as aircrew in patrol and scouting squadrons. After separation from the Navy, he earned an MFA in Poetry from The Warren Wilson Program for Writers in 1999 and began teaching at Virginia Intermont College as a professor of English until its closing in 2015. He currently works as Head Start School center aide and Bus Monitor/Driver at the Bristol Child Development Center in Bristol, Virginia. Mr. Jennings is the author of three chapbooks, *Reckoning* (Jacar Press), *A Letter to Greta* (Plan B Press), *Small Measures* (Wild Leek Press), and one full-length collection, *Intentional Fallacies* (Broadstone Press). His poetry and prose have appeared in a variety of journals and anthologies.

Dayana Lee (Chesapeake) is an author, activist, model, singer, and spoken word artist. Born in Norfolk, Virginia she learned early on that immersion in the arts provided a safe space. A Cum Laude graduate from Virginia State University, with a degree in Sociology, Dayana uses art as a therapeutic tool to combat the quarrels of mental health. She has written and produced three play

productions, *Give Me My Sun Back*, *Under Enemies Arms*, and her most current *Langston Blues*, which debuts December 16, 2021, in Norfolk, Virginia at the Granby Theatre and February 7, 2022 in Petersburg Virginia at Virginia State University. Dayana Lee is the youngest black woman to debut a play inside of the Granby Theatre. As her journey continues, she aspires to be a famous playwright, artist, and creative director and use her art to highlight the raw truths about our communities.

Erika Meitner (Blacksburg) is the author of five books of poems, including *Ideal Cities* (HarperCollins, 2010), which was a 2009 National Poetry series winner; *Copia* (BOA Editions, 2014); and *Holy Moly Carry Me* (BOA Editions, 2018), which won the 2018 National Jewish Book Award in Poetry, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Library of Virginia Award in poetry. Her sixth book of poems, *Useful Junk*, is forthcoming from BOA Editions in April of 2022. Meitner's poems have been anthologized widely, and have appeared in publications including *Best American Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *Orion*, and *The Believer*. Other honors include fellowships from MacDowell, the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Hermitage Artist Retreat, Bethany Arts Community, The Betsy Writer's Room, and Blue Mountain Center. She was also the 2015 US-UK Fulbright Distinguished Scholar in Creative Writing at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's University Belfast, and the winner of the 2021 Cecil Hemley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. Meitner is currently a professor of English at Virginia Tech.

Debra Nystrom (Charlottesville) grew up in South Dakota, but has lived in Virginia for most of her adult life. She is the author of four poetry collections: *A Quarter Turn*, *Torn Sky*, *Bad River Road*, and most recently *Night Sky Frequencies*, *New and Selected Poems*. Her poetry, fiction and nonfiction have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Best American Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, *Ploughshares*, *Slate*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Narrative*, *Georgia Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Yale Review* and *The American Poetry Review*, and her work has been featured by *Poetry Daily*, *The Writer's Almanac* and The Poetry Foundation's *American Life in Poetry*. Nystrom is the recipient of the James Dickey Award from *Five Points Magazine*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review's* Balch Poetry Award, the James Boatwright Prize from *Shenandoah* and The Virginia Prize for Poetry, and she has been awarded fellowships from The Virginia Commission for the Arts and The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. She teaches in the Master of Fine Arts Writing Program at The University of Virginia, and lives with her husband in Charlottesville. She is currently at work on a memoir.

Courteney (Kiki) Petrosino (Orange) is the author of four books of poetry and one memoir, all from Sarabande Books: *Fort Red Border*, *Hymn for the Black Terrific*, *Witch Wife*, *White Blood: A Lyric of Virginia*, and the forthcoming *Bright: A Memoir*. She holds graduate degrees from the University of Chicago and the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. Among her awards are the Rilke Prize from the University of North Texas, the Spalding Prize for the Promotion of Peace and Justice in Literature, a Fellowship in Literature from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Pushcart Prize, and research fellowships from the Kentucky Arts Council and Virginia Humanities. Petrosino is a Professor of Poetry at the University of Virginia, where she directs the Creative Writing Program.

The Virginia Commission for the Arts 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.

For additional eligibility information and other Commission requirements contact the Virginia Commission for the Arts or visit our website: www.arts.virginia.gov.

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