

National Centre for Writing announces first Associate Artists and a new international residency programme

NEWS RELEASE

The National Centre for Writing (NCW) today announced its first two Associate Artists. Supported by Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence funds, four Associate Artists will be appointed over a three year period and each will be supported to create new work, explore collaborations, be in residence at the National Centre for Writing and work with its audience and communities.

The first two of these Associate Artists will be poet and theatre-maker Hannah Jane Walker and writer, publisher and producer Tom Chivers who will each receive a package of support that includes time-to-write funds, commission fees and residency time to the value of £10,000 to develop a new literary project. The associateship includes performance opportunities and a residency at the NCW campus at Dragon Hall in Norwich, England's first UNESCO City of Literature.

Chivers, director of the award-winning literary arts company Penned in the Margins, will write a new play set during the British Civil Wars. He says the play will "disturb the complex network of ideas around nationhood, and question who owns the history and myths of this land". He will work in collaboration with director Russell Bender.

Walker's piece will question our innate trust in extroverted speakers and who we choose to put in positions of authority. It will examine whose voices we will need to listen to navigate an uncertain future in a period of huge change. Walker says: "This opportunity allows me to scale up my ambition and create my first solo stage show to premiere in May 2019. I feel supported, inspired and encouraged."

Chris Gribble, Chief Executive at NCW says: “We’re delighted to open our Associate Artist scheme with Hannah and Tom, both artists, producers and writers whose work we love and admire. They are also people who give a lot back to many communities of writers, performers and makers in their own right and the Associate Artist scheme is designed in part to enable the National Centre for Writing to explore how we ourselves can best support writers and artists and communities to make and create outstanding work. We’re so pleased that Hannah and Tom will be helping us start that process.”

In addition NCW today announces a new writers’ residency exchange in collaboration with Passa porta and the Flemish Literature Fund. In April 2019 Flemish writer Kathleen Vereecken will spend a month at the NCW and later in the year UK writer Katie Hale will head to Brussels for a residency with Passa Porta.

Vereecken, who is writing a book on Margareta, the sister of 15th century painters Hubert and Jan Van Eyck, says: “I couldn’t dream of a better environment to work in than the 15th century Dragon Hall where history is still alive. I was born with a strange longing for people and times I have never known.”

Hale is writing a collection of poetry exploring the ways in which our identity is shaped by those who come before us. She says: “The poems particularly examine different aspects of cultural heritage, the parts we celebrate alongside what we choose to forget.”

Kate Griffin, Associate Programme Director, NCW says: “We are delighted to be collaborating with Passa Porta on this residency exchange, offering two very talented writers the important gift of time to write, in two different but equally inspiring cities.”

Notes to Editors:

1. For comment, interviews and photos contact Alice Kent, Communications Director at / 01603 877177 or alice@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk
2. **The Patrons of the National Centre for Writing are -**

Margaret Atwood
John Boyne
JM Coetzee
Anthony Horowitz OBE
Jon McGregor
Kei Miller
Sarah Perry
Elif Shafak
Ali Smith CBE
Rose Tremain CBE

3. **About National Centre for Writing (NCW)**

NCW is a literature development organisation based in Norwich England's first UNESCO City of Literature. The National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall promotes great literature, inspires communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation, nurtures literary talent and hosts world-class events. www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

4. **About Tom Chivers** Tom Chivers is a writer, publisher and producer, born in south London in 1983. As director of award-winning literary arts company Penned in the Margins, he has published more than 75 books of poetry, fiction, non-fiction and criticism, and produced a wide range of theatrical productions including ten solo spoken word shows and a major, site-specific re-imagining of the fourteenth-century epic poem *Piers Plowman*. As a writer, he has released two pamphlets and two full collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *Dark Islands* (Test Centre, 2015). He was shortlisted for the Michael Marks and Edwin Morgan Poetry Prizes and received an Eric Gregory Award in 2011. Tom has made perambulatory and audio work for organisations such as LIFT, Cape Farewell, Humber Mouth and Southbank Centre. In 2011 an animated film of his poem 'The Event' was broadcast by Channel 4; it has subsequently been screened at film festivals worldwide and viewed online over 400,000 times. Tom is currently writing a non-fiction book entitled *London Clay: Journeys into the Deep City*.

5. **About Hannah Jane Walker**

Hannah is a poet from Cambridge and Essex. She has toured intensively both nationally and internationally doing shows, readings and running workshops. She is passionate about engaging people with poetry and using poetry to have conversations. She believes that poetry is just another way of talking, that poetry is for everyone and that it is something that we need as we go forward.

6. **Kathleen Vereecken** (1962) has worked as a freelance journalist for several papers and magazines. She made her debut in 1993 with *Het raadsel in het fluisterbos* (The riddle in the whispering woods, 1993), but readers had to wait until 1997 for her first historical novel for young adults. *Alle kleuren grijs* (All colours grey), based on her great-grandmother's life, was promptly nominated for the Golden Owl. Later on she wrote the gripping *Lara & Rebacca*, about the friendship between a white girl and a slave girl. With *Ik denk dat het liefde was* (I Think It Was Love) – a novel about the supposed son of famous philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau – Vereecken won the Boekenleeuw (Book Lion) and several other rewards. The novel was translated in French, German and Italian. In *Zijdeman*, also based on a family history, she focusses on the children of a missing silk merchant in Paris. The novel is currently adapted for screen (animation) with Vereecken as a co-script writer. In 2016 her first novel for adults was published: *Haar*. In september 2018 a new children's book will be published: *Alles komt goed, altijd* (Everything will be alright, always), the moving story of a girl during World War I.

7. **About Katie Hale**

Born in Cumbria, Katie's poetry pamphlet, *Breaking the Surface*, was published by Flipped Eye in 2017. She recently won the Buzzwords Poetry Prize, the Jane Martin Poetry Prize and the Ware Poetry Prize, and was shortlisted for the University of Canberra Vice Chancellor's International Poetry Prize and the Ballymaloe International Poetry Prize. Her poetry has been published in *Poetry Review*, *The*

North and Interpreter's House, among others. In 2017, Katie was mentored by Penguin Random House on their inaugural WriteNow scheme. Her debut novel, *My Name is Monster*, is due from Canongate in June 2019.

- 8. About Passa Porta** The international house of literature Passa Porta is a unique, multilingual meeting place in the heart of Brussels for anyone and everyone curious about ideas, texts and stories. It is where readers meet their favourite writers from Belgium and abroad and where they discover new talents. It is where authors and translators have access to a stage or a workspace. And every two years the Passa Porta Festival celebrates Brussels as a city of literature with the arrival of hundreds of writers and artists from around the world.
- 9. About the Flemish Literature Fund** Flanders Literature opens a window on the dynamic and diverse literary landscape in the northern part of Belgium. Our mission is to help publishers and festival organisers find that one particular title or author that is the perfect fit for their list or audience.