Event Title:

**Southern Plains Gothic and Gritty Realism: Fiction from the American Southwest**

Event Description:

Four award-winning writers from Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma read their place-based fiction: work that kicks away stereotype, grinds against landscape, reveals, appeals, and confounds. Featuring National Book Award Finalist Brandon Hobson, Chicano Gothic novelist Ito Romo, Oklahoma Book Award winner Constance Squires, and Western Heritage Award winner Rilla Askew, this panel reads deep into the lives and landscapes of the region.

Event Category: Fiction Readings

Event Organizer/Moderator: Rilla Askew

Event Participants and Bios:

**Rilla Askew** is the author of four novels, a book of stories, and a collection of creative nonfiction, *Most American: Notes from a Wounded Place.* She received a 2009 Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and teaches at the University of Oklahoma.

**Brandon Hobson** is the author of *Where the Dead Sit Talking*, which was a finalist for the 2018 National Book Award. He has won the Reading the West Book Award and a Pushcart Prize. He teaches creative writing at New Mexico State University and at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

**Ito Romo**'s work, dubbed “Chicano Gothic” and “Chicano Noir,” shows the dark and gritty life along Interstate 35 through South Texas. He is the author of *The Border is Burning* (2013) and *El Puente / The Bridge* (2001). This year, Romo was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters.

**Constance Squires** is the author of the novels *Along the Watchtower* and *Live from Medicine Park*, and *Hit Your Brights*, a short story collection. Her work has appeared in *Guernica, The Atlantic, Shenandoah, The Rolling Stone 500* and other venues. She teaches writing at the University of Central Oklahoma.

Opening Remarks and Introductions:

Welcome to Southern Plains Gothic and Gritty Realism: Fiction from the American Southwest, a fiction reading.

This panel features nationally recognized writers whose work is steeped in the American Southwest and the Southern Plains.

A few reminders before we begin:

• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, Rilla Askew, know and a printed copy of the presentation will be delivered to you.

• Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.

• Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.

• Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing perfume.

• Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

• We realize the lines for the bathrooms may be long, but please refrain from using an accessible stall unless you require such accommodation. Please also be aware family restrooms located on level 2 are reserved for those with disabilities or those wishing to use a single-stall restroom.

I’m Rilla Askew, moderator. I teach at the University of Oklahoma. My fellow panelists, from left to right, are Brandon Hobson, from New Mexico State University, Constance Squires, from the University of Central Oklahoma, and Ito Romo, from St Mary’s University here in San Antonio, and.

Our first reader is Brandon Hobson, an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation, whose work transgresses stereotypes about Native lives and Native literature. He’ll be reading from his forthcoming novel, *The Removed*: a work about the unraveling of the boundary between displacement and the spirit world, which draws deeply on Cherokee folklore, in an exploration of personal and ancestral trauma.

Brandon Hobson reads.

Our second reader is Constance Squires. She is an Oklahoma best-selling author whose rock-centered fiction is published in *The Atlantic* and *Rolling Stone 500*. She’ll be reading from her novel, *Low April Sun*, where the Oklahoma City Bombing’s long reverberations expose fault lines in the life of a family gripped by gambling addiction and the sure money of oil company fracking.

Constance Squires reads.

Our next reader is Ito Romo. Ito hails from Laredo, lives in San Antonio, and is renowned for his Chicano Gothic fiction. He’ll be reading from his collection of short fiction, *The Border is Burning,* which famously raises questions about life on the border and the people trying to survive that reality.

Ito Romo reads.

And finally, as the last reader, I’ll introduce myself, Rilla Askew. I write about racism, history, place, and women’s lives in towns and cities in the Southern Plains. I’ll be reading from my historical novel about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, *Fire in Beulah*.

Rilla Askew reads.

Thank you. We have a few moments left for questions. Does anyone have questions? We could speak, perhaps, about avoiding stereotypes in writing place-based fiction set in the Southern Plains.