Preliminary Event Outline

2020 AWP Panel
Beyond How-To: The Art of the Craft Essay

Category
Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

Panelists
➢ K. L. Cook
➢ Joan Silber
➢ Sven Birkerts
➢ Margot Livesey
➢ Christopher Castellani

Introduction
➢ K. L. Cook (organizer/moderator) will introduce the panel and panelists.
➢ Panel Description: Five award-winning writers, editors, and professors in MFA programs—who have published books on craft—will discuss the rich tradition of the craft essay and their approaches, as practitioners, to investigating and artfully writing about issues of aesthetics, technique, process, close reading, and literary and nonliterary influence.
➢ The craft essay has a rich history, including works by Henry James, Vladimir Nabokov, E. M. Forster, Flannery O’Connor, Eudora Welty, and the acclaimed authors in Graywolf’s “Art of..” series, edited by Charles Baxter. The prominent role the craft lecture plays in low-residency MFA programs has created a renaissance in the form. This panel, consisting of writers with distinguished careers as teachers and editors, will share their insights about writing their own collections of essays on the art and craft of fiction and nonfiction.
➢ Each panelist will give a 10-12-minute presentation, followed by a brief Q&A.

K. L. Cook
➢ Brief introductory bio.
➢ Cook will discuss his experience as a graduate student in Warren Wilson College’s low-residency MFA Program in the early 1990’s, and the lasting impact of listening to the craft lectures that were at the heart of the intensive residencies—lectures by Joan Silber, Margot Livesey, Richard Russo, Charles Baxter, Robert Boswell, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Heather McHugh, and Larry Levis, among many others.
➢ He will then discuss his experience of giving his own craft lectures, as a professor at various colleges and universities, including Iowa State University and Spalding University’s low-residency MFA Program—lectures that serve as the basis for his collection, The Art of Disobedience: Essays on Form, Fiction, and Influence.

Joan Silber
➢ Brief introductory bio.
➢ Silber will discuss her experience giving craft lectures as a professor at Sarah Lawrence College and as a faculty member in Warren Wilson’s MFA Program, and her work on, among other award-winning books, The Art of Time in Fiction: As Long as It Takes.
Sven Birkerts
➢ Brief introductory bio.
➢ Birkerts will discuss his experience with the craft essay as the editor of AGNI, as a lecturer, professor, and director and core faculty member of the Bennington MFA Program, and as the author of many books of essays on fiction, poetry, memoir, and culture, including The Art of Time in Memoir: Then, Again.

Margot Livesey
➢ Brief introductory bio.
➢ Livesey will discuss her experience with the craft essay as a professor at many colleges and universities, including Emerson and the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and as a faculty member at Warren Wilson College, Breadloaf, and the Sewanee Writers’ Conference, where many of her essays on fiction in her collection, The Hidden Machinery, originated.

Christopher Castellani
➢ Brief introductory bio.
➢ Castellani will discuss his experience with the craft essay as the artistic director of Grub Street, faculty member and board member at Warren Wilson College and Breadloaf, and as the author of, among other books, The Art of Perspective: Who Tells the Story.

Q&A