



January 3, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steven Padla / press@artidea.org / (203) 498-3702

**THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & IDEAS
WILL PRESENT ITS
8TH ANNUAL VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AWARD TO
MACARTHUR “GENIUS” FELLOW
CLAUDIA RANKINE**

**AWARD LUNCHEON AND CONVERSATION
THURSDAY, MARCH 8**

NEW HAVEN, CT—The International Festival of Arts & Ideas will present its **8th Annual Visionary Leadership Award** to celebrated poet **Claudia Rankine**, recipient of a 2016 MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Fellowship, at an Award Luncheon and Ceremony on Thursday, March 8 at 12:00 PM at the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale (155 Temple Street).

The annual Award Luncheon, co-chaired by Kiki Kennedy, Kimberly Goff-Crews, and the Reverend Kevin Ewing, draws over 400 attendees from across the region and raises money for the Festival’s diverse roster of programming presented in June each year. The award, which was established in 2010 in honor of Festival Co-Founder Jean M. Handley, is presented annually to a Visionary Leader whose trailblazing work is impacting the world. Ms. Handley provided thoughtful and effective leadership as a lifelong champion of many of the region’s arts, cultural, social, and educational organizations. She was a role model for women, a person of extraordinary wisdom, and an individual of exceedingly high standards who was generous with her talent and time.

Prior awardees include noted revitalization strategy consultant and Peabody Award-winning broadcaster **Majora Carter** (7th Annual); **Sheryl WuDunn**, the first Asian-American reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize (6th Annual); **Angélique Kidjo**, award-winning singer/songwriter and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador (5th Annual); **Sheila Nevins**, documentary film producer and president of HBO Documentary Films (4th annual); **Charlayne Hunter-Gault**, journalist and civil rights leader (3rd annual); **Jill Abramson**, journalist and first female Executive Editor of the *New York Times* (2nd annual); and **Zainab Salbi**, the pioneering Founder and CEO of Women For Women International (1st award).

“Claudia Rankine’s body of work exemplifies the intersection of arts and ideas that serves as the backbone, and core mission, of the International Festival,” said **Chad**

Herzog on behalf of his Co-Directors **Liz Fisher** and **Tom Griggs**. “We are delighted to honor and celebrate her profound contributions to American culture, and look forward to exploring her prize-winning book, *Citizen*, with the Greater New Haven community this spring as part of the NEA’s 2018 Big Read initiative.”

The 8th Annual Visionary Leadership Award Luncheon is sponsored by Bank of America / US Trust, Comcast / NBC Connecticut, NewAlliance Foundation, and Inner City News. The Luncheon is hosted by the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale.

ABOUT CLAUDIA RANKINE

Recipient of the 2016 MacArthur Fellowship, Claudia Rankine is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Citizen: An American Lyric* and *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*; two plays, including *Provenance of Beauty: A South Bronx Travelogue*; and is the editor of several anthologies including *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*. She also co-produces a video series, “The Situation,” alongside John Lucas, and is the founder of the *Open Letter Project: Race and the Creative Imagination*. Among her numerous awards and honors, Rankine is the recipient of the Poets & Writers’ Jackson Poetry Prize and fellowships from the Lannan Foundation and the National Endowment of the Arts.

Rankine’s bestselling book, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf, 2014), uses poetry, essay, cultural criticism, and visual images, to explore what it means to be an American citizen in a “post-racial” society. A defining text for our time, *Citizen* was the winner of the 2015 Forward Prize for Best Collection, the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry (it was also a finalist in the criticism category, making it the first book in the award’s history to be a double nominee), the NAACP Image Award, the PEN Open Book Award, and the LA Times Book Award for poetry. *Citizen* was nominated for the Hurston/Wright 2015 Legacy Award, was a finalist for the 2014 National Book Award, and was selected as an NPR Best Book of 2014, who stated: “This collection examines everyday encounters with racism in the second person, forcing the reader—regardless of identity—to engage a narrative haunted by the deaths of Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, and Renisha McBride.” *Citizen* also holds the distinction of being the only poetry book to be a *New York Times* bestseller in the nonfiction category.

In all of her work, whether writing about intimacy or alienation, Rankine’s voice is one of unrelenting candor, and her poetry is some of the most innovative and thoughtful work to emerge in recent years. Her work often crosses genres as it tracks wild and precise movements of mind. In the words of the Judges Citation for the Jackson Prize: “The moral vision of Claudia Rankine’s poetry is astounding. In a body of work that pushes the boundaries of the contemporary lyric, Rankine has managed to make space for meditation and vigorous debate upon some of the most relevant and troubling social themes of the 20th and 21st centuries....These poems do the work of art of the highest order—teaching, chastening, changing, astounding, and humanizing the reader.”

Her other poetry collections are *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely* (2008); the award-winning *Nothing in Nature is Private*; *The End of the Alphabet*; and *Plot*, wherein she welds the cerebral and the spiritual, the sensual and the grotesque. *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*—a multi-genre project that blends poetry, essays, and image—is an experimental and deeply personal exploration of the condition of fragmented selfhood in contemporary America. Rankine is also the author of the play, *Provenance of Beauty: A South Bronx*

Travelogue, which is performed on a bus ride through the Bronx. The New York Times calls it an “engrossing urban adventure, which does not conform to the standard formula for theater but does make the bustle outside the bus throb with history, mystery and meaning, as the best live performances do.”

Rankine co-edited the anthology *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, and her work is included in several anthologies, including *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present*, *Best American Poetry 2001*, *Giant Step: African American Writing at the Crossroads of the Century*, and *The Garden Thrives: Twentieth Century African-American Poetry*. Her work has been published in numerous journals including Boston Review, TriQuarterly, and The Poetry Project Newsletter.

She lives in New York City and teaches at Yale University as the Frederick Iseman Professor of Poetry.

MORE ABOUT ARTS & IDEAS

The International Festival of Arts & Ideas is a year-round organization that culminates with an annual celebration of performing arts, lectures, and conversations each June in New Haven, Connecticut. The Festival convenes leading artists, thought leaders, and innovators from around the world for 15 days of dynamic public programs to engage, entertain, and inspire a diversity of communities. More than 80% of Festival programs are free to the public, including events that feature some of the most influential jazz, classical, dance, and theater artists of our time.

The Festival takes place in venues and open spaces in downtown New Haven, in the heart of the northeast corridor, two and a half hours south of Boston and ninety minutes north of New York City.

The Festival's programs have an impact throughout the year and include additional performances, educational opportunities, and the annual Visionary Leadership Award. The Festival was established in 1996, by Anne Calabresi, Jean M. Handley, and Roslyn Meyer. They envisioned an annual celebration in New Haven—a city steeped in a rich array of cultural and educational traditions—distinguished from other arts festivals by its fusion of the arts with events centered on sharing ideas.

The Festival is presented with major support from KeyBank, Comcast/NBC Connecticut, Yale University, The City of New Haven, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Connecticut Office of the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

###

Facebook: /artidea | Twitter: @artidea | Instagram: @artsideasct

www.artidea.org