

THE MAGIC

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Newsletter of the Arne Nixon Center

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Arne Nixon Center for the Study
of Children's Literature

The Arne Nixon Center is a unit within the Special
Collections division of the Henry Madden Library



The Magic Mirror is published by
**the Arne Nixon Center for the Study
of Children's Literature**

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*“It is the function of
some people to be a lamp
and some to be a mirror.
I have been very pleased
to function as a mirror of
others' work.”*

Arne Nixon

Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature



The Arne Nixon Center is one of the West Coast's largest and most significant research centers for the study of children's literature. With an emphasis on diversity, the Center's collection includes more than 60,000 books, original artwork, letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, ceramics and other ephemera, including:

- The largest LGBTQ collection of books for young people in the United States.
- A World Languages collection of books in over 50 languages.
- Over 2,100 Spanish-language children's books.
- Over 2,100 editions by, about and inspired by the works of Lewis Carroll.
- The Helen Monette Amestory collection of 6,000 books on cats.

Recognizing Denise Sciandra *Founding President of the Arne Nixon Center Advocates*

The Arne Nixon Center and board of the Arne Nixon Center Advocates (ANCA) are pleased to recognize the past efforts and accomplishments of Denise Sciandra in her role as founding president of the advocacy group. Sciandra served as ANCA president from the group's inception in 2001 to 2013. Among her many achievements in office, Sciandra was instrumental in creating the award-winning Leo Politi Garden, located just outside the Madden Library. She brought the London-based Beatrix Potter Society to Fresno for its annual conference. She secured the papers of famous authors and illustrators and raised funds to realize many worthwhile projects. We thank Sciandra for all of her capable efforts and fulfilled successes.

Cover photo: Muriel Feldshuh's "Picture Books Are Hot!" Quilt

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FRESNO STATE

Arne Nixon Center for the Study
of Children's Literature

Renée Watson

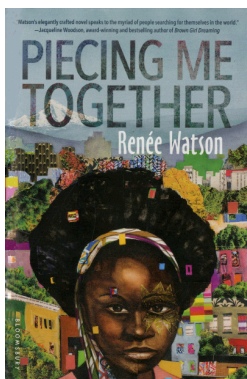
2018 Arne Nixon Center Artist in Residence Fellow



Meet Renée Watson, the Center's new Artist in Residence for 2018. Watson is a highly acclaimed writer, educator, performer and social justice activist, whose works include the young adult novel *Piecing Me Together* and her latest middle-grade novel, *Betty Before X*. She will spend a week in Fresno from March 19-23.

To welcome Watson to Fresno State, a catered reception will be 2-3:30 p.m. Monday, March 19 in the University Dining Hall. Watson will present a talk about her work, and her books will be available for sale and signing.

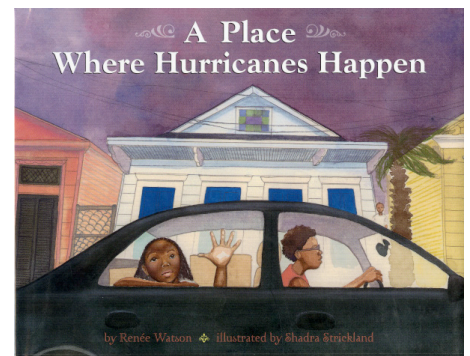
During her stay, Watson will be an integral part of English, education, and women's studies classes at Fresno State, working with students and faculty to promote the relevancy of children's literature and provide a more personal level of learning engagement. She also will connect with the wider community, visiting local high schools and presenting at the Fresno County Public Library.



Watson is the author of a number of celebrated books for young people. Her picture books include *Harlem's Little Blackbird: The Story of Florence Mills*, which received an NAACP Image Award nomination in children's literature, and *A Place Where Hurricanes Happen*, based on poetry workshops she offered to the children of New Orleans after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Watson's two books for teens are *This Side of Home* and *Piecing Me Together*, both of which were nominated for the Best Fiction for Young Adults by the American Library Association and received multiple starred reviews. *Piecing Me Together* was a Kirkus Best Book of 2017. Writing with Ilyasah Shabazz, Watson's new middle-grade novel, *Betty Before X*, recounts four challenging childhood years in the life of Dr. Betty Shabazz, then future wife of Malcolm X. Published in January, it has earned starred reviews from both Kirkus and Publisher's Weekly.

Watson has worked as a writer in residence for more than 20 years teaching creative writing and theater in public schools and community centers throughout the nation. Her articles on teaching and arts education have been published in *Rethinking Schools* and *Oregon English Journal*. She is on the Council of Writers for the National Writing Project and is a team member of We Need Diverse Books. She currently teaches courses on writing for children for the Solstice MFA program at Pine Manor College in Massachusetts.



As a fellowship recipient, Watson will receive a \$10,000 stipend plus expenses. The Arne Nixon Center Artist-in-Residence Fellowship was made possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor. The award committee consists of Fresno State professors from the English department; the Department of Literacy, Early, Bilingual, & Special Education (LEBSE); the Chicano and Latin American studies department; and the women's studies program; along with Jennifer Crow, the Center's curator.

Campus parking for the event is recommended in Lot P27. Traveling north on Cedar Avenue, turn right, past Shaw Avenue, onto Scott Avenue. For free parking, please enter the parking code 218835 into the parking permit dispenser located just off Rowell Avenue. For more information, including disability accommodations or physical access, please call **559.278.8116** or send email to Jami Helwig at jhelwig@csufresno.edu.

Curiosity of the Cats



The curious case of Louis Wain came to the attention of the Center via a phone call from an off-campus researcher inquiring about Wain's books. The call revealed that the Center owns two very rare copies of antiquarian books by the illustrator and author in its Helen Monnette Amestoy Collection of Books About Cats.

Louis Wain was a prolific English illustrator who began commercially drawing cats at the end of the 19th century and continued into the early 20th century. A cat enthusiast and authority, Wain's name became as recognizable as his anthropomorphized drawings of large-eyed cats. The cats were often depicted in humorous situations and could be found playing pranks, driving dog-drawn carriages or golfing on the links. Books, articles, pop-up dioramas and picture postcards bore his artwork. His illustrations became highly sought after both in England and America, where he was offered his own comic strip by famed newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst.

Wain was always considered a bit of an odd fellow, from his eccentric views on science to his talk of visiting spirits. He became even more disturbed after the death of his closest sister, Caroline, in 1917. Due to his lack of business sense, shy character, prolific nature and failure to retain any reproduction rights for his artwork, demand for Wain's illustrations gradually declined. He was eventually hospitalized for his strange and sometimes violent behavior and was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Though hospitalized, Wain continued his favorite pastime of drawing cats. Some of the cats he drew began to take on bizarre characteristics. Often the ornate and colorful designs, barely recognizable as cats, displayed a beautiful but psychedelic nature, leading some to assume a direct correlation to his disease. Some believe the cat designs resembled wallpaper patterns that Wain might have viewed while growing up in his father's drapery business. While it has been widely debated whether these drawings reflect the progression of Wain's mental illness or if he was simply creating new design techniques, these strange cat drawings remain an intriguing curiosity.

There has been a resurgence of Wain's popularity since the late 1960's that has not been deterred with time. His work is often found these days memorialized in the living skin of his admirers. Tattoos of his patterned cats, as well as his more conventional cats, adorn the backs, arms, legs and other body parts of fans of Wain's cat illustrations.

With nearly 70,000 books in house, the Center may hold many unrecognized treasures. Sometimes it takes an outside inquiry for these treasures to come to light. And so it was that the Center uncovered the curious case of Louis Wain and discovered it held the only U. S. copy (out of a total of nine cataloged books) of *The Louis Wain Nursery Book* and the only other cataloged copy in the world of *To Nursery Land with Louis Wain*.



Beetles, Chris. (1986). *Cats! An exhibition of the works of Louis Wain (1860-1939)*. York City, UK: Chris Beetles, Lmt.

Dale, Rodney. (1991). *Louis Wain: The man who drew cats*. London, UK: Chris Beetles, Lmt.



Secret Garden Party!



A Child's Verse in the Garden!

**SUNDAY
APRIL 8
2018**

Come and enjoy a tranquil afternoon in a beautiful hidden garden in northwest Fresno! The location is a secret, but will be revealed when you accept our invitation.

The Arne Nixon Center Advocates invite you to their 14th Secret Garden Party on Sunday, April 8, 2018 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Celebrate the joy of children's poetry in a lovely garden setting as we honor National Poetry Month in April and the new Young People's Poet Laureate, Margarita Engle.

This year's party supports the creation of a community mural designed by the award-winning illustrator, Rafael López. Come paint with us! Together, we will add beauty to a Fresno neighborhood.

For more information about the Secret Garden Party, including disability accommodations or physical access call 559.278.8116 or contact Jami Sanford at jsanford@csufresno.edu

Be an Underwriter for the Party!

You will receive free tickets and your gift will be acknowledged at both the party and in the Arne Nixon Center *Magic Mirror* newsletter.



\$1,000 Sponsor (includes 8 tickets)

\$500 Patron (includes 6 tickets)

\$250 Contributor (includes 4 tickets)

Please make checks payable to **Fresno State Foundation** and mail to this address:

Arne Nixon Center, Madden Library, Fresno State
5200 N. Barton Avenue, M/S ML 34
Fresno, CA 93740-8014



I would like to become an underwriter at the _____ level
or I would like to purchase individual tickets at \$65 each (\$40 is tax deductible.)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____



Picture Books Are Hot!

November was Picture Book Month. To celebrate, the Center was honored to display "Picture Books Are Hot!," a special quilt created by Muriel Feldshuh using the work of 33 picture book illustrators.

Feldshuh, a native New York Brooklynite and retired classroom and library teacher, is a long-time literacy advocate and creator of picture book quilts. Feldshuh sends blank fabric squares to award-winning illustrators who paint, draw and sew the blocks. They return them to Feldshuh, who then pieces them together to create fabulous original quilts. Feldshuh's body of work includes a total of eight quilts featuring squares by such artists as Peter Sis, Kevin Henkes,

Jan Brett and many more. The quilts have been displayed extensively in galleries and libraries throughout the nation.

The Center hosted a pop-up reception for the quilt on Nov. 29. Guests viewed the quilt along with a related display of the illustrators' picture books while cake and punch were served. Bookmarks, brochures about the quilt, and activity guides created by Feldshuh were available for attendees to take home. A second display table showed some of the many picture books that feature quilts and their various functions throughout our history and culture.

Many thanks to Muriel Feldshuh for lending the Center her delightful picture book quilt!

2018 Research Fellowships

The Arne Nixon Center Research Fellowship Selection Committee is thrilled to announce the recipients of its second-ever round of research fellowship stipends for 2018.

This year fellowships were awarded to Lettycia Terrones, a librarian and doctoral student in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Dr. Isabel Millán, assistant professor in the Department of American Ethnic Studies at Kansas State University.

Terrones' work will utilize the Center's collection to explore the depiction of domestic materials in picture books and their representation of Latina/Chicana women's culture of resistance and resilience.

Dr. Millán will examine how marginalized communities in the U.S., Mexico and Canada compare when seeking culturally competent education materials.

A third fellowship was awarded to JaNay Brown-Wood, an accomplished author and doctoral

student at the University of California at Davis. Brown-Wood's research may reveal additional insights about the need for diverse characters in picture books. She will perform studies to determine how young children choose picture books and how those choices may affect the development of verbal skills. Funding for Brown-Wood's research will be provided by the Arne Nixon Center Advocates.

The recipients have one year to complete their research in the Center. Each will deliver findings and

information about their studies to interested Fresno State faculty and staff at lunchtime presentations.

The research awards, created with funds from an anonymous donor, encourage innovative and robust inquiry into varied aspects of children's literature. Creating a positive outcome for all involved, the stipends support scholars from outside the Fresno/Clovis area and bring greater recognition to the Center through the dissemination of the researchers' work.

Hoàng Chi Trường, the TigerFish

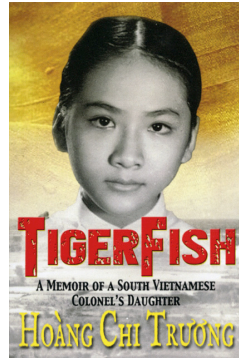


The Center was excited in October to partner, in our first collaboration, with Dr. Jenny Banh and Dr. Davorn Sisavath in Fresno State's Asian American Studies program. Together, we brought author and Fresno State alum Hoàng Chi Trường for a return visit to her hometown of Fresno to talk about her newly published book *TigerFish: A Memoir of a South Vietnamese Colonel's Daughter*.

Trường told an audience of more than 120 guests about growing up in Vietnam during the height of the Vietnam War. She talked about her family's escape from Saigon and their experiences and challenges as refugees in their new home in the United States. The family was one of

the first wave of refugees to come to the U.S. from South Vietnam. They quickly settled in Fresno.

Trường answered many questions from the audience. Her impetus for writing her memoir was to share her previously unspoken story with her children and to bring greater awareness to the plight of refugees. In a surprise moment during her talk, Trường was reintroduced to a member of the church organization that originally sponsored her family.



The indefatigable Trường has now published a new picture book, *No Ordinary Sue: The Tale of a Heroic Pumpkin*. The book chronicles the voyage of a winter pumpkin named Sue who becomes washed away in the historic California flood of 1997. As she floats along the floodwaters,

Sue helps as many others as she can, thus gaining confidence and eventually finding her dream life. The book also will be published in a bilingual version in both Vietnamese and English, *Cô Bí Xu Hùng*.

Trường, who has written articles for the Huffington Post, describes herself as a "learned optimist" and encourages others to seek their passions and pass on kindnesses to those who are in need.

Honoring All Life Members: It's Time for Tea!

Each year Life Members are honored with a tea party hosted by our Arne Nixon Center Advocates Board members. The special invitation event, for Life Members only, will take place Feb. 7 in the library of the Smittcamp Alumni House at Fresno State. The theme for this year's tea is "Together We Blossom."

A delicate array of finger foods and teas will be served. A short topic-related talk will be presented. Past subjects for the talk have included illustrator Kate Greenaway, authors Beatrix Potter and Leo Politi; and a tribute to author Margarita Engle.

Life Members are those who have given gifts of \$1,000 within the period of a year. If you are interested in adding your name to

the list of 70 ANCA Life Members and attending the tea, please give us a call at **559.278.8116** or see our ANCA membership form.



The Arne Nixon Center gratefully acknowledges our new and renewing Arne Nixon Center Advocates. Their gifts were received August 2017 through January 19, 2018.

New Members

Cynthia and Patrick Ginn
Diana Rey (*Gift membership from Alberta Steitz*)

Renewing Members and Secret Garden Party Sponsors

Aliki Brandenburg
Martha Connor
Sharon Darnell
Sue Haffner
Susan and Doug Hansen
Pat Hillman*
Ruth Kallenberg*
Shirley Kovacs
Lydia Kuhn*
Ann Lamb
Patricia Libby
Susan Loucks
Sharon Mullennix
Marcie Morrison
Claire Noland
Bonnie Pinto
Kathie Reid-Bevington
Marilyn Renna
Mary Ann Gamegan-Richardson and Eugene Richardson
Kristene and John Scholefield*
Lisa School*
Lisa and James Scroggin
Helen Sirett
Barbara Stafford
Alberta Steitz
Saundra and Dennis Stubblefield*
Lois Tarkanian*
Karen Thomas
Barbara Troisi*
Cindy Wathen-Kennedy
Chris and Howard Watkins
Tekla White
Anne Wick
Betty and Wayne Winter
Louise Wirt

In Memory of Helen Teichman

Jennifer Crow

* Life Member

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Award-winning author Alex Gino will visit Fresno April 9 and 10. Please join us in a big welcome! The Arne Nixon Center, Cross Cultural and Gender Center at Fresno State and the community organization Trans-E-Motion have partnered to bring Gino to speak at Fresno State's Diversity Week kickoff on Monday, April 9. A catered talk will begin at 1 p.m.

By George! Author Alex Gino Will Visit Fresno

in the University Dining Hall. A second catered reception and talk, co-hosted by Trans-E-Motion, will take place later that evening at 6:30 p.m. in the University Dining Hall. The talk will start at 7 p.m. All are welcome! Books will be available for sale and signing.

Gino is the author of the Stonewall Award-winning middle-grade novel *George*. The book tells the story of a young girl who is denied the opportunity to play the character of Charlotte in her school play *Charlotte's Web* because she is seen as a boy named George. Her best friend, Kelly, is the only one who knows her secret and together they devise a plan to once and for all let her be who she really is.

Campus parking for either event is recommended in Lot P27. Traveling north



on Cedar Avenue, turn right, past Shaw Avenue, onto Scott Avenue. For free parking, please enter the parking code 218824 into the parking permit dispenser located just off Rowell Avenue.

Gino's visit on April 10 will include a presentation and ice cream extravaganza for students in a local elementary school classroom. Gino will also talk to a Fresno State LGBT + Literature class, which will be studying *George* in the spring semester.

For more information, including disability accommodations or physical access, please call **559.278.8116** or send email to Jami Helwig at jhelwig@csufresno.edu.