

2025

PORTFOLIO

writers-in- residence

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Ciudad de Asilo
CITY of ASYLUM
匹茲堡避難城



- Introduction
- About City of Asylum
- Anouar Rahmani
- Bo Mima
- Olena Boryshpolets
- Oleksandr Frazé-Frazénko
- Rania Mamoun
- Volodymyr Rafeyenko
- Tour City of Asylum
- Contact

Content



“

City of Asylum is a sanctuary and a refuge. It is a home for persecuted dreamers. It is the last of the real America, the last of the land that once opened its arms and its heart to the bludgeoned and the oppressed of the world, the last of the land of idealism.

**- Ben Okri,
Booker Prize Winning Writer**

”



Introduction

The City of Asylum Writers-in-Residence Program is a long-term residency for literary writers who are in exile from their home countries and under threat of persecution because of their work. Currently, there are six writers-in-residence, which is the most robust program for writers in exile in the world. The goal of this sanctuary program is to enable each writer-in-residence to continue to create while transitioning to a stable, independent life in exile.

For two years or more, we provide our writers and artists with a home, a stipend, legal counsel, medical benefits, and access to professional development opportunities. Our program is effective: Each writer or artist hosted by City of Asylum has created a full-length work while in residence, and has been able to continue to create.

WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE PORTFOLIO

About City of Asylum

Since 2004, City of Asylum builds a just community by protecting and celebrating freedom of creative expression.

We provide sanctuary to endangered writers and artists, so that they can continue to create and their voices are not silenced.

Annually, we offer a broad range of more than 110 free literary, arts, and humanities programs in a community setting to build social equity through cultural exchange.

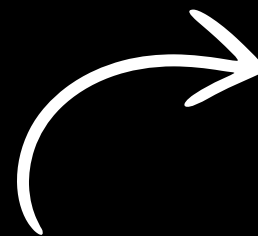


WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE PORTFOLIO

Connecting with Community

City of Asylum Writers-in-Residence are passionate about sharing their skills and experiences with communities in Pittsburgh and beyond. Through partnerships with universities and schools, arts and cultural institutions, and literary festivals, these experiences take many shapes. Here are a few examples:

- **writing workshops**
- **poetry and fiction readings**
- **concerts and performances**
- **speaking engagements**
- **panel discussions**
- **classroom visits**
- **interviews and podcasts**



Jorge, Oleksandr, and Rania after leading a panel discussion at Literary Cleveland's Inkubator Writing Conference



MEET THE WRITERS

ANOUAR RAHMANI

Country of Origin: Algeria

Anouar Rahmani is an Algerian novelist, journalist, and human rights defender whose literary work boldly challenges societal norms and advocates for freedom of expression, LGBTQ+ rights, and social justice. Born in 1992, Rahmani has emerged as a fearless and uncompromising voice in Algerian and Arabic literature, using fiction as a powerful tool to confront authoritarianism, religious dogma, and the erasure of marginalized identities. Since 2019, he has been working on a new novel, continuing his tradition of blending poetic symbolism with sharp political critique. He has published four novels, each igniting critical discourse and controversy. Beyond literature, Rahmani has built a distinguished career as an international news editor, journalist, and columnist, with his work featured in renowned media outlets worldwide.





✱ Languages

Arabic (native); French (native); English (advanced)

✱ Expertise

journalism, blogging, North African Indigenous cultures, Algerian history and culture, political regimes and revolutions of North Africa and the Arab World, activism, fiction, storytelling; rights of women, LGBTQIA+, and Indigenous ethnic groups of Algeria; Islam and sexuality, Algerian law, comparative religions, Arab and Islamic civilization

✱ Personal Experience

police and judicial harassment, queer life in Algeria, homophobic persecution from peers, adults, and religious leaders, networking in international human rights networks

✱ Current Artistic Interests

literature in translation, novels, poetry

✱ Published Works

excerpt from *The City of White Shadows*, “Homosexuals in Algeria: From Self-Hating to Sexual Apartheid”, four novels in Arabic: *The Hallucinations of Jibril*, *City of White Shadows*, *What God is Hiding From Us*, *The Sun that Urinates Standing*

BO MIMA

(Anonymous writer)

Country of Origin: Egypt

Bo Mima is a novelist and ethnographer, born in the Egyptian Delta. He graduated from the University of Bahia (UNBE) in Brazil and works as a Research Fellow in the Department of Languages, Cultures, and Applied Linguistics at Carnegie Mellon University. He has published a number of novels, stories, and research books and has written for many magazines and cultural websites. He is currently interested in issues of social change, class, gender resistance, and urbanism in rural Egypt after 2011. Bo Mima grew up in a household where his mother challenged traditions and patriarchal norms, an influence that shaped his worldview. Motivated by her defiance, he turned to ethnography as a means of documenting societal transformations and advocating for breaking stereotypes, regardless of the consequences. His writing delves into themes of faith, love, and alienation, examining how these experiences contribute to shaping individual identity, separate from the collective consciousness.





* Languages

Arabic (native), English (fluent), Portuguese (basic)

* Expertise

novel writing, poetry and prose; writing articles on themes of cultural, artistic, and social heritage; teaching, ethnographic research and academic writing, film, changes in the Egyptian countryside after 2011 (particularly for women), interconnections of gender, urban and social change in Egypt, gender and masculinity, class, and semi-cities

* Personal Experience

Research Scholar at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), extensive past experience as a TV program producer, presenter and coordinator of cultural events, teaching the Arabic language (currently studying a specialized course in teaching Arabic as a second language at CMU), Master of Arts graduate student from the University of Bahia in Brazil, two-year academic fellowship in Germany from 2020-2022

* Current Artistic Interests

writing novels on themes of gender, urban and social change, masculinity, class, and semi-cities; writing stories for children

* Published Works

To be provided upon request.

OLENA BORYSHPOLETS

Country of Origin: Ukraine

Olena Boryshpolets is originally from Odesa, Ukraine. They say you can leave Odesa, but Odesa will never leave you. Thus, Olena brought Odesa with her when she came to Pittsburgh and is ready to share this incredible city with all of us. Olena is a poet, writer, journalist, actress, cultural manager, and author of the short story book *Ukrainian Detox* and the book of poetry *Orpheus and Eurydice in New York*. Olena is also a member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, a co-founder of the public organization Creativity Without Borders, and a member of PEN America.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Olena traveled to Poland, where she spent a year acting in the Polish-Ukrainian play *Life in Case of War*. Since March 2023, she has been a Research Scholar at the University of Pittsburgh and a Writer-in-Residence at the City of Asylum Fellowship for Ukrainian Writers.





✱ Languages

Ukrainian (native), Russian (native), Polish (conversational), English (beginner/intermediate)

✱ Expertise

poetry, short fiction, screenwriting, journalism, acting; curation and production of artistic, literary, and theater projects; Ukrainian culture and arts

✱ Personal Experience

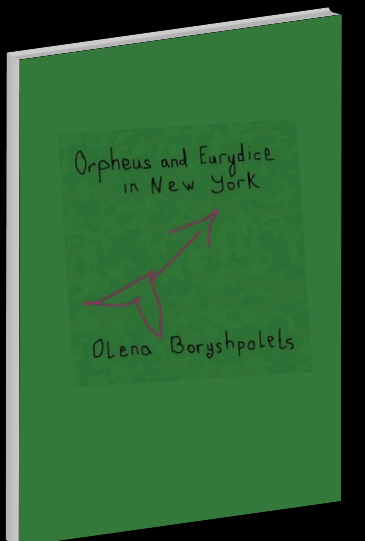
Master's degree in Law from Odesa National University of Law, project manager of international literary project, "Creation Without Borders," freelance journalism, art curation and production, modeling, acting, displacement by war

✱ Current Artistic Interests

short story writing, poetry, a multi-genre project about Andy Warhol's life

✱ Published Works

poetry collection, *Orpheus and Eurydice in New York*, published by Poets of Queens, short story published by Krakow Literary Institute: "In Search of Orodruin" (available in English by request)



OLEKSANDR FRAZÉ- FRAZÉNKO

Country of Origin: Ukraine

Oleksandr Frazé-Frazénko is a filmmaker, writer, and musician. His oeuvre includes films, music videos, commercials, a discography of over 50 albums, and a dozen books of poetry. This collection includes Oleksandr's poetry volume *FAQ Ukraine* (2024) and the novel *Nothing is Under Control* (2025). In addition to his original works, Oleksandr published Ukrainian translations of Jim Morrison's poetry (the first of their kind) and translated English poetry of the Restoration Period, including the works of John Rochester. His photographs, paintings, drawings, and sculptures have been featured in private collections across the globe, including exhibitions in Ukraine, Germany, Canada, and the US, among others. During the first year of the war in Ukraine, Oleksandr stayed in the country and became involved in a volunteer movement working with foreign journalists as a producer, filmmaker, and writer to spread the truth about the situation and the historical context. He has been in residence as part of City of Asylum's Fellowship for Ukrainian Writers since 2023 with his wife, Mari Frazé-Frazénko, a gifted Ukrainian singer.





✱ Languages

Ukrainian (native), Russian (fluent), Polish (fluent), English (fluent)

✱ Expertise

poetry and prose, literary editing and journalism; video directing, cinematography, and editing; multi-instrumentalist (guitar, piano, saxophone, clarinet, drums); genres: rock, jazz, classical, hip-hop, soundtracks; sound recording, mixing, and mastering; translation and interpretation of English and Ukrainian, graphic design

✱ Personal Experience

filmmaking, photography, music production, graphic design, translation, poetry, long-form writing, painting, displacement by war

✱ Current Artistic Interests

music production, poetry, translation, suspense short story writing

✱ Published Works

"The Poets" Feature Length Documentary Series, other fictional short films, novel *Nothing is Under Control*, short story "Sandy Dies," poetry collections *Happy Lovers* and *FAQ Ukraine*



RANIA MAMOUN

Country of Origin: Sudan

Rania Mamoun is a Sudanese activist and bestselling writer of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. She completed *Something Evergreen Called Life*, a poetry manuscript written during COVID-19 quarantine, translated into English by Yasmine Seale and published by Action Books in March 2023. Rania has published two novels to great international acclaim, *Green Flash* and *Son of the Sun*, and *Thirteen Months of Sunrise*, a short story collection shortlisted for the 2020 Warwick Prize for Women in Translation. Rania just completed a short story collection in Arabic called *A Lonely Woman under the Neem Tree*, forthcoming for publication. Rania continues to organize for democracy in Sudan. Her writing has appeared in English, Korean, French, and Spanish translation. She is a Writer-in-Residence at City of Asylum since 2019.





✱ Languages

Arabic (native), English (fluent)

✱ Expertise

fiction, poetry writing and workshops, censorship and freedom of speech, Sudanese culture and history, genocide in Darfur and Nuba Mountains, Sudanese civil war, resistance of authoritarian regimes to build a path to democracy, building grassroots political coalitions between ethnic groups and diverse regions of Sudan, rights of women and girls in Sudan, Arabic literature, racism in the Arab world and Sudan

✱ Personal Experience

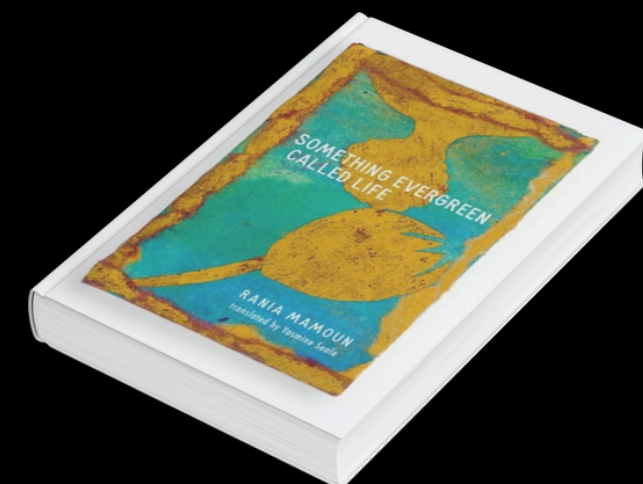
police and judicial harassment, leadership in the Sudanese revolution against the regime of Omar Al-Bashir, meditation, censorship and book bans, black market book sales and festivals, gender-based violence

✱ Current Artistic Interests

short fiction, journalism, poetry

✱ Published Works

short story collection *Thirteen Months of Sunrise*, poetry collection *Something Evergreen Called Life*, short story published in *World Literature Today* “*The Lemon Tree*,” article published in *Al-Doha Magazine* “*Eritrea: Gliding With Broken Wings*,” short story from *Banthology* “*Birds of Paradise*,” bilingual Arabic-English excerpt from the novel *Ibn Al-Shams (Son of the Sun)* “*At the Coffee Shop*,” three poems from *Something Evergreen Called Life* “*Far From*”



VOLODYMYR RAFEYENKO

Country of Origin: Ukraine

Volodymyr Rafeyenko is an award-winning Ukrainian writer, poet, translator, literary and film critic from Kyiv, Ukraine. He graduated from Donetsk University with a degree in Russian philology and culture studies, and from 1992 to 2018, he wrote his works in Russian, was mainly published in Russia, and was considered a representative of Russian literature. Following the outbreak of Russian aggression in Ukraine, Volodymyr left Donetsk and moved to a town near Kyiv, where he wrote *Mondegreen: Songs about Death and Love*, his first novel in the Ukrainian language, which was shortlisted for the Taras Shevchenko National Prize—Ukraine’s highest award in arts and culture. Volodymyr learned Ukrainian from scratch and has dedicated himself to speaking Ukrainian, rather than Russian, his mother tongue, as an act of resistance and perseverance. Among other recognitions, he is the winner of the Volodymyr Korolenko Prize for the novel *Brief Farewell Book* (1999) and the Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award for the novel *The Length of Days* (2017). Volodymyr’s prose is full of phantasmagorical images and storylines, as well as explicit and implicit allusions to well-known texts. He is sometimes called the “magical postmodernist” due to the intertextuality and richness of his prose. He has been a Writer-in-Residence at City of Asylum with his wife, Olesia Rafeyenko, since June 2023.





✱ Languages

Ukrainian (fluent), Russian (native), Polish (conversational), English (beginner)

✱ Expertise

novel writing, short story and article writing, poetry, literary and film critique, teaching

✱ Personal Experience

displacement by war, many years conducting online courses on writing skills and hermeneutic analyses of various works of world literature

✱ Current Artistic Interests

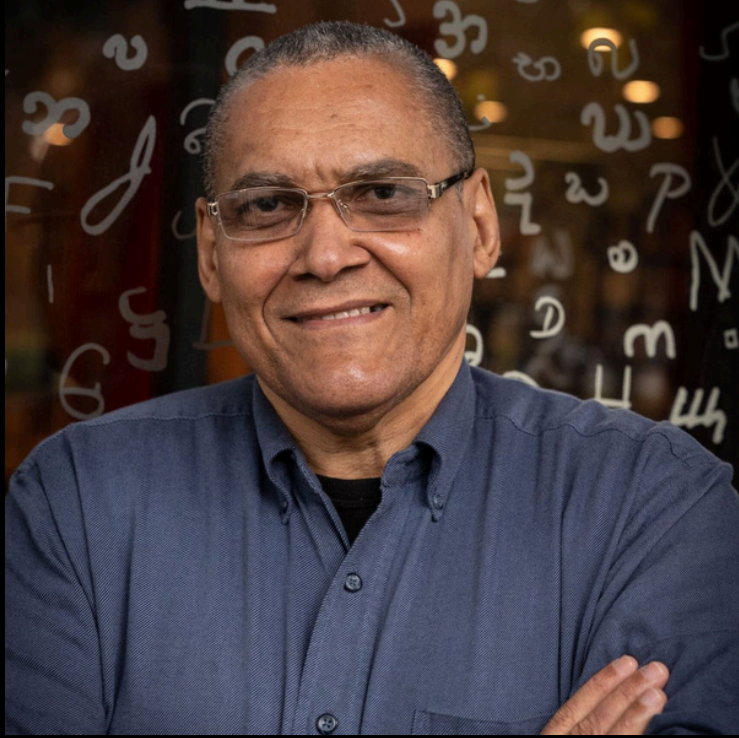
novel writing, Shakespeare analysis

✱ Published Works

novels *The Length of Days: An Urban Ballad* and *Mondegreen: Songs about Death and Love*, article published in *Literary Hub*, “I Once Wrote - and Spoke, and Thought - In Russian...No More,” play in three acts *Signals of Being* translated by Mark Andryczyk



RESIDENCY ALUMNI



JORGE OLIVERA CASTILLO

Writer-in-Residence from 2021 to 2024

Country of Origin: Cuba

Current Residence: Pittsburgh



TUHIN DAS

Writer-in-Residence from 2016 to 2022

Country of Origin: Bangladesh

Current Residence: Pittsburgh



MAI KHÔI

Writer-in-Residence from 2020 to 2022

Country of Origin: Vietnam

Current Residence: Pittsburgh



**AUNEL ARNETH
KIMBEMBE MAKAYA**

Writer-in-Residence from 2020 to 2021

Country of Origin: Republic of Congo

Current Residence: Pittsburgh

RESIDENCY ALUMNI



SIMTEN COŞAR

Writer-in-Residence from 2020 to 2021

Country of Origin: Turkey

Current Residence: Turkey



BEWKETU SEYOUM

Writer-in-Residence from 2019 to 2021

Country of Origin: Ethiopia

Current Residence: Ethiopia



OSAMA ALOMAR

Writer-in-Residence from 2017 to 2019

Country of Origin: Syria

Current Residence: Chicago



ISRAEL CENTENO

Writer-in-Residence from 2011 to 2018

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Current Residence: Pittsburgh

RESIDENCY ALUMNI



YAGHOUB YADALI
(1970 - 2022)

Writer-in-Residence from 2013 to 2015

Country of Origin: Iran



KHET MAR

Writer-in-Residence from 2009 to 2012

Country of Origin: Burma

Current Residence: Maryland



**HORACIO
CASTELLANOS-MOYA**

Writer-in-Residence from 2006 to 2011

Country of Origin: El Salvador

Current Residence: Iowa



HUANG XIANG

Writer-in-Residence from 2004 to 2006

Country of Origin: China

Current Residence: New York City

We also enthusiastically welcome groups to visit City of Asylum, in the Central North Side.

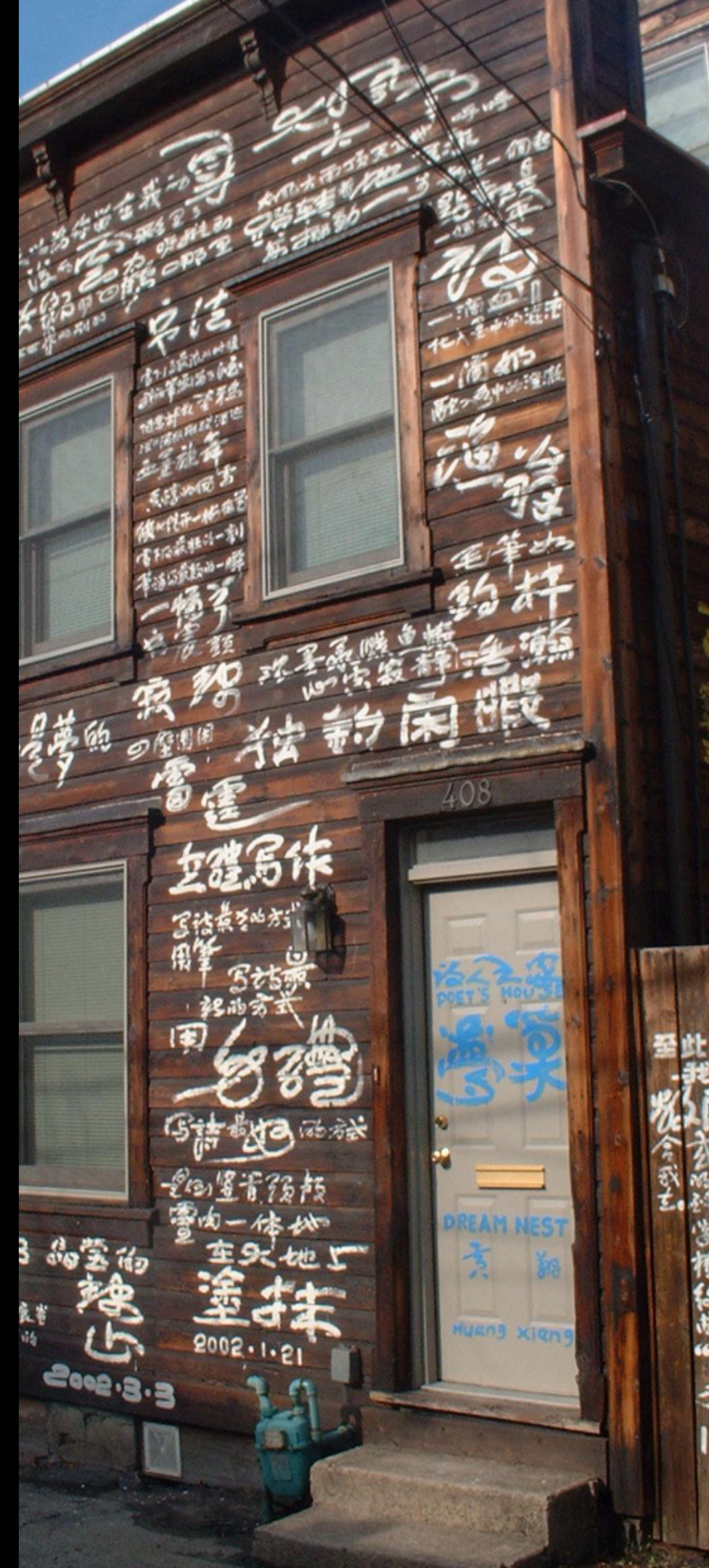
Tour City of Asylum



We can arrange for groups to meet with Writers-in-Residence in our space.

Guests can tour Alphabet City, home to our beautiful community performance space, bookstore, and restaurant.

We can also provide a tour of our unique House Publications—a series of homes that house Writers-in-Residence and include public artwork that incorporates a literary text on the façade of each house.



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Contact Us

If you would like to invite a writer to speak to your group, or if you would like to bring a group to visit City of Asylum, please reach out. We'd love to hear from you.

 Catherine Skolnicki, Residency Manager

 cskolnicki@cityofasylumpittsburgh.org

 412-435-1110 Ext. 203



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