



**PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature  
Will Focus on the Voices and Viewpoints of Today's Mexico**

*Festival Will Feature Rare New York Appearances by Leading and Emerging Authors from Mexico  
Alongside an International Roster of More than 150 Artists and Public Intellectuals*

*Salons, Workshops, Conversations, and Performances will be  
Held Across New York City, April 25 – May 1, 2016*

New York, NY (February 18, 2016 - Updated April 22, 2016) – Writers from around the globe will gather in New York for cross-cultural exchange and debate during the 12<sup>th</sup> annual [PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature](#), April 25 – May 1, 2016. One of the world's largest literary festivals, the event catalyzes conversations among writers, artists, thought-leaders, and the broader public on a variety of timely cultural and social topics.

The Festival, entitled *Renegotiating the Narratives*, will explore Mexico's rich culture and burning social issues through a series of events that invite audiences to rethink widely accepted narratives on topics such as national identity, the border, migration, as well as systematic corruption and free expression in today's Mexico. Insights will be provided from some of Mexico's leading thinkers and authors, including Carmen Boullosa, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Lydia Cacho, Yuri Herrera, and Sabina Berman, who will come together with an extraordinary roster of international and American literary and cultural figures. Sabina Berman, noted playwright and essayist, will co-curate the Mexican program alongside Festival Director László Jakab Orsós.

"This year's focus on Mexico allows us to present new perspectives on some of the urgent sociopolitical issues of our time—perspectives that are often absent from mainstream cultural forums," said Orsós. "But this Festival is not solely about understanding the realities of Mexican society and culture in all of its complexities. It is also about exploring the great well of imagination found in the country's artistic life, as expressed through its fiction, poems, music, film, and art."

The Festival will open with a reading of new and original works written for the occasion by Boris Akunin, Anne Enright, Cristina Rivera-Garza, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Marlon James, Paul Muldoon, Olga Tokarczuk, and Juan Villoro, who will share their views about the human craving for mind-altering drugs, the desire to escape reality, and the mythologies and cultural narratives that fuel the multibillion-dollar drug industry. Events will also include an exploration of the breadth and beauty of Mexican landscapes with literary artists; a conversation about the uncompromising role women writers play within the Mexican cultural ecology; and a multimedia crash course on contemporary Mexican poetry. At a salon-style gathering at the Queens Museum, writers and artists will mingle with guests over drinks as hosts lead a discussion on the sociopolitical issues affecting the Mexico-U.S. border. A number of emerging Mexican writers will make appearances throughout the Festival, including novelist Valeria Luiselli, author and illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh, and human rights journalist Marcela Turati.

"In the English-speaking world, as readers and writers, we have always had reason, especially in the past hundred years, to be excited and nourished by Mexican literary culture. The very names—Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz—are enough to make clear how essential Mexican writing has been to the whole world," said Festival Chairman Colm Tóibín. "What is happening in Mexican letters now is very exciting, and it is a real pleasure to be involved in bringing to New York and North America the new voices, the ones who are making a difference now, whose names will soon be etched on our shared culture, no matter where we are from."

Centered on but not limited to Mexico-themed programming, the Festival will offer an eclectic lineup of events from Lower Manhattan to Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. The popular "Literary Quest," which invites

audiences inside individuals' homes for intimate readings, will return to Westbeth Artists Housing and will also launch a new edition at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Additional highlights of the week-long Festival include a conversation between Festival Founder Salman Rushdie and Barbara Goldsmith; a panel on Italian literary sensation Elena Ferrante; a conversation between poet Elizabeth Alexander and journalist Maria Hinojosa, punctuated by audience-triggered "extreme action" movement developed by action architect Elizabeth Streb; venerated Russian crime fiction writer Boris Akunin in dialogue with Walter Mosley, and a discussion of expatriate life with Kwame Anthony Appiah, Marlon James, Jamaica Kincaid, Valeria Luiselli, and Colum McCann.

Performances will include poetry readings, a series of new plays by renowned dramatists from eight nations, concerts, and a late-night cabaret. The Festival also extends its relationship with the visual arts this year, as Colm Tóibín hosts a conversation with Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco, French visual artist Sophie Calle joins an interdisciplinary discussion of melancholy at the Rubin Museum, and the Festival's visual identity features original artwork by Elena Climent.

"In its 12-year history, PEN World Voices has drawn together over 1,500 writers from every continent, but never before have we put our focus so close to home," said Suzanne Nossel, Executive Director of PEN America. "The symbiotic relationship between the United States and Mexico puts an onus on all of us to better understand and listen to our neighbors next door. By convening such an exceptional group of Mexican writers to tackle the tough issues that sometimes divide us, our hope is to strengthen the common resolve of writers and intellectuals across North America to defend free expression and promote better understanding across our borders."

The *Village Voice* will serve as the Festival's official media sponsor this year, partnering on initiatives to help broaden the impact of Festival events and reach new audiences throughout the City.

"The Village Voice is thrilled to support the PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature," said Peter Barbey, Publisher and Owner of *The Village Voice*. "This is a terrific opportunity to join forces with another organization that has such a storied and similar history of supporting free speech."

Festival highlights include:

- *The Drug Edition*: For this flagship opening night event, leading international authors share their philosophical inquiries into our society's need for mind-altering drugs and the all-too-human desire to escape. Participants include Boris Akunin, Anne Enright, Cristina Rivera-Garza, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Marlon James, Paul Muldoon, Olga Tokarczuk, and Juan Villoro. At The Great Hall, The Cooper Union. (Monday, April 25)
- *I Wish to Say*: Stop by Bryant Park, where artist Sheryl Oring and a team of PEN writers and University of North Carolina Greensboro students invite you to dictate postcards to the Presidential candidates. Your message will be typed on a manual typewriter, and Oring will mail it to the candidate. At Bryant Park. (Tuesday, April 26/Rain Date: April 27)
- *Expats*: A panel of leading expat authors including Kwame Anthony Appiah, Marlon James, Jamaica Kincaid, Valeria Luiselli, and Colum McCann explore what it means to be uprooted from their birth land, change their language, and adapt to life in America. At the Instituto Cervantes. (Wednesday, April 27)

- *Mexico in Two Acts*: This two-part event features Sabina Berman and Héctor Aguilar Camín, who will deliver their personal views on today's prevailing sociopolitical and cultural phenomena, followed by a panel of writers including Jennifer Clement, Claudio Lomnitz, Pedro Ángel Palou, Marcela Turati, and Juan Villoro responding to those remarks. At Dixon Place Theater. (Wednesday, April 27)
- *Mexican Landscapes*: Acclaimed authors from around the globe pay homage to the breadth and beauty of Mexico's geography with pieces about their favorite places written especially for PEN World Voices. Participants include Sabina Berman, Carmen Boullosa, Álvaro Enrique, Yuri Herrera, Jorge Volpi, and Guadalupe Nettel. At The Cooper Union Rose Auditorium. (Sunday, May 1)
- *Fiction from Fact: Boris Akunin and Walter Mosley*: These two venerated historical and crime fiction writers discuss how contemporary political circumstances and their own political activism inform their work with moderator Keith Gessen. At Tishman Auditorium at NYU School of Law. (Saturday, April 30)
- *Mexican Poetics: A Lecture-Performance*: Celebrated Mexican poet, essayist, and editor Luis Felipe Fabre offers a vivid and insightful multimedia crash course on contemporary Mexican poetry. The evening includes music, live performance, and recorded readings from some of Mexico's premier poets. At Nuyorican Poets Café. (Thursday, April 28)
- *Women of Mexico*: Some of Mexico's leading contemporary voices including Carmen Boullosa, Valeria Luiselli, Guadalupe Nettel, and Cristina Rivera-Garza discuss the role that brave and uncompromising women writers play in Mexican fiction, poetry, journalism, and playwriting with moderator Mónica de la Torre. At The Auditorium Alvin Johnson/J.M. Kaplan Hall at The New School. (Thursday, April 28)
- *Remembering Umberto Eco*: Best-known in the United States for his groundbreaking first novel *The Name of the Rose*, Umberto Eco was also a prominent teacher, scholar, and public intellectual. Join writers Siri Hustvedt, Gianni Riotta, and Salman Rushdie for this free event, commemorating Eco's life and his multifaceted career with readings from Eco's most important writings. Moderated by Michael F. Moore. RSVPs required. At the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di New York. (Thursday, April 28)
- *La Frontera: A Literary Salon*: At this salon-style gathering, audiences will mix and mingle with writers as hosts Yuri Herrera and Cristina Rivera-Garza lead conversations on the sociopolitical issues affecting the Mexico-U.S. border, including how crime, migration, and flawed policy disrupt the lives and cultures of the people who inhabit this region. Participants include Fey Berman, Carmen Boullosa, Luis Felipe Fabre, Francisco Goldman, Claudio Lomnitz, Rubén Martínez, Guadalupe Nettel, Guillermo Osorno, Juan Villoro, and Óscar Martínez. Co-presented with the Queens Museum. At the Queens Museum. (Saturday, April 30)
- *Cuba in Two Acts*: As the United States begins to reopen diplomatic relations with Cuba, a more complex view of the island is becoming more available to Americans whose access to the island has been limited by the five-decade embargo. This event offers a rare opportunity to hear leading intellectual historian Rafael Rojas, prize-winning film director Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti and citizen journalist and *Huffington Post* blogger Miriam Celaya discuss the challenges facing public intellectuals in today's Cuba. The event opens with a short film about the infamous case of Cuban poet Heberto Padilla, whose censorship, imprisonment and forced confession in 1971 remains a tragic reference point for troubled relations between Cuban writers and the state. At the Instituto Cervantes. (Friday, April 29)
- *Objective/Reality: Gabriel Orozco with Colm Tóibín*: Famed visual artist Gabriel Orozco is joined by celebrated author and Festival Chair Colm Tóibín to discuss Orozco's brilliant and insightful work, and its relationship to Mexico's current artistic and cultural movements. At The Frederick P. Rose Auditorium at The Cooper Union. (Sunday, May 1)

- *Risky Talking: Creative Migrations*: The award-winning poet Elizabeth Alexander joins choreographer Elizabeth Streb and journalists Laura Flanders and Maria Hinojosa for a conversation on creativity and migration, including audience-triggered physical acts by Streb. At STREB@SLAM. (Tuesday, April 26)
- *In Conversation: Salman Rushdie and Lila Azam Zanganeh*: Festival founder Salman Rushdie is interviewed by acclaimed writer Lila Azam Zanganeh, in a discussion of Rushdie's life, work, and writing in exile. At the NYU Law School Tishman Auditorium. (Wednesday, April 27)
- *Literary Quest: Westbeth Edition*: The residents of Westbeth Center for the Arts open their homes to Festival-goers for salon-style readings and discussions with leading authors. Participants include Dalia Betolin-Sherman, Lorea Canales, Álvaro Enrigue, Saleem Haddad, Yuri Herrera, Andreï Makine, Karim Miské, Mark Nowak, Alexandre Vidal Porto, Susanna Reich, Fatima Shaik, Burhan Sönmez, Abdellah Taïa, Juan Villoro, Jorge Volpi, and Klaus Wivel.. At Westbeth Center for the Arts. (Thursday, April 28)
- *Literary Quest: Tenement Museum Edition*: For this new edition of the Literary Quest, Festival audiences are invited to wander through the Lower East Side Tenement Museum for readings by Rashidah Ismaili, Eisa Davis, Richard Price, Colm Tóibín, Olga Tokarczuk, Sunjeev Sahota, Veronica Gonzalez Peña, Guadalupe Nettel, and others who draw inspiration from the historic family dwellings. At the Tenement Museum. (Wednesday, April 27)
- *The Voices of the Student "DREAMers"*: Many of the "DREAMers"—immigrants brought to the United States at a young age without documentation—have moved through the public school system, earning college degrees and starting professional careers. Student "DREAMers" share their experiences with original pieces created under the guidance of Valeria Luiselli and Álvaro Enrigue. At the Nuyorican Poets Café. (Saturday, April 30)
- *Melancholy*: László F. Földényi guides readers through the history of "feeling a bit blue" in *Melancholy*, available in English for the first time this spring, in a new translation by Tim Wilkinson. For this Festival conversation, the Hungarian author joins world renowned French visual artist Sophie Calle and American poet and cultural critic Wayne Koestenbaum to unearth the role this state of mind plays in our lives and the creative process. At the Rubin Museum of Art. (Saturday, April 30)
- *¡Cabaret Mexicano!*: NYC's iconic Joey Arias joins legendary Mexican political satirists Las Reinas Chulas and the NAFTA Aztec Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and performance artist Raúl de Nieves for this outrageously hip night of merriment that will squash stereotypes and upend borders. MC'd by Katie Halper. At The Cutting Room. (Saturday, April 30)
- *State of the City: New York*: A conversation on the transformation and gentrification of New York City with world-renowned humorist and author Fran Lebowitz, and native New Yorker and chronicler of urban America Richard Price. At The Cooper Union. (Saturday, April 30)
- *The Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture*: Leading feminist writer and cultural critic Roxane Gay will deliver the Festival's signature address. This appearance marks Gay's debut at the Festival as she joins a distinguished roster of writers who have delivered the lecture in past years, including U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor; novelist Colm Tóibín; writer and activist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and author and essayist Christopher Hitchens. At The Great Hall at The Cooper Union. (Sunday, May 1)

Tickets for all Festival events are available at [www.penworldvoices.org](http://www.penworldvoices.org).

Village Voice serves as official media sponsor of the 2016 PEN World Voices Festival.

*The Festival is made possible in part through the generosity of Kaplen Brothers Fund, Ford Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Embrey Family*

*Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.*

*Programming and participants subject to change.*

**About PEN America**

Founded in 1922, PEN America is an association of 4,300 U.S. writers dedicated to defending freedom of expression, advocating for persecuted writers and journalists, advancing literature and literary translation, and fostering international literary exchange.

**About the PEN World Voices Festival**

Founded by Salman Rushdie in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 with the aim of broadening channels of dialogue between the U.S. and the world, PEN World Voices is the only international literary festival in the world with a human rights focus. It attracts the world's best-known writers and has garnered broad global acclaim as one of the world's premier literary events. Since its founding 12 years ago, PEN World Voices has presented more than 1,500 writers and artists from 118 countries, speaking 56 languages.

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