### SPECIAL EVENTS

**LYNN DOWNEY: AREQUIPA SANATORIUM**  
Saturday, February 29, 2–4 p.m.  
Lynn Downey is a widely published historian of the West, and the fifth generation of her family to live in Sonoma. Her new book, *Arequipa Sanatorium: Life in California’s Lung Resort for Women*, tells the story of a women’s tuberculosis sanatorium which operated in Fairfax from 1911 to 1957, and where her own grandmother was treated in the 1920s. Based on sanatorium records and interviews she conducted with former patients and others associated with Arequipa, Downey tells a vivid story of the sanatorium and its cure.  

Until streptomycin was discovered in the 1940’s, tubercular patients had few options other than a rest cure. Supported by philanthropist Phoebe Apperson Hearst, Arequipa treated primarily working class women and women of color. Unique to the Arequipa Sanatorium was a flourishing arts and crafts program that produced stunning pottery and formed the basis for the developing fields of occupational and art therapies.

**BARBARA BAER and SUSAN SWARTZ: JOURNALISTS**  
**TURN TO FICTION**  
**Saturday, March 14, 2–4 p.m.**  
Long time journalist, author, radio commentator and public speaker, Susan Swartz is new to fiction but intimately familiar with the challenges women face as we get older. “Laughing in the Dark” takes you along on the roller coaster year in three women’s lives as they navigate infidelity, the latest in California dying styles, and the absurdities of aging together, saved by their credo, “Friendship is the best medicine.” Swartz has said the difference between journalism and fiction is like the difference between a red snapper and a mermaid.

In Barbara Baer’s “The Ice Palace Waltz,” two Jewish immigrant families—rough and ready westerners and smooth ‘our crowd’ New Yorkers—come together in a family saga amid the financial and political turmoil of early 20th century America. Barbara, also a journalist and small press publisher, bases her multi-generational saga on remembered stories from her family and much research. She doesn’t think fiction falsifies fact, but rather adds more ingredients to a recipe that deepens the flavors.

The two authors will talk about the differences between journalism, novel writing and memoir and how much personal experience feeds them all. They’ll give a short reading and welcome discussion and questions.

**EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPE US: INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR LANDSCAPES**  
**Jodi Hottel, Ron Thomas, and Donna Emerson**  
**read poetry and prose.**  
**Saturday, April 25, 2–4 p.m.**  
April is Poetry Month and we celebrate with readings by local writers. In “Beside the Well” poet Donna Emerson takes us from wells, woods, meadows, and horses, rooted in her family homestead of western New York to music, ocean, and earth in her current California, sharing time-stopping moments of intimacy. Ron Thomas offers an intoxicating coming-of-age story “I Want To Walk You Home” full of dysfunction, chaos, and humor that will remind readers what it’s like to meet love head-on. Jodi Hottel’s poetry chapbook, “Out of the Ashes”, reflects her personal experience during the 2017 Tubbs fire and its aftermath and the journey to healing and renewal.

Using three different forms, these three writers share what shapes us, life transitions that create new outcomes. Varied experiences and varied voices come together to create a textured afternoon.

**POETRY: MAYA KHOSLA, ELLERY AKERS, PATTI TRIMBLE, ROSA LANE**  
**Saturday, May 9, 2–5 p.m.**  
We continue our celebration of Poetry Month with a reading by four distinguished local poets: Maya Khosla, Sonoma County Poet Laureate, Patti Trimble, our Writer in Residence, Ellery Akers, award winning poet and artist who will read from her new collection, *Swerve: Environmentalism, Feminism, and Resistance*, and Rosa Lane whose recent book, *Chouteau’s Chalk*, won the 2017 Georgia Poetry Prize. Copies of their books will be available for sale.

**OUR VERSION OF MEMORIAL OBSERVATIONS**  
**Saturday, May 23, 2 p.m.**  
Remembering Women Authors/Artists and Activists who have recently died — always turns out to be a surprisingly stimulating and cheerful experience. We read from the women to get their voices out into the room and speculate on their influence and lastingness (what an odd word!). All welcome. No reservations necessary. FMI, call J.J. Wilson at 795-9028 after May 1.
SAPPHO, OUR “LIBRARYTHING”

If you haven’t recently (or ever) taken a look at the Sitting Room online catalog, we urge you to give it a try: www.librarycat.org/lib/Sitting_Room. You don’t even need to have a specific woman author or title in mind—the opening screen has a wonderful parade of book jackets to browse, not so very different from scanning the shelves of a bookstore, just to take in what is there and available, and maybe remind yourself of something you “always meant to read.” If something intrigues you, just click on the title to retrieve more information and the book’s location in the Sitting Room. It is a rich parade—we now have over 6,000 titles!

Of course you can also be specific in your searching by using the “advanced search” option—any title words, words in authors’ names or collections will work. A good sample search for browsing this way is graphic novels, or Afghanistan. The results are clearly and simply displayed—indicating where to find the item on the Sitting Room shelves.

LINKS TO THE WOMEN WRITERS ARCHIVE

Our exciting new enterprise this year is to link catalog records for individual authors with their files in the Women Writers Archives. For example, a search on Jane Austen has a tag. See also Women Writers Archive, to indicate that there is an archival file for this author in the Archive Room. As a reminder—the Archive contains primary materials and unique, esoteric information, not only on famous women authors, but on some lesser-known treasures as well. This is an ambitious project was launched last fall, and we hope to complete it over the coming year with the help of our wonderful interns Krista Anandakuttan, Brianna Wallen and Lucas McKuen.

Of course, nothing compares to an in-person browse, but Sappho can keep you company until you pay a visit to the Sitting Room, and she (or we) can then direct you to specific books once you’re here. You are also welcome to request a one-on-one tutorial. For more information/questions contact Karen Petersen, kpetaluma@gmail.com.

Sappho lists books in our permanent collection, of course — the non-circulating books. The many (about 800) books on the BOOKS TO GO shelves are there for the taking, no check out needed, honor system.

CHANGES & STAYING IN TOUCH

We are now open Monday-Saturday, We are now open Monday-Saturday, 9am to 5pm, and by appointment. Be sure to check our website for up-to-date info on book groups, events and publications, www.SittingRoom.org. You can also “follow” us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/thesittingroomlibrary, and Instagram, www.instagram.com/thesittingroomlibrary. If you would like to receive email reminders of events at the Sitting Room and regionally, or if you would like to schedule a tour, please contact sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com

REBECCA WEST: OUR NEXT RE-DISCOVERY PROJECT OF A NEGLECTED WRITER WELL WORTH READING

Have you ever thought of what pen name/alias you might choose? Cecily Isabel Fairfield did and it was a much more interesting name: REBECCA WEST. Taken from a figure in Ibsen’s play “Rosmerholm”, she made it her own and if you are not familiar with that name, you’ve got some fascinating territory to explore. Your guides will be Rosemary Manchester and Meredith Sabini who last year got us reading and re-reading the addictive novels of RUMER GODDEN. Trust them. They know a good thing when they read it and they are ready to lead us to and through some of West’s novels. The Sitting Room will have copies to loan out; so do the public libraries and used bookstores and on-line sources.

They are all worth reading or re-reading but we will be focusing on “The Fountain Overflows” on Saturday, June 20, 1:30 to 4 with Rosemary Manchester connecting the novel and West’s own life.

Saturday, June 27, 1:30 to 4 will feature Meredith Sabini giving an overview of the other two novels in West’s planned trilogy: “This Real Night” and “Cousin Rosamund”. And there will be time allotted to her extensive and successful journalism too, with excerpts from her account of the Nuremberg Trials and even some glimpses at her 1150page (!) “Black Lamb and Grey Falcon” (said to be one of Bill Clinton’s favorite books). Here was a writer who knew how to name herself. Telephone J.J. Wilson at 707 795-9028 (after May 1) if you want more information on this project.

2020 EXHIBITIONS

From Suffrage to #Me Too:
Groundbreaking Women in Sonoma County
January 25 – September 13, 2020
Sonoma County Museum
museumscc.org/suffrage-metoo/

Frida Kahlo: Appearances can be Deceiving
March 21-July 26
de Young Museum
deyoung.famsf.org/exhibitions/frida-kahlo

Judy Chicago: A Retrospective
May 9 –September 6, 2020
de Young Museum
deyoung.famsf.org/exhibitions/judy-chicago

Artemesia
April 4 – July 26
The National Gallery, London www.nati

THE SITTING ROOM BOOK GROUP meets the third Wednesday of every month from 2 to 4 pm. Book Group updates are posted on the website, www.SittingRoom.org/events or email Joanne Page, jpage@sonic.net if you wish to receive reminders of the meetings and readings. All are welcome to attend, no fee of course. Coming up soon: February 19, Susan Minot, Monkeys; March 18, Sally Field, In Pieces
2019 SITTING ROOM PUBLICATION
READERS WITHOUT BORDERS
Last chance! due date April 1 or you’re out.

We keep urging more of you to contribute to the Sitting Room publication “Readers Without Borders” to let us know of an international book you have read which gives well described and “felt” examples of women’s lives in other cultures; heck, we even removed the one page limit on contributions and yes, we’ve been getting some fine accounts (see the excerpt below from a longer piece by that well-known author, “Anon.”)

“BEHIND THE VEIL: OMAN CONFIDENTIAL”
How much time have any of us spent wondering what goes on in Oman? How many of us can locate it on a map? Ms. Alharthi has provided an abundance of answers to the first of these questions in her “Celestial Bodies,” translated from the Arabic by Marilyn Booth. (Hint: To find Oman on a map, look to the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula).

Another important “elephant in the room” are the lives of women, and who but a woman of that culture is better placed to tell about them? Up until the choice made by a young woman named, significantly, London, in the 1980’s marriages are arranged. The passion or lack thereof, and ultimate acceptance or contentment or discontent within such a system is explored throughout the interlocking narratives. By the 1980’s two of her female characters have sought divorce. Ms. Alharthi shows us too that it is also the male partner who suffers or chafes within the system.

Samantha Aikman, tenth grader from Mount Mansfield Union High School in Richmond, Vermont. Her poster won the 2020 National Poetry Contest for Students.

ANNUAL HOW GLAD WE ARE THERE IS A SITTING ROOM CELEBRATION
Saturday, June 6, 2 to 5 p.m.

Please note the change to Saturday when we have more parking available. And there is another change being introduced: anyone of whatever gender with a new book (within the past year or so) is welcome to come “set up shop” at our Circle of Author Tables. Copies of our finally published READERS WITHOUT BORDERS will also be proudly displayed to hand out to the p-lucky authors and sold for a pittance to would-be readers.

You may remember last Summer’s performance of “The Penelope Poems” with our Writer in Residence, Patti Trimble. This year she will once again bring musicians and spoken word to the Sitting Room backyard, with a first glimpse of her current work-in-progress. “I’ve been working on a prayer to Earth, a kind of song of Earth. As a former science writer I’m aware every day of the immensity of environmental change, unfathomable, disorienting. And simultaneously, as a poet and lover of pathways and woods, I am pulled into wonder: at the privilege of being on and of this planet; thoughts of beauty, connection, grief, weather, water.” Don’t miss it!

Don’t worry — we’ll still have the so-special CAKE and Punch and strawberries too. One of the few events at the Sitting Room that is not a potluck.

GERI DIGIORNO
Poet Laureate of Sonoma County, artist, teacher, mentor, and founder of the Petaluma Poetry Walk. Geri’s books and the Petaluma Poetry Walk Anthology are on display at the Sitting Room. Her fabulous life and work will be remembered on March 29, 1-5 p.m., at the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma. Rsvp, Michelle Baynes, Mchbaynes@aol.com

I believe that writing poetry is telling the truth
ironing is therapy
kissing is an art
and dusting is a waste of time

Geri DiGiorno

Samantha Aikman, tenth grader from Mount Mansfield Union High School in Richmond, Vermont. Her poster won the 2020 National Poetry Contest for Students.
WORKSHOPS

WRITING FROM MEMORY OR IMAGINATION with Nicole R. Zimmerman Wednesdays, Feb. 26 – April 1, 10am – noon.

This workshop series focuses on generative writing with the Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA) method, which uses prompts and positive group reflection to bolster your writing practice. Participants will find a safe environment in which to experiment, learn craft, and develop each unique voice. All genres and experience levels welcome. Nicole is a 2019 recipient of Creative Sonoma’s Discovered Awards for Emerging Literary Artists, has an MFA in Writing, and is certified to lead AWA workshops. $120.00 for the series; no drop-ins. Size is limited to 12. To find out more or to reserve a space: https://www.nicolerzimmerman.com/workshops/.

NEW INQUIRY, NEW LISTENING New Writing Workshop with Patti Trimble, Saturdays 2-5 p.m., March 7, April 4, May 2

How many conversations—personal, political, social—do we hold in our intelligent creative minds? How do our doubts and certainties, facts and fictions, lyric imaginations and deep concerns live, in reality, side by side? And when we write, how do we dignify the real relationship of things? In three free workshops we’ll address the complexity of writing today. And we’ll write together, merging genres and finding language to braid whatever: personal experience and expertise, uncertainty, imagination, world events, facts, fiction. With practices for thoughtful inquiry and for listening through for the power of personal revelation and wisdom. Join us for one or three. No charge and all levels welcome.

Patti Trimble’s lyric poems, essays, and stories have appeared in journals and collections, recordings, museum catalogues, art performances, theater, science/literature/writing textbooks, and spoken-word performances in the US and Europe. She lives in Petaluma and Sicily and she’s facilitated writing workshops in universities and on hillsides. www.pattitrimble.com

DREAMS: A SOURCE FOR POETRY & PROSE Salon and workshop with Meredith Sabini, Saturday, May 16, 1-4 p.m.

Ever considered writing a poem or short story based on a dream? Would you enjoy hearing “dream poems”? We’ll begin by listening to examples from women poets like Louise Bogan, Jane Hirshfield, Marie Howe, Maxine Kumin, Mary Oliver, Linda Pastan, Liz Rosner, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, as well as the presenter’s. Then we’ll experiment writing dreams into various poetic and prose. You’ll discover that in the House of Creativity, dreams and poetry live down the hall from one another. Bring several dreams—fresh or old, long or short—and a notebook.

Meredith Sabini is a widely published author of poetry, essays, and professional articles. RSVP to J.J. Wilson, boxcar@sonic.net or 707-795-9028. Sliding scale: $15-$45. (No one will be turned away for lack of funds)

TERRY EHRET is teaching at SRJC this spring but will return to the Sitting Room next Fall, 2020. Her workshops on contemporary women writers are very popular and fill up well in advance. Terry reserves space for Sitting Room members, so if you are interested, please write to her, tehret99@comcast.net.

LGBTQI HISTORY CLASS with Tina Dungan

The Older Adults Program at Santa Rosa Junior College is offering a FREE class in LGBTQI history in Sonoma County. Explore community building, cultural and social change and how our history can inform our future. Details at www.older-adults.santarosa.edu or call 707.527-4533.