



WASHINGTON STATE
ARTS COMMISSION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 11, 2019

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POET LAUREATE UNVEILS ONLINE POETRY MAP OF WASHINGTON STATE

“WASHINGTON POETIC ROUTES” FROM CLAUDIA CASTRO LUNA LAUNCHED AS PART OF NATIONAL POETRY MONTH CELEBRATIONS

For Claudia Castro Luna, the Washington State Poet Laureate, the twisting lines of a map feel like the twisting lines of a poem, so she’s taken Washington State’s highways and roads and overlaid them with poetry.

The result is the new [Washington Poetic Routes](#), an online poetry map of our state. Visitors click dots on the map to see a poem from a Washington State poet written about that location.

Launched this April as a celebration of National Poetry Month, the map is intended to be a living document of Washington State. The map currently has 25 poems from both established and younger poets, but Castro Luna hopes that a broad swath of Washington’s residents will be included, from school children to adults to long-time poets and first-time writers. Anyone can submit a poem for consideration [via the website](#).

“As a writer and poet I am constantly interested in the relationship people have to place,” said Castro Luna. “Geography is inescapable. We are bound to the locations we inhabit: we dream in space, work in space, love in space. When we write about the place we live in, we tap into memory, into history, into our desires and frustrations. This is fertile territory for poetry.”

The project is part of the Washington State Poet Laureate program, sponsored by Humanities Washington and ArtsWA (the Washington State Arts Commission). Each poem will be accompanied by artworks selected from the Washington's State Public Art Collection. Managed by ArtsWA, the Collection is comprised of 4,700 public artworks located at public K-12 schools, colleges and universities, technical schools, and government buildings across the state.

The theme of “routes” was chosen because of Washington’s terrain. Though our state is full of natural wonders, its numerous mountains and waterways can be difficult to traverse. But our routes and roads, like poetry, can connect us despite the challenges that surround us.

“My hope is that together, through our own poems of place we will have a new, different way of engaging with each other as citizens,” said Castro Luna. “Together we will create a living map of what it is like to live in this wonderful place we share called Washington State.”

See the project at washingtonpoeticroutes.com.

ABOUT CLAUDIA CASTRO LUNA

Claudia Castro Luna, a prominent Seattle poet and teacher, is the fifth Washington State Poet Laureate. She was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to serve from February 1, 2018 to January 31, 2020.

Castro Luna fled war-torn El Salvador for the United States at the age of 14 with her family. She went on to earn an MFA in poetry and an MA in urban planning. After working as a K-12 teacher, she became Seattle’s first Civic Poet, a position appointed by the mayor. In that position, Castro Luna won acclaim for her [Seattle Poetic Grid](#), an online interactive map of showcasing poems about different locations around the city. The grid landed her an interview on [PBS NewsHour](#). She is also the author of the poetry chapbook *This City* and the collection *Killing Mariás*, which was nominated for the Washington State Book Award. Previous poets laureate were Tod Marshall (2016-2018), Elizabeth Austen (2014–2016), Kathleen Flenniken (2012–2014), and Sam Green (2007–2009).

ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE PROGRAM

The Washington State Poet Laureate position was established by the Legislature in April 2007. The Legislature recognized the value of poetry to the culture and heritage of the state. Washington. The Washington State Poet Laureate is a joint program of the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) and Humanities Washington. The Laureate is appointed by the Governor to a two-year term. The position is funded by ArtsWA, Humanities Washington, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Information and events calendar at: wapoetlaureate.org.

ABOUT HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state. For more about Humanities Washington, visit humanities.org.

ABOUT ARTSWA

The Washington State Arts Commission advances and supports arts and culture in Washington State through leadership, funding, and resources that build participation and access to the arts. For more about ArtsWA visit arts.wa.gov.

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