

Get ready to die

- Los Angeles Poetry Beach Festival 2021 -



Anthology

A selection of L.A. Poetry
Beach Festival 2021



Colofon:

Publisher: House Of Craziness

Jury:

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Photo credit:

Model: KayDee Donnelly

Photo: Andrew Herrstein

Location: Blue Ridge Parkway at Craggy Gardens, North Carolina

Special thanks:

Amy Castillo, Hotel Erwin

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Introduction

In memoriam

Kenneth Patchen

(December 13, 1911 - January 8, 1972)

Welcome to the Los Angeles Poetry Beach Festival 2021!

This year's theme is 'get ready to die', we chose this topic to honour the 110th birthday of one of California's greatest poets, Kenneth Patchen.

The LAPB Festival started this year with the Poetry Train departing from New York on December 7 and arrived at Los Angeles on December 12, with 91 stops in 12 states along the way.

Goal of the Poetry Train is to get poets from all over the USA to Los Angeles, hence each year the L.A. Poetry Beach Festival will start with a beach to beach Poetry Train.

On December 13, 2021 the LAPB Inaugural Festival took place at the following two locations at Venice Beach, Los Angeles:

- Venice Beach Poetry Monument, from 7.30 to 8.00 pm,
- Hotel Erwin, from 8.00 to 9.30 pm.

Around the Poetry Train and the LAPB festival, we organised a poetry competition, which resulted in this poetry anthology. In it, you find the eight selected poems of this year's Festival.

We are proud to present it to you and would love to see you (again) next year, when the theme will be 'Some people will never go crazy'. Get ready!

Erik Van Loon
L.A. Poetry Beach Festival

Katrina Khan, 21

Los Angeles, CA

Asylum

Asylum takes too long
Marriage is a fraud
How far can I continue on
The law won't let me live

The law won't let me work
Without work I must perish and
Without joy I shall die
I

I have no parents
Or siblings of mine
All I'm doing
Is to live till I die

Is there no mercy
In this world full of spite?

Is there nothing but folly
In this chest of mine?

I am at my wits end
The law won't let me live
I'm forced to see the other side;
The life of crime,

Full of money but no invite
I am at my wits end
The law won't let me work
I don't wanna die

But I can't make it work.

Larry Smith, 78

Huron, OH

Conflicted

My friend marched on the Capitol,
not for peace and justice, but to hide
his fears of losing out. Strange
the power lies can hold over others
and ourselves if we swallow.

I watched doors and windows punched out
by ruthless thugs, a part of his crowd.
I hope he was at the other end.
Democracy could not be beaten
though this herd tried. And that
my friend was with them sickens me
more than words can say. So, I
stand here conflicted on how to
accept his friendship with the threat
his ignorance and hate brings

Greg Bell, 74

Los Angeles, CA

Coda: Prayer of the American Dream

America, just beyond the campfire light
under soiled & darkened transit bridges
before your microwaves & tempurpedics
and way beyond the light cast by your cell phones
beyond all your social media
beyond what's streaming 24/7
beyond the borders of your paranoia
sitting with the children in your cages —
look! was it there or was it just fear
trembling at the edges of your vision?
The darkness speaks and you must listen:
The darkness speaks and you must hear:
You know you're dying every day
You must give yourself away

LA Fogle, 49

Columbus, OH

For Kenneth Patchen

It was never done,
your walk from pyre to pyre
on celestial stilts. Each step shed
its charry skeleton closer to the ground.
And money burns faster than faith
when you have no faith in money.
In the sorting of possession—
a ring, identification, unfinished words—
the poet doesn't leave much unsaid.

Whorls of swords scrape blood
and opinions, temper the edges
of youth, make room for memories
in the widowed grip on the hilt
of a hero's blade. Honesty is
the death of the body.

There's no need for music,
my love. Death dances
a swansong after birth,
waiting to eat its own words
from the beak of another stranger.
But should we need
our own dance, our own music,
your lips sang lullabies
wrapped in animal instinct,
in the sensualness of holy writ.

Kate Copeland, 52

Los Angeles, CA

Get ready

because yesterday
my hands unravelled the wires
that anchor our terraced houses, that
are useful for my master plan
while familiar windows show
the outgoing smiles, the amber evening lights
still, our night
blackens the room and my tea turns bitter
as I play the records of the dead people
as your supernatural-vision-eyes eye me
soberly
The thought hits my palms, cringing together
like a family of birds
leaving me more dead
unafraid
and beyond frozen shutters
I'm nearly sea
laughing soon enough
over beautiful grief, over
your tears as pearls while the water shows me how to cry
with arms wide open
with my eyes, the weapons I need
I see
them wires, your shadows
undisturbing the stones in my sea -
get ready
because today.

Pamela Brown, 68

Brooklyn, NY

I want to be ready to walk into jerusalem jut like John

death is no more poems. death is no more mangoes.
death is no more korean TV series of outstanding quality
to be bingewatched on bad teaching nights,
that is, every night.
death is no more feet staring at you from the end
of the bed.
death is no more emily dickinson poems about death.
death is the mother of beauty.
death is no more freakish hajiras to hartford to see
the white brick
suburban house where wallace stevens wrote death
is the mother of beauty
death is a gerund with spectacles. death is
the undiscovered country from which no traveler returns.
that's shakespeare.
death is a green wolf hunting princesses.
that's pam brown.
death is the friend of philip petit applauding
as he walks the wire.
death is a man with odd tastes.
death is beyond our means so we bankrupt ourselves
to buy it.
death may not be here today or gone tomorrow but
the date is on the calendar.
death is the public face of time.
death is life by other means.
death is the garbage man and death is the queen.
death is a syllable without much charm,
yet why should this be so,
since breath is charming. a kissing cousin of
death

Lisa Freedman, 58

Brooklyn, NY

Hydroplaning

It rains and the highway has dips
your station wagon floats and spins
a heavy dancer finding her rhythm
and swirling swooning into the streetlight.

The music stops. You wait and listen to the rain.
The tow truck driver thinks you are you
you on the license
But you have not landed.

Ten days later, the party breathes
your husband is the dee jay
and your eyes are closed in the dark
dancing with someone else aloft.

Lisbeth Coleman, 58

Lakewood, CA

Rhabdomyolysis on June 30, 2019

Electrocution
of the human body
Pillages the space of oxygen
in the bloodstream
Mashes muscle fiber
Causes kidney failure

Rafael Acosta Arevalo
in a wheel chair
head hung forward
before a judge
Only eight healthy ribs
sustained his mangled torso long enough
for him to whisper a plea
Barely audible to his lawyer
"Auxilio"
Witnesses in the courtroom
did not stand up to block
the henchmen taking him away
People did not run to the streets to save him

A day later
one hour for each of his heroic ribs
which suspended his voice
the slush entered his brain
Acosta Arevalo died from torture.

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For the L.A. Poetry Beach Festival
2021, we Erik van Loon and P. Segal,
selected the following emerging poets:

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Conflicted

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For Kenneth Patchen

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Los Angeles

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