

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Creative Leaders Offer Their New Year's Resolutions

Tod Hardin · Wednesday, January 6th, 2016

Each time each year so many of us are consumed with the annual march to declaring our new year's resolutions. Lose some weight, start exercising, eat better, read more, travel more, be kinder, etc, etc. Certainly nothing wrong with that. Hell, as I write this introduction I'm on day one of my six-month attempt to consume no pop (aka: soda. Sorry, that's the Midwestern boy in me), no fast food, and to commit to going to the gym at least twice a week.

Pretty boring and typical stuff, so as an observer of our creative community – and sadly as one with very little creative talent – I felt I could make things more interesting by reaching out to some of my creative heroes and ask them one simple question: What is your new year's resolution for creativity?

Thankfully, the challenge was met with an eagerness to participate, so it is with great pleasure that I present the words of 12 amazingly creative human beings.

[divider]SARA BLECHER[/divider]



Sara Blecher is an award-winning South African film director and producer. She is the co-founder of CINGA productions, where she has made a number of drama series, including “Zero Tolerance”, which was nominated for an international Emmy Award. She is an accomplished documentary filmmaker and in 2003 was the winner of CNN’s African Journalist of the Year Award. Her second feature film, Ayanda, is currently screening to rave reviews from critics around the world.

“This year I want to make real time for reading, and watching films, and theatre, and dance and looking at art; in short indulging in other people’s creativity. I want to prioritize all of these things in order to allow me the space to be creative. As a working mom doing the crazy juggle between raising a family and trying to make films – I am not sure what else will have to give in order to do this. Maybe I’ll simply have to sleep less. Or learn to say no.”

[divider]CHIWAN CHOI[/divider]

Chiwan is the author of two poetry collections, “The Flood” and “Abductions.” He is the Co-Founder and Editor of [Writ Large Press](#), a downtown Los Angeles based literary small press,

and also Cultural Weekly's editor.

to finish all my book projects.

for writ large press to publish all its scheduled books.

to work on a mixed reality/mix media book with my wife Judeth.

[divider]DOMINIQUE CHRISTINA[/divider]

Award-winning poet, author, educator, and activist. She holds five national poetry slam titles in four years, including the 2014 & 2012 Women of the World Slam Champion and 2011 National Poetry Slam Champion. Her work is greatly influenced by her family's legacy in the Civil Rights Movement and by the idea that worlds make worlds.

“My New Year’s resolution for creativity? It’s not so different from any other resolution I have made. I intend to take risks. I intend to interrogate the landscape of my womanness, my *otherness*. I intend to chase the ghosts down and remind them that they are not the story of me. I will keep nudging at my ancestors in the writing. I will keep writing poems that assure me I am unkillable. I will finish this young adult novel for Random House. I will publish my memoirs. I will erect an exhibit that brings the imagery of a slave woman I have imagined and (re)imagined into the room to insist on a reckoning. I will be, in every way, the best kind of poem. I will write. I will write. I will write. And insist on myself. And be big with invention and unimpeachable bravery. That is what I am resolved to do.”

[divider]SARAH ELGART[/divider]

Sarah Elgart is an award winning, LA-based choreographer/director whose work is produced internationally for stage, screen, and site-specific venues. Through her ongoing series ScreenDance Diaries, opens Cultural Weekly readers to the union of dance and film.

“My creative resolution for 2016 is to be fearless and joyful in the face of my dreams... To dream what I want to realize, and to realize what I dream.”

[divider]ALEXIS RHONE FANCHER[/divider]

Since 2013 Alexis has been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes and four Best of The Net awards. Alexis is poetry editor of Cultural Weekly, where she also publishes “The Poet’s Eye,” a monthly photo essay about her ongoing love affair with Los Angeles.

“My New Year’s resolution for creativity is to match my creative endeavors with equal amounts of promotion. I want funding for my Los Angeles Poets Project, Phase 2. In April, 2015, thirty of my poet portraits had a show at Beyond Baroque, in honor of Poetry Month. I now have over seventy portraits completed, with more to come. My resolution is to have a show in conjunction with the

city, and produce a book of L.A. poets portraits and poems, documenting and promoting our thriving poetry scene.”

[divider]ICY and SOT[/divider]

ICY and SOT are stencil artists from Tabriz, Iran currently residing in Brooklyn, New York. Since 2006, the two brothers have made paramount accomplishments in Iranian urban art culture as both skaters and artists. They continue on their creative crusade to dismantle pre-conceived perceptions of a fleeting Iranian tradition through their striking stencil work depicting human rights, justice, social and political issues. Icy and Sot have held and participated numerous international exhibitions and their outdoor artworks can be seen across the cities of Iran, The United States, and Europe.

“Our resolution for creativity for the new year is to experiment as much as we can by exploring different art forms and not limiting our work in just stencils also make whatever ideas we have happen by just doing them as soon as we are able to because written ideas in the notebooks don’t exist until you make them happen.”

[divider]ADAM LEIPZIG[/divider]

Adam is the publisher and managing editor of Cultural Weekly. He also serves as the COO of CreativeFuture, which is a non-profit organization that advocates for the rights of our creative community. He is the former President of National Geographic Films, a past Senior VP at Disney, and a long time independent film producer and distributor.

“Make more time for my writing. Now let me be clear: I do not like writing. In fact, I hate it. Writing is an unnatural act. Humans were made for being with other humans, socializing, eating, working together, having fun or chasing after bison in a collective hunt. We were not constructed to be alone and anti-social, in solitary confinement tapping our fingers on plastic keypads. But there you go. My two books that came out in 2015 have shared a lot of knowledge with a lot of people, and that feels good. On top of that, my publisher wants more books. So here I am. As much as I hate writing, I love having written, and I can’t have the latter without the former. I have adjusted my schedule for more writing time in 2016. It’s a resolution I won’t enjoy keeping, but will be glad I did.”

[divider]JASON MAYDEN[/divider]

Jason is a Designer, Lecturer, Artist, Collector of curious and wonderfully crafted goods, a Sports Junkie, Book Worm, Equality in Education Advocate, 1990’s Hip Hop Enthusiast and a Social Innovator. Currently, Mayden is a strategic advisor on the topic of Design for MarkOne, the first Designer-In-Residence at Accel Partners and a Media Designer/Lecturer at the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University. Prior to his various current endeavors, Mayden had a successful career as the Sr. Global Design Director for Jordan Brand, a division

of Nike Inc.

“To remain unapologetically, me. It’s easy to lust after the appearance of success or the perception of accomplishment that dominates the modern social narrative. However, I truly believe that the most unique and impactful thing that you can be is yourself. So in 2016, I will continue to strive to be the first “Jason Mayden” rather than the next anyone else.”

[divider]LORI MCNEE[/divider]

Lori is a professional artist who specializes in still life, and landscape oil paintings. She is an exhibiting member of Oil Painters of America, Plein Air Painters of Idaho, is a Ketchum Arts Commission commissioner, on Plein Air Magazine Board of Advisors, and is a Sun Valley Wellness board member.

“‘Scatter your fire, and you won’t hit the mark,’ my mom said to me many years ago. I’ve always had many interests, and this helpful mantra has reminded me to stay focused and on target. Today, I am a successful professional artist, but I’m also an active blogger, author, speaker, and social media influencer (and a mom!). I love all the different facets of my career, but over the past few years my creative time in the studio has been sacrificed. For 2016, my mother’s wise words are ringing yet again in my ears. My New Year’s resolution is to spend more quality time in my studio painting, and a bit less time on the computer. Of course, I will continue with my blogging, writing and social media businesses, but only after I’ve made time for my art. And now my resolution is in writing!”

[divider]MATTHEW MODINE[/divider]



Matthew has been referred to as “one of the best, most adaptable film actors of his generation” by legendary NY Times film critic Vincent Canby. He is best known for his role as Private Joker in Stanley Kubrick’s “Full Metal Jacket”, the title character in Alan Parker’s “Birdy”, and for his work in “Married to the Mob”, “The Dark Knight Rises” and “Memphis Belle” – just to name a few.

“I don’t like marking time by making silly resolutions. Life is one long day – divided by periods of darkness. we are born, we live, and then who the hell knows what. i say live each day full of ambition – or no ambition at all. that’s your choice. but whatever or however you choose to pass your days – find enjoyment in your decisions. don’t be bitter about things you think you should have done, could have done, or might have done. own the things you did. if you’re lucky, when your last breath is upon you, you’ll be able to rest your head on your pillow and give a sigh of pleasure and easy release because you know you lived life on your terms and enjoyed your journey.”

[divider]**LUIS J. RODRIGUEZ**[/divider] 

Luis J. Rodriguez is Poet Laureate of Los Angeles with 15 books in poetry, children's literature, fiction, and nonfiction. His memoir, "Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.," has sold around half-a-million copies. His last memoir is "It Calls You Back: An Odyssey Through Love, Addiction, Revolutions, and Healing," which is a finalist for a 2012 National Book Critics Circle Award. His most recent poetry collection is "Borrowed Bones" from Curbstone Books/Northwestern University Press. He is also founding editor of [Tia Chucha Press](#) and cofounder of Tia Chucha's Cultural Center & Bookstore in the San Fernando Valley.

"2016 is my second year as Los Angeles' Poet Laureate. I'll continue to do readings, talks, and workshops in libraries, schools, book fests, community festivals, graduations, and more. I'm also writing a monthly weblog for the L.A. Public Library website. And I'll be focusing on an L.A.-area poetry anthology called "Coiled Serpent: Poets Arising from the Cultural Quakes & Shifts of Los Angeles," due March 2016 from Tia Chucha Press. There are more than 150 poets in this anthology and we plan readings throughout next year."

[divider]**VIVEK TIWARY**[/divider] 

Vivek J. Tiwary is a #1 New York Times bestselling author, a Tony Award-winning Broadway producer, and the founder of multi-platform arts and entertainment company Tiwary Entertainment Group. He is the author of the award-winning graphic novel "[The Fifth Beatle: The Brian Epstein Story](#)" which he is currently working with Simon Cowell on to bring to the big screen.

"In 2016, I pledge to use my creativity to not just entertain, but to inspire and heal. I hope all artists will join me and do their best to do the same."

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