

Below are five examples of project narratives from authors who have been accepted for residencies at the Sundress Academy for the Arts in the past.

**Example 1:**

I've written two books in the last five years. The longer I write the more I feel like I'm working toward a voice that is less and less afraid of what it is saying. In my first book I'm heavily lyrical, in my second book I'm working toward more material truths, and now that I've written both of these and experienced one of them out in the world I feel like I'm writing the poems I used to feel too guilty to write. That's what I think this next project is. Something honest. Something queer. Something vulnerable. I think if I had the proper time and space I could buckle down and do some more reading of queer theory and Hindu scripture. I think there's something waiting for me in research because reading theory is what catapulted my second manuscript, and I think the right texts could lead me in the right direction. To be honest with you I don't know what the shape of this project is yet, but I can feel it brewing, like something below the surface waiting to be unearthed. I've never had a residency but I know new places and travel open me up in ways I need. I'd be grateful for this opportunity.

**Example 2:**

*fruitscape* is a poetry project that serves as somewhat of a sequel to my forthcoming collection, *fruits of the valley* (Querencia Press, 2026). The first installment in what I am calling the "fruits" series explores queerness and childhood in the Baltimore metropolitan area, while the second delves into queer adulthood in the city itself. Touching on heartbreak, trauma, alcoholism, and the formation of self, *fruitscape* will dive deeply into setting detail and memory to create a collection that is as vivid as it is emotionally resonant.

*Sundress Publications* chapbook editor Ashley Elizabeth described *fruits of the valley* as "[a] masterpiece of self-exploration, awakening, and awareness to the environment and of the self," while *underscore magazine* editor-in-chief Erica Leslie Weidner called it "vibrant, personal, and ultimately nostalgic." *fruitscape* intends to follow in its predecessor's footsteps; despite the relative newness of the project, I believe I have a firm grasp on where to take the project from here, as well as a strong base of poems upon which to develop a full manuscript.

**Example 3:**

I have used my creative practice as a means of healing for a long time, so as a creative who considers writing to be a catharsis, mine is as much a practice of self-discovery as it is craft. Specifically, writing and artwork is how I have processed a myriad of emotions related to alcoholism, borderline personality disorder, and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, as much as my work is about processing, it's equally about the shared experience of everyone with similar struggles. It's just as important to me that someone with similar life experiences is able to see themselves in the work.

The submitted poetry is the beginning of a collection titled "pushing pixels." The work I have written for the collection so far examines the impact of capitalism on mental health, as well as delving into the effects of BPD and C-PTSD on my daily life. I tackle many of the themes that are present throughout my practice as a whole through this framework—C-PTSD is related directly to my memory loss over the years. BPD presents as a lack of control. I am now sober, but have a complicated relationship with sobriety. All of these themes mingle with the state of

the world and form their own unique dilemmas and complexities.

My primary influences in creating this body of work are Lucas Scheelk, Brendan Joyce, and BEE LB. I am decidedly interested in viewing language through a queer, neurodiverse framework, and pushing form to follow function, as seen in Scheelk's *A Prayer For A Non-Religious Autistic*. I'm interested in the ways capitalism worms its way into the everyday, as seen in Joyce's Personal Problem. But my writing is also still deeply rooted in the personal and confessional, as seen in LB's poems, so the intersection of the three of these writers is where I hope *pushing pixels* will land.

#### **Example 4:**

I'm working on a third poetry manuscript currently titled *my gods & I*. My first two manuscripts were a clean 65 pages in document length; I wrote them both in under three years. This one though, this one feels energetically different. Feels, hefty. It is already nearly fifty poems and it doesn't feel even halfway complete.

I think part of the shift happened last year for many reasons, but in July 2025 I attended the SAFTA residency for a week, and it was my first residency I've ever done. And it was life changing. I knew I was already working on this book from the start of 2025. I've never had dedicated time to write like that where I had no other responsibilities and I went in with no plans to write, just research. I wrote six poems on the farm.

This manuscript is about my understanding of love, that I liken it to worship because of my grandmother. Her death last year is the defining factor of this work, as is my decision to date again. I was taught to love through worship and have come to realize I expect, in romance and all of my relationships, to also be worshipped. This is a manuscript about a sense of self being shaped into being. The extreme ups and downs of grief in loss, in lack, in absence. Honestly, I think there are books I'd love to just sit and read (Plato's Symposium, bell hooks, Sonia Sanchez, additional Hindu scripture) that would be in conversation with what I'm trying to accomplish and I'd like that time.

The epigraph for this collection is this quote from Sonia Sanchez: "Don't never go looking for love girl. Just wait. It'll come. Like the rain fallin' from the heaven, it'll come. Just don't never give up on love."

#### **Example 5:**

My current WIP, *mt desert*, is a book-length poem (see attached writing sample), which will explore my own relationship with masculinity, Judaism, "abbas" - that is, father figures including the white men in my family who built (1) wealth that their offspring exploited to become successful & (2) houses my family members still own.

The titular mountain is a real place, part of Acadia. I'm interested in the landscape there: mountains, ocean, wee tourist towns, & of course a golf course. The idea of what we deserve (just deserts) stands to become a larger theme as the poem develops from the first draft it is now. I would like to play with desert (what we deserve) vs desert (the place where slaves went to die after Egypt so their children could reach the promised land). Maybe even some desserts, if I can make it sound like it isn't the worst pun in the world.

The poem uses the religious idea of "going up the mountain", to show how power structures (the "grandfore" already up the mountain) force the powerless ("grandlings") to come to them for validation & blessing. The Akedah--that is, the story of the binding of Isaac--serves

as a metaphor for how masculinity demands sacrifice. In Abraham's case, he & god play a potentially lethal game of chicken with Isaac as sacrificial lamb.

It is early in my writing process, so I haven't worked out exactly how to tell this story. I'm not yet sure how much I want to use queer theory & my own queerness to challenge the narratives of my Conservative Jewish upbringing in this poem. I do, however, know I will need safe spaces in which to work. You may be able to tell from the writing sample that the social commentary hasn't really blossomed yet. It will.

A residency with SAFTA would allow me the space & time to study the rather dense literature & liturgy I need to write *mt desert*. Writing spaces are integral to my practice of poetry. I say this with such conviction because my first full-length, *The Acute Avian Heart*, was written almost exclusively in camping trailers & writing retreats. My second book, *Penitent & Arbiter*, was written in the social isolation of lockdown 2020 & will be published in April 2022.

It's difficult to project out what I'll need to accomplish in the spring, but my goals for residency would be something like this:

- draft 10-20 pages of first draftiness
- convert 10-20 pages of first draftiness to second draftiness
- read supplemental materials over "The Akedah", including traditional Jewish midrash (this is a big thing because I need a place without my preferred distractions to get this kind of work done)
- walk every day to gain imagery for setting descriptions

Hopefully by the time of my residency, I will be supporting my second full-length, *Penitent & Arbiter*, which is scheduled for release in early 2022.

Thanks for your attention & best wishes.