Former Cal Poly Professor To Read From New Novel

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Critically praised fiction writer and former Cal Poly English professor Susann Cokal will read at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 26 in Room 123 in the Agricultural Engineering Building (Building 08) on campus.

Cokal, who taught literature and creative writing at Cal Poly from 2001 to 2004, will be reading from her newly published second novel, "Breath and Bones." Called "riveting" by the Library Journal, the novel blends pre-Raphaelite painting, American brothels, Utahan polygamists, a bit of cross-dressing, a dynamite-wielding labor movement, one California millionaire, and the invention of electrical stimulation (as treatment for consumption) into a comic novel that gallops across the American West.

"I remember reading the first few pages of Cokal's first novel, 'Mirabilis,' and thinking that I'd entered a world I'd never before experienced in literature. and as a guy who's read all kinds of wild stuff, that's saying something," said Cal Poly poet and English Professor Kevin Clark. "Cokal's fiction is not only accessible to most readers but it consistently finds new ways to dramatize the everyday inner life.

"After reading 'Mirabilis,' I came to see that fiction can be as lyric as poetry and as odd and alluring, too," Clark said.

Cal Poly English Professor Kathryn Rummell said, "Cokal's voice is unique in contemporary American fiction; it's offbeat and quirky, but also heart-wrenchingly profound. Hers is a voice that lingers with the reader long after the book is put down."

The reading is free and open to the public. It is sponsored by Cal Poly's English Department. For more information, call Rummell at 756-2142.

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