Cal Poly Announces Academy of American Poets Winner

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Award-winning poet and former Cal Poly English professor Angie Estes selected English senior Lisa Araujo of Grover Beach as winner of the Cal Poly Academy of American Poets Award. Araujo will receive $100 for a group of poems.

Cal Poly poetry-writing Professor Kevin Clark said that Araujo’s poems are powerful because “they find a way to set the images of an unbridled imagination in tight, concise lines. Nothing’s wasted in Lisa’s work. Her poems are nearly always fewer than 25 lines, and yet they keep producing so much psychic heat. They’re volatile revelations about the sometimes secret psychic terrain of women’s lives.”

Kate Asche of San Luis Obispo received an honorable mention. Clark described Asche’s poems as lyric explorations of the lives of young, unmarried women in America.

“Kate has won this contest and the university’s creative writing contest before,” Clark said. “She, too, is simply a superb writer. Her poems are often subtle evocations of longing. Lisa simultaneously demonstrates control and velocity, both of which are hard enough for young poets. That she does both with such grace is stunning.”

Clark called both women dedicated poets who have been coming into their own as writers for the last couple of years.

“Lisa’s work is on fire,” he said. “Her lines sizzle. Sometimes I think to myself that this young woman must be completely spent after she finishes a single poem. She writes eight to 10 each quarter, then revises constantly.”

“Kate is a poet of intense and quiet characterizations,” Clarke said. “a surprisingly mature writer who implies so much in the melody of her lines.”

Asche also recently won the Cal Poly Arts Award for Artistic Excellence
and the College of Liberal Arts Academic Excellence Award for graduating seniors. In the fall, Asche plans to attend the UC Davis master’s program in poetry writing, an extremely selective program, according to Clark.

“Kate’s smart, poetical and musical,” he said. “She plays in the orchestra here. She’s the model of the classic, well-rounded student.”

Clark also praised this year’s contest judge, Angie Estes. A nationally recognized poet, Estes is author of two widely praised books of poems, “The Uses of Passion” and “Voice-Over.” A third volume is forthcoming. The former Cal Poly professor moved to Ohio several years ago and teaches at Ohio State University and Oberlin College.

“Angie Estes is one of the hot poets on the American scene,” said Clark. “It’s quite a coup to have her as the judge of our contest.”

The Academy of American Poets promotes poetry around the country and sponsors individual university contests. To maintain the award, Cal Poly’s English Department contributes to the group annually.

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