



## LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Sandra Gioia Treadway  
Librarian of Virginia

### Library of Virginia and VMFA Announce Winner of Annual Art in Literature Award Philip J. Deloria to be honored at the 2020 Library of Virginia Literary Awards in October

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ann Henderson, Communications Manager, Library of Virginia  
804.692.3611, [ann.henderson@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:ann.henderson@lva.virginia.gov)

**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA** – The Library of Virginia and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts are pleased to announce the winner of the annual **Art in Literature: The Mary Lynn Kotz Award**. The judges selected **Philip J. Deloria's** book *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract*. Deloria will be recognized on Friday, October 16, 2020, and Saturday, October 17, 2020, at the Library's annual Virginia Literary Awards, to be celebrated virtually this year.

#### ABOUT THE WORK

Dakota Sioux artist Mary Sully was the great-granddaughter of respected 19th-century portraitist Thomas Sully, who captured the personalities of America's first generation of celebrities (including the figure of Andrew Jackson immortalized on the \$20 bill). Born on the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota in 1896, she was largely self-taught. Steeped in the visual traditions of beadwork, quilling, and hide painting, she also engaged with the experiments in time, space, symbolism, and representation characteristic of early 20th-century modernist art. And like her great-grandfather, Sully was fascinated by celebrity: over two decades, she produced hundreds of colorful and dynamic abstract triptychs, a series of "personality prints" of American public figures like Amelia Earhart, Babe Ruth, and Gertrude Stein.

Sully's position on the margins of the art world meant that her work was exhibited only a handful of times during her life. In *Becoming Mary Sully*, Philip J. Deloria reclaims that work from obscurity, exploring her stunning portfolio through the lenses of modernism, industrial design, Dakota women's aesthetics, mental health, ethnography and anthropology, primitivism, and the American Indian politics of the 1930s. Working in a complex territory oscillating between representation, symbolism, and abstraction, Sully evoked multiple and simultaneous perspectives of time and space. With an intimate yet sweeping style, Deloria recovers in Sully's work a move toward an anti-colonial aesthetic that claimed a critical role for Indigenous women in American Indian futures—within and distinct from American modernity and modernism.

800 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

[www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov)

804.692.3500 *phone*  
804.692.3976 *ty*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip J. Deloria is the Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University, where his research and teaching focus on the social, cultural, and political histories of the relations among American Indian peoples and the United States. He is the author of several books, including *Playing Indian* (Yale University Press, 1998), *Indians in Unexpected Places* (University Press of Kansas, 2004), *American Studies: A User's Guide* (co-authored with Alexander Olson, University of California Press, 2017), and *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract* (University of Washington Press, 2019), as well as two co-edited books and numerous articles and chapters.

Deloria received a PhD in American studies from Yale University in 1994 and taught at the University of Colorado and the University of Michigan before joining the faculty at Harvard in January 2018. He is a trustee of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, where he chairs the Repatriation Committee. Deloria is former president of the American Studies Association, an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the recipient of numerous prizes and recognitions, and will serve as president of the Organization of American Historians in 2022.

## ABOUT THE AWARD

**Art in Literature: The Mary Lynn Kotz Award** recognizes an outstanding book published in the previous year that is written primarily in response to a work (or works) of art while also showing the highest literary quality as a creative or scholarly work. Submissions can include works of journalism, poetry, fiction, biography, or history, as well as museum exhibition catalogs. This unique award, established in 2013, is named in honor of Mary Lynn Kotz, author of the award-winning biography *Rauschenberg: A Life*. The inaugural award recipient was *The Innocence of Objects* by Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk. Last year's winner was Mary Gabriel for her book *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler – Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art*, which chronicled the lives of women who dared to enter the male-dominated world of 20th-century abstract painting—not as muses but as artists. The Art in Literature Award is presented each year during the annual Virginia Literary Awards celebration weekend.

## EVENTS

### Friday, October 16, 2020 | Art Meets Literature: An Undying Love Affair

Virtual Event in Partnership with the VMFA, 6:00–7:30 PM

This event will feature a presentation by the award recipient, Philip J. Deloria.

### Saturday, October 17, 2020 | Library of Virginia Literary Awards Celebration

Virtual Event, 6:00–8:00 PM

The winners of the fiction, nonfiction, and poetry awards—as well as the People's Choice Awards—will be announced on Saturday, October 17, 2020, at the 23rd Annual Library of Virginia Literary Awards Celebration honoring Virginia authors and friends. The event, sponsored by Dominion Energy, attracts authors, publishers, and those who enjoy the written word. Author Adriana Trigiani will again serve as host for this event.

For more information, please call 804.692.3813 or visit <https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/litawards/>.

###

August 31, 2020