

Ghanaian writer wins 2014 African Writer's Residency Award

Nii Parkes has been selected as the 2014 winner of the Sylt Foundation African Writer's Residency Award. Parkes, who lives in Ghana and England, will take up the Residency Award at the Sylt Foundation's headquarters within the next months.



Parkes is a writer, editor, socio-cultural commentator and performance poet. He holds an MA in Creative Writing from Birkbeck (University of London) and is a 2007 recipient of Ghana's national ACRA award for poetry and literary advocacy. Nii's debut novel 'Tail of the Blue Bird' was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Prize and his work has been translated into Italian, French, Chinese, Dutch, German and Arabic. His latest books of poetry are the Michael Marks Award-shortlisted pamphlet, *ballast: a remix* (2009) and *The Makings of You* (Peepal Tree Press).

Winning this award he commented: "The fact that the award of the Sylt Residency considers work in progress as one of its criteria makes this win doubly sweet - it validates the work I am doing and also gives me valuable immersion time to work towards its completion. I'm dreading the cold on Sylt island, but I'm very happy."

Judges

The winner was selected in a two-tier process by the four independent judges, this year judges were Imraan Coovadia (writer and literary scholar, Cape Town), Pamela Nichols (literary scholar, Johannesburg), Veronique Tadjou (poet, writer and literary scholar, Johannesburg) and Indra Wussow (literary scholar and translator, Johannesburg/Sylt) out of an impressive list of strong contenders. The jury commented: "Nii Parkes is such an original writer who easily moves about different literary genres that he will surely offer us something new and exciting with this new project he will be working on in his residency."

This new residency opportunity is awarded annually to writers of contemporary African literature. The winner of the first African Writer's Award 2013 was Nigerian writer Chika Unigwe. The African Writer's Residency Award provides a two month stay in a subsidised apartment to writers of contemporary African literature, who engage with current themes and concerns related to Africa and the African diaspora. The award is open to published writers of poetry, prose, plays and novels.

The Foundation is located on the island of Sylt off the coast of Hamburg in Germany. Its residency programme has been running for several years and offers opportunities to South African as well as international visual artists, writers, composer and filmmakers. The programme is managed under the directorship of literary scholar and curator Indra Wussow.