

States of Independence Programme 2025 – please note, while we do our best to keep to the timings published here, changes are sometimes unavoidable.

10am: Stalls open			
11am – 11.45am	The story of Serendipity's exhibition, '100 Black Women Who Have Made a Mark' Serendipity: Pawlet Brookes Hugh Aston 1.49	Tell Tall Tales: Leicester Folklore Pedestrian Arts: Debbie Longley-Brown, Sean Dudley and guests Hugh Aston 1.50	Science versus Superstition: a Victorian mystery screenplay Matt Kirton Hugh Aston 1.51
12 – 1 pm LUNCH			
1pm - 1.40 pm - Keynote: Anthony Joseph - in conversation and reading hosted by Carol Leeming			
2pm – 2.45pm	DMU Creative Writing Showcase DMU Creative Writers Hugh Aston 1.49	Gay Modernist Poetry Greg Woods Hugh Aston 1.50	Worldbuilding and the Mind's Eye Rod Duncan Hugh Aston 1.51
3pm – 3.45pm	Deepfake? Real Lives, True Lies and the Ethics of Biofiction Bethany Layne-Hodgkins & Clare Harvey Hugh Aston 1.49	Poetry Open Mic Hosts: DMU Alumni Abi Willock & Noé Dos Reis Martins Da Ponte Hugh Aston 1.50	Writing the Unexplained Giselle Leeb Hugh Aston 1.51

Plus ...

- Pitch session with literary agent, Oli Munson 6 x 15 min slots 11am – 11.45am; 12.15pm - 12.45pm
- For younger book lovers: book cover trail and colouring activity
- Make a book-themed Victorian Puzzle Purse
- The Coffee House in the Hugh Aston building is open for refreshments from 10am - 3pm

Poetry Open Mic: sign up on the day at Abi and Noé's book stall.

Programme Blurbs

11 AM – 11.45 AM

The story of Serendipity's exhibition, '100 Black Women Who Have Made a Mark'

Curated by Pawlet Brookes MBE, CEO and Artistic Director of Serendipity Institute for Black Arts and Heritage, the '100 Black Women Who Have Made a Mark' exhibition features 100 portraits of Black British women by five Black female artists based in the UK. Join Pawlet to find out more about the literary influences behind the exhibition and how it is the start of revealing the huge contribution that Black women have made to all sections of British life.

Leicester Folklore: Tell Tall Tales (Debbie Longely-Brown, Sean Dudley and guests)

Tell Tall Tales uncovers Leicester's folklore through an exciting community heritage project leading to a graphic novel.' Come and hear about an exciting collaborative project between researchers, writers and illustrators revisiting and revitalizing the city's folklore.

Science versus superstition: a Victorian mystery screenplay

Join screenwriter Matt Kirton for a talk about his Victorian mystery screenplay, *Descent*, exploring clashes of belief when an American scientist visits nineteenth century Grangemouth. Come and hear about a journey of spiritual discovery, how a man can survive for 30 days inside the belly of a whale, and how models of scientific enquiry can aid script-structure.

2 PM – 2.45 PM

Gay Modernist Poetry – Gregory Woods

Join poet and scholar Gregory Woods for a talk about, and readings of, gay Modernist poets from Europe and Latin America. Introducing his recent chapbook of translations, *They Exchange Glances*, Gregory will talk about desire, censorship, taboo, and indie publishing's role in representing marginalized queer voices.

Worldbuilding and the Mind's Eye

In this workshop, we'll explore things the text leaves unsaid – those dark corners left to be filled by the reader. We'll try out writing techniques designed to emulate the interaction of the human eye and the visual cortex. To call it 'hacking' the brains of our readers would make it sound manipulative. So, let's say we are helping them to generate a vivid and immersive experience.

Rod Duncan is the author of 12 books, including 9 novels. Being aphantasic (unable to form mental images) he has been driven to explore the ways his readers respond to visual cues in his writing. This question of the hidden world of other people's reading experience became the subject of his PhD research, which is the basis of this workshop.

DMU Creative Writing Showcase – come and support our creative writers as they share their work or launch their publications. Some students will be sharing their work for the first time. Lots of support from the States family for this event would be great!

3 PM – 3.45 PM

Deepfake? Real Lives, True Lies and the Ethics of Biofiction – Bethany Layne-Hodgkins and Clare Harvey

Join historical novelist Clare Harvey, and biofiction scholar Bethany Layne-Hodgkins for a discussion of the troubled border between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’. Who owns ‘life stories’; and what are the ethics of fictionalising real lives?

Poetry Open Mic – Sign up on the day of the festival with Abi and Noé, our DMU alumni, at their bookstall.

Writing the Unexplained

Join Giselle Leeb for a chilly dip into the art of the deeply unsettling. We will look at different approaches to creating a sense of disturbing unease in your fiction, playing with the eerie ambiguity of the uncanny. We will consider common themes and unnerving techniques, and put them into practise as you start writing your own tale of the unexplained.

Giselle Leeb's debut collection, 'Mammals, I Think We Are Called' (Salt), was longlisted for the Edge Hill Short Story Prize 2023. Her stories have appeared in Best British Short Stories 2017 (Salt), Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet, Black Static, IZ Digital, Nightjar Press, and other publications. Her latest story, 'Inclusions', appears in Remains, a new horror magazine edited by Andy Cox, the former editor of Black Static and Interzone. Her genre-bending writing mixes realism, sci-fi, horror and the fantastical, and has a dark but often humourous edge.