

Conducted by Hannah Kramer

Three poets to read at Prairie Lights on Friday

Traveling from Ohio, Minnesota, and New York, three friends will meet in Iowa City this weekend.

For them, Prairie Lights serves as more than a bookstore or public reading venue. It's the place in which they can catch up and share their poetry with the community.

"I think the most exciting thing for me is to find the ways in which our work overlaps," poet Nate Pritts said.

He and poets Matt Hart and Dobby Gibson will read from their works at Prairie Lights Books, 15 S. Dubuque St., at 7 p.m. Friday. Admission is free.

The three share a collaborative relationship. They exchange pieces of writing for feedback between visits and combine their talents to write collections.

This weekend will mark the first time Gibson and Pritts have the opportunity to read together, but both have worked with Hart before. The poets agree that reading together highlights similar issues being addressed in different ways through poetry.

"Dobby's poems are really sort of argumentative, [and] Nate comes out of this tradition of the speaker at the center of the world expressing himself to the vasts," Hart said. "I fall in between those two."

The poets write using a similar philosophy — there is a spontaneity in the inspiration fueling their work that is neither forced nor strictly planned.

"I'm not one for talismans or scented candles or whatever," Gibson said. "I just put my pen down and start moving it around, and that usually means producing some junk and then leaving it quickly behind. I've always believed Ginsberg's 'first thought, best thought' to be terrible advice."

The similarities in the way these poets create art through words explains how they can relate as friends and colleagues. Yet the differences will show the audience this weekend how writers can communicate the same issues from different perspectives.

For example, Pritts said his poetry is usually focused on the linguistics of a poem, often resulting in a lot of "funky" language coming through. In contrast, Hart said his poems

Nate Pritts // <http://www.natepritts.com>

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are more exploratory and go off on crazy tangents, which he hopes tie together by the end of a piece.

Regardless of the different approaches that the three take in their work, reading together is an opportunity quickly seized when offered.

In the last few years, Hart has done reading tours with both of the other poets. He spent time reading on a West Coast tour with Gibson and shared work on the East Coast with Pritts.

Gibson is confident that the upcoming reading will be yet another high-quality presentation of poetry by his colleagues; the crowd at Prairie Lights won't be disappointed, he said.

"That's the best place to be when Matt Hart or Nate Pritts are reading," Gibson said. "In the audience."

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