



EX LIBRIS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY IN PARIS

SPRING 2020

A growing Library for growing readers

Every Wednesday morning and afternoon, young readers gather to listen to tales read aloud by librarians and volunteers during Story Hour. This beloved activity, originally christened “Children’s Hour” was inaugurated in 1920, shortly after the Library’s incorporation. It served as a model for similar *heures du conte* at French public libraries. The program at the American Library has become so popular that it has outgrown the available space in our current Children’s Library. Now it often takes place on the Lower Level, against a staid backdrop of poetry, drama, and literary criticism.

In part to address this growing demand, the Library will be expanding by seventy square meters into an adjacent space. The project will double the size of the ground floor area for children and



Rendering courtesy of Lia Kiladis

include a second mezzanine space for teens. Among the many new features will be collections separated by age range, a stage for Story Hour, and comfortable, child-sized furnishings. The renovation will also create a dedicated Parents’ Lounge and an additional multipurpose meeting room on the Mezzanine.

Construction will begin in earnest in April and continue through May, with an anticipated soft opening in early summer and a proper ribbon-cutting ceremony at *la rentrée scolaire* in September. Disruptions in service should be minimal. Renderings and plans from architect Lia Kiladis, like those on this page, may be viewed on the Library’s website.

The expansion is the capstone of Project 100, the Library’s ongoing centennial capital campaign, which has raised close to 800,000€ thanks to 100 percent participation from the Board of Trustees as well as generous gifts from other supporters. Project 100 also includes provisions for refreshing the print collections

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Rendering courtesy of Lia Kiladis

2020 Gala

Susan Orlean to headline

On the evening of 28 May, the Library will celebrate its 100th birthday at the Annual Gala Dinner, held in the Bibliothèque Clément Bayard of the Automobile Club de France. This year’s keynote speaker will be acclaimed author and supporter of libraries, Susan Orlean.

Orlean is the author of eight books, including *The Orchid Thief* (1999), which was made into the Academy Award-winning film *Adaptation*, starring Nicolas Cage and Meryl Streep. In 2018 she published *The Library Book* about the 1986 arson fire at the Los Angeles Public Library.

The Library Book won the California Book Award and the Marfield Prize, was nominated for the Andrew Carnegie Medal, and was a *New York Times* bestseller and Notable Book of 2018. Orlean is currently adapting *The Library Book* for television. She has been a staff writer for *The New Yorker* since 1992 and has also contributed to *Vogue*, *Rolling Stone*, *Outside*, *Esquire*, and the *New York Times Magazine*.

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Photo: Noah Fecks

A new scribe in town



Carolyn Dubol recently joined the Library as Communications and Outreach Manager. She edits *e-Libris*, the bi-weekly e-newsletter, as well as *Ex Libris*, and creates print and online content and marketing materials supporting the Library's programming and fundraising efforts. She also works closely with partner organizations.

Originally from the Bay Area, Carolyn has a BA in English from Bowdoin College in Maine and performed with various theater companies in San Francisco before heading East to New York and working as a private chef and menu consultant, specializing in allergies. A longtime Library volunteer, she is thrilled to join the staff and put her writing skills to good use.

Library After Dark

The Library After Dark fundraiser on Saturday 21 March will feature readings by an illustrious quartet of authors—and friends of the Library: Stephen Clarke (*The French Revolution & What Went Wrong, A Year in the Merde*); Nicola Keegan (*Swimming*); Jake Lamar (*Bourgeois Blues, Postérité, The Last Integrationist*); and Dana Thomas (*Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion and the Future of Clothes, Gods and Kings: The Rise and Fall of Alexander McQueen and John Galliano*).

In addition to the readings, attendees will enjoy music, an *apéritif dînatoire*, cocktails, and first access to limited edition Library souvenirs. Thanks to our generous donors, the night's raffle will include signed books and twelve bottles of prestige wine.

Information and a link to purchase tickets are available on the Library's website. Each ticket includes one raffle entry. Additional raffle entries may be purchased for 20€ at the Welcome Desk or by emailing giving@americanlibraryinparis.org.



EX LIBRIS

The newsletter of the American Library in Paris is published quarterly. Back issues available online.

Centennial

In sight for 2020

21 March: Centennial Kickoff Event: **The Library After Dark**

24 March: *Evening with an Author* with Writer-in-Residence **Geraldine Brooks**

6 May: *Evening with an Author* with Visiting Fellow **Mark Braude**

28 May: Centennial Gala with keynote speaker **Susan Orlean**

September: Public ribbon-cutting for Library expansion and Project 100

30 September: *Evening with an Author* with **Janet Skeslien Charles** on *The Paris Library* (see article at right)

For the latest Library news, subscribe to *e-Libris*, the bi-weekly Library e-newsletter.

Book award jury selected

The jury for the 2020 American Library in Paris Book Award has been chosen.

Ethan B. Katz will chair the panel. Katz is a professor of history at the University of California-Berkeley and author of *Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*, which won the 2016 Book Award. Joining him on the jury are **Rachel Donadio**, Paris correspondent at the *Atlantic Monthly* and former European cultural correspondent and Rome bureau chief of the *New York Times*, and **Jake Lamar**, the novelist, memoirist, playwright, and former *TIME* correspondent.

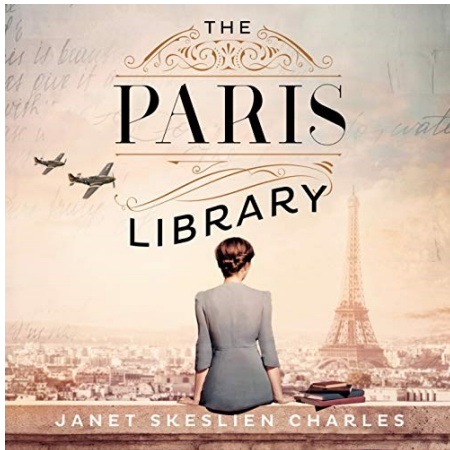
The jury will choose the winning title from a list of finalists to be announced in July. The award will be presented in November 2020 at the George C. Marshall Center in Paris.

The award, which comes with a \$5,000 prize and is now in its eighth year, goes to a distinguished book about France or the French, originally written in English. It is supported by a grant from the Florence Gould Foundation and by generous Library patrons.

Past winners include Marc Weitzmann for *Hate: The Rising Tide of Anti-Semitism in France (and What It Means for Us)* in 2019 and Julian Jackson for *A Certain Idea of France* in 2018.

The deadline for submission of books published between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020, is 1 May 2020. For further details, please see the Library's website.

Extraordinary heroism in the quietest of places



When you pick up a copy of *The Paris Library* at your local bookshop later this spring, don't be surprised if you recognize the setting or the characters. Novelist **Janet Skeslien Charles**, a former Programs Manager at the Library, based her latest piece of historical fiction on the true story of Dorothy Reeder, the countess Clara de Chambrun, Boris Netchaev, and other American Library staff from the 1930's and 1940's.

We've always been proud of the courage shown by our predecessors who kept the Library open and running during the Nazi Occupation, and we are thrilled that their story will reach a wide audience in June. The American publisher (Atria/Simon & Schuster) is planning an initial 200,000 copy printing, and the English publisher (Two Roads/Hodder) has a massive marketing promotion planned for Britain. *The Paris Library* will be published in French in the early summer (JC Lattès) and the rights to publish the translation in an additional 17 languages have been sold.

Charles will be speaking at the Library in the fall, so you'll have plenty of time to read the novel before this very special *Evening with an Author*.

Me, my shelf, and I

Become a part of the Library's future during the centennial year by dedicating a shelf in the expanded Children's and Teens' Department or the new Mezzanine meeting room. Your message will be engraved on a plaque fixed to your assigned shelf.

Donations are 500€ per shelf and dedications are limited to 60 characters.

Donors will receive a tax receipt letter that can be used in both the USA and France. Contact giving@americanlibraryinparis.org by 1 May, 2020 in order to reserve a shelf.

Ex-plore Ex Libris

Enjoying this issue of *Ex Libris*? Would you like to read over one hundred previous issues? Our entire run has been digitized and is now on our website, along with a brief history of the Library's original *Ex Libris*, a short-lived (1923-25) literary magazine with a worldwide readership, its revival as *The Paris Observer* in 1972, and its ultimate reincarnation in 1984 as a newsletter.

We'd like to thank the University of Michigan and the Hathi Trust for helping us access digitized copies of the 1923, 1924, and 1925 issues, allowing us to preserve the extremely fragile originals in our archives. We also appreciate the efforts of Collections volunteers Jason Hazard and Diane Scurtu, who patiently digitized, uploaded, and linked three decades' worth of back issues.

Our centennial initiatives include making key documents from the Library's institutional archive available to a wide audience. Spread the word!

PRESS ROOM

Le podcast, c'est chic

The American Scholar launched a new podcast in February, "Americans in Paris," which will be recorded monthly at the Library with the assistance of Elliot Rambach of our Member Services team. The podcast will feature host Thomas Chatterton Williams and local writers and thinkers. The first episode, an interview with *Washington Post* correspondent James McAuley, was posted on 6 February and is available wherever you get your podcasts.

The leader of the Library's Proust book group, **Morgan Evan Thomas**, mentioned the American Library in Paris on the podcast *The Book Club Review*, in the episode "How to Start a Book Club: The Ultimate Guide."

Library Director Audrey Chapuis was featured in the Winter 2019 issue of *Illinois Alumni* magazine. The article, "Bibliophile," is available online on the Illinois School of Information Science's website.

Chapuis spoke about the Library on *Vocable's* radio show, issue 819, with host Shelly De Vito.

The website **Frenchly** put the Library at the top of its January list, "Where to Go in Paris When You're Feeling Homesick for the U.S."

Library Journal featured the real story behind **Janet Skeslien Charles's** *The Paris Library*, showcasing archival images of the American Library in Paris.

The **UChicago Civic Leadership Academy** visited the Library on Monday 2 March.



Connect with us!

Pierre Le-Tan

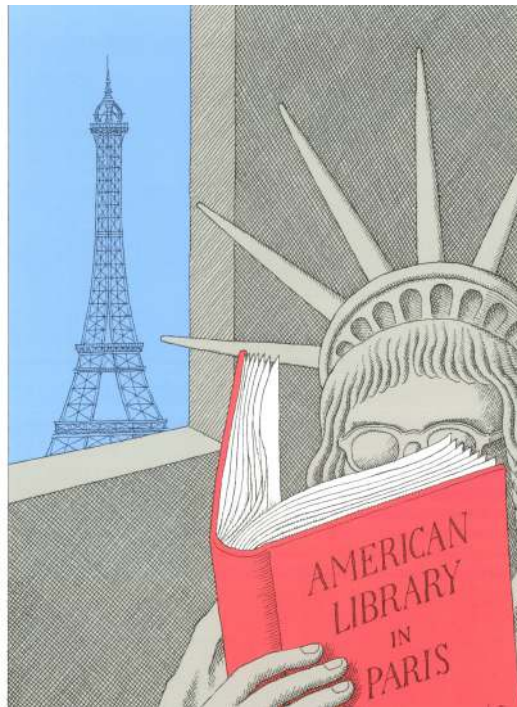
When the American Library in Paris last marked a major milestone, its 75th birthday in 1995, the celebration was crowned with a gala banquet at Versailles attended by, among many others, Bernadette Chirac and Carole Bouquet, and speechifying that went past midnight. But the legacy of that anniversary has long been dominated by a painting commissioned for the occasion and signed Pierre Le-Tan.

You have probably seen the image in the Library or in these pages. It depicts a stylized Lady Liberty sitting at a window, wearing glasses, reading a book entitled “American Library in Paris.” Through the window is the Eiffel Tower. With exquisite simplicity, the artist fuses these two symbols of France and America in a single image.

Le-Tan’s lasting contribution to the American Library naturally came to mind last September when news came that the artist had passed away at the age of 69. He was hailed in *Le Monde* for a repertoire that included book covers, magazine illustrations, movie posters, fabric

design, and advertising, all in his distinctive, easily recognizable hand. *The New York Times* obituary spoke of the quiet, methodical originality of his work.

“Mr. Le-Tan’s drawings, usually rendered with meticulous crosshatching in ink and watercolor, frequently depict interiors populated by interesting objects, sometimes accompanied by



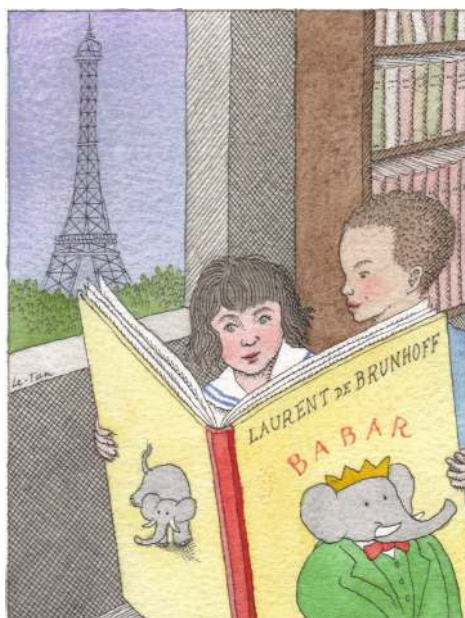
—that is, design a poster around Babar. He was glad to. A few weeks later, he presented the Library with what he called a *clin d’oeil* at his earlier anniversary image. This time it was two children, not Lady Liberty, sitting at the window with the Eiffel Tower in view, reading a Babar book.

Le-Tan’s extraordinary apartment was as striking and personal an environment as that of his art. It seemed as though every piece of his museum-quality bric-a-brac had been set in place with intention. “Renaissance marbles, a sketch by Giacometti, stacks of 18th-century Turkish rugs, original works by Hokusai, a framed pencil drawing by Andy Warhol, a row of Cecil Beaton first editions, oxblood Pierre Cardin oxfords with hand-molded, articulated toes— that’s just a fraction of what’s in the first two rooms,” journalist Alexandra Marshall wrote of her visit to profile him. Le-Tan later recreated parts of his apartment at the Tristan Hoare Gallery in London in an installation entitled “The Collection of Monsieur X.”

Pierre Le-Tan was born Pierre Tan Lê in 1950 to a Vietnamese-born father (and painter) and a French mother. He later inverted his surname to make it sound more western, he said. He published his first *New Yorker* cover, the first of eighteen for the magazine, when he was just 19, and never lacked for clients and collectors after that.

static human figures. Almost all his work shares a delicate sensibility that invites a closer look, even when the subject matter at first appears mundane,” the *Times* wrote. Quoting an earlier appraisal of Le-Tan’s work, the obituary notice stated: “When his drawings are not actually about solitude, he often depicts rooms with only the faintest evidence of human presence, an open book here, a set table there; the emotional register of his figures is so still as to almost render them as objects.”

About ten years ago, the Library was preparing to welcome Laurent de Brunhoff (who took over the Babar series from his father, Jean de Brunhoff) as its annual gala dinner honoree. Then-Library director Charles Trueheart called on Le-Tan at his apartment on Place Bourbon and asked if he would do another favor to honor a fellow-illustrator



Orlean at Gala

Continued from page 1

The Library is honored to add Orlean’s name to the esteemed list of past Gala speakers. The Gala is the Library’s primary fundraising initiative of the year and contributes directly to the Library’s vitality and health. Invitations will be mailed in March, but tables and seats may be reserved in advance. Contact Advancement Manager Morgan Wurzburger for additional information at +33 (0)1 53 59 12 67, or visit the Library’s website.

IN MEMORIAM

The Library lost three other old friends recently.

David McGovern, one of the leading lights of the American community in Paris, died here on 7 February. The New York-born, Yale-educated lawyer was a partner in the Paris office of Shearman and Sterling, starting in 1967. As a board member or board chairman, he faithfully served and cheerfully championed such historic Paris institutions as the American Library in Paris, the American Cathedral, the American Hospital, the French-American Foundation, the American Club, and the American University of Paris. Back when the term was used, McGovern was sometimes called the mayor of the American “colony.”

Felix Rohatyn, the US ambassador to France during the last years of the 20th century, died in New York on 14 December. He was best known as an investment banker with Lazard Frères who played a pivotal role in the financial rescue of New York City in the mid-1970’s, and later as a famous corporate dealmaker and essayist for the *New York Review of Books*. Having grown up in Paris until his family was forced to flee to the United States under the looming Nazi Occupation, Rohatyn was at ease in the world of French finance and society as few ambassadors have been before or since. Both as ambassador and in retirement, he spoke about public affairs and economic policy to Library audiences, including on the occasion of his last books, *Bold Endeavors* and *Dealings*. With his wife Elizabeth Rohatyn, a former honorary chairman of the board who died in 2016, he was also a generous donor to the Library.

John Young was a veteran estate lawyer at Cahill Gordon in New York. He became the advisor and executor of Florence Gould and, upon her death, took on the unexpected role of designing a grant-making institution supporting French-American activities. The foundation provided everything from seven-figure support for the Metropolitan Museum of Art to \$10,000 grants to such small entities as theater company Word for Word. The Florence Gould Foundation supported physical renovations to the Library in the 1990’s, then stepped up to underwrite the Book Award and make one of the two leadership gifts to the 2016 renovation. The Reading Room is named in honor of Mrs. Gould.

Word around the Library

“Expanding our Children’s and Teens’ Library is an investment in our youngest members and in our future—I can’t think of a more fitting way to celebrate our Centennial.”

Forrest Alogna

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

“With the expertise of our talented librarians, the Children’s Library expansion will help young readers engage with creative, high-quality digital and print content, in ways that stimulate their imaginations and enrich their face-to-face interactions. What an exciting and promising way to build community and make the future!”

Jade Vu Henry

Chair of the Library Affairs Committee

“I’m thrilled and grateful the entire Library community has come together to support Project 100 and the extension of the Children’s Library and Teen Mezzanine, and in particular for the board’s leadership with 100% participation in funding.”

Heather Keane

Chair of the Development Committee

Library Expansion

Continued from page 1

for children, teens, and adults, improving infrastructure, and increasing the endowment. These goals were defined as part of a two-year strategic planning process. Library trustees and staff gathered feedback from members of all ages about how they use the Library and what their dream library would offer.

Director Audrey Chapuis reports how inspiring that process was: “Young readers know what they want from the Library. Contrary to some expectations, students did not ask for more technology. In fact, their needs are straightforward. First and foremost, they want a great collection of books to chose from. Quiet, comfortable spaces for reading and reflection were also paramount. One child did request a ping pong table, though. It’s under consideration!”

The Children’s and Teens’ Services Manager, Celeste Rhoads, is particularly excited about how the space will be used by teen members. “We’re going to be able to use the multifunctional space for many of the popular teen programs we have, and when it’s not in use for clubs, workshops, and other events, there will be spaces for our teen members to cozy up with a good book, find a spot to study, or work in small groups.”

When describing her inspiration for the project, architect Lia Kiladis quotes Rebecca Solnit in *The Faraway Nearby*: “It is the place where nothing happens, the place of perfect peace; it is itself not another world but an unending expanse of trees and small ponds, each pond like a looking glass you can go through to another world. It is a portrait of a library, just as all the magic portals are allegories for works of art, across whose threshold we all step into other worlds.”

Updates about the project will be sent out in the Library’s biweekly newsletter, *e-Libris*, and will be featured on the website.

Echo-conscious

The Library welcomed author, Paris resident, and Library member **Echo Brown** to the Lower Level Reading Room on 22 February for a celebration of her debut young adult novel *Black Girl Unlimited: The Story of a Teenage Wizard*.

Brown, an actress and storyteller as well as an author, wrote the novel at the American Library in Paris, using a cozy nook upstairs on the Mezzanine. Brown has fond memories of working quietly among the stacks, surrounded by our collections.

During her talk, Brown was interviewed by Children's and Teens' Services Manager Celeste Rhoads about her experiences growing up outside of Cleveland, Ohio, and how she used those memories to create a work fusing magical realism and autobiography. The book has already received a starred review from *School Library Journal* and a write-up in the *New York Times*, online. *Black Girl Unlimited: The Story of a Teenage Wizard* is available for borrowing at the American Library in Paris.

If you are looking for a place to hunker down and start your own novel, you can stake out a spot of your own on the Mezzanine, reserve a study room, or enjoy the soundproof Florence Gould Reading Room.



Photo: The American Library in Paris

To infinity and beyond

Artist William Adair's *Golden Doors to Infinity* project paid an extended visit to the Library this winter.

The *Omaha Beach Door*, which was installed in the Library's Turner Commons in December and January, was created for the 75th anniversary of the landing of Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944. This door is one component of Adair's larger conceptual art project featuring recycled wooden doors covered with gold leaf, on which the public is invited to write or draw, and thus participate in the creation of each unique piece. The completed series will one day include 31 doors that will be installed in the desert in Joshua Tree, California.

The Library's teen members were particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity to co-create *Omaha Beach Door* and quickly added their mark to this evolving artwork before it moved on to its next location.



Photo: williamadairart.com

Removal of Doubt, William Adair, 2011

Upcoming programs for kids

Read-A-Thon Kick-off Party

(All ages)

Saturday 14 March at 15h

Learn the history of the American Library in Paris, practice reading games, and get motivated to learn about the Library's 5th annual Read-A-Thon.

No sign-up necessary

Music Together with Stacey Pavesi Debré

(Ages 0–5)

Saturday 18 April at 11h

Join us for songs, rhymes, and music!

RSVP required via the website

Silly Songs with Matt Black

(All ages)

Saturday 25 April at 15h

Join children's performer Matt Black for a performance of extremely silly songs.

No sign-up necessary

Happy Birthday to the Library with Eric the Magician

(Ages 6–12)

Saturday 23 May at 15h00

Meet fellow Library members and enjoy trivia, games, and BIRTHDAY CAKE!

No sign-up necessary

Due to the evolving circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 virus, some programming may be cancelled or rescheduled. Please visit the website calendar and sign up for e-Libris for the latest information.

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Look back



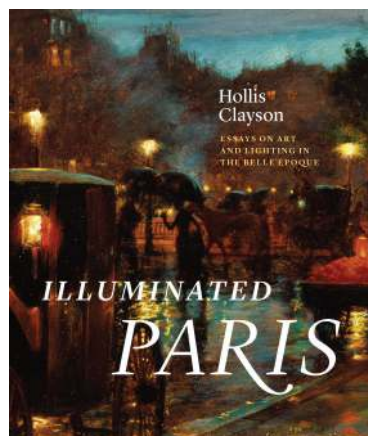
Photo: Patrick Banks

On 5 February, the Library hosted "Black ou Noir(e): A Public Panel on Black Expats and Belonging in Paris," moderated by Tarani Merriweather and featuring Jacqueline Ngo Mpii, Yanique Francis, and Maya Dorsey. Over 150 guests listened as our panelists discussed Black experience in Paris, covering topics ranging from discrimination to embracing natural hair.

Tuesday 1 September (Rescheduled from 25 March)

Painting the City of Light

Hollis Clayson is Professor of Art History and Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities at Northwestern University. Her books include *Painted Love*, *Paris in Despair*, and *Is Paris Still the Capital of the Nineteenth Century?* In 2014 she was named a Chevalier in the Ordre des Palmes Académiques by the French Ministry of Culture. Hollis will be speaking about her latest book, *Illuminated Paris: Essays on Art and Lighting in the Belle Epoque*.



Authors, publishers, publicists, and literary agents should direct speaking inquiries and proposals to programs@americanlibraryinparis.org.

Evenings with an Author and other week-night programs at the Library began at **19h30** and are free and open to the public (with a **10€ suggested donation**) thanks to support from **GRoW @ Annenberg**, our members, and those who attend programs.

Tuesday 7 April

Found it at the movies

Tony Maniaty will discuss how his parallel careers in journalism, authorship, photography, and screenwriting have shaped his identity—and the critical impact of cinema on his writing and thinking. Tony is the author of two novels and two works of non-fiction, including *Shooting Balibo*, his acclaimed memoir of reporting the 1975 East Timor conflict, in which five of his TV news colleagues lost their lives, and his return to the island as a consultant on the 2009 feature film *Balibo*.

Tuesday 14 April

A haunting debut

Mamta Chaudhry's first novel, *Haunting Paris*, is set in the City of Light in 1989. Alone in her luminous apartment on Île Saint-Louis, Sylvie discovers a mysterious letter among her late lover's possessions, launching her into a decades-long search for a child who vanished in the turbulence of the Second World War. A timeless story of love and loss, the novel matches emotional intensity with lyrical storytelling to explore grief, family secrets, and the undeniable power of memory.



Photo: Daniel Fryer

UPCOMING EVENTS

Albena Azmanova's *Capitalism on Edge ...* public panel discussion on Asian Experience in Paris ... **Lindsey Tramuta's** *The New Parisienne ...* Writing Workshops with Writer-in-Residence **Geraldine Brooks** (fictional voice), **Mimi Zollars** (poetry), **Anna Elkins** (poetry), **Gail Folkins** (nonfiction), **Mark Braude** (journalism/non-fiction), and **Kristina Perez** (publishing) ... Visit our website for a complete list of events ... Sign up for our bi-weekly email, e-Libris, for event updates.