POZ Awards 2018 / Best in Literature, Fiction and Nonfiction

Read about the nominees, then scroll down to vote for your favorite!

October 1, 2018

Welcome to the 3rd Annual POZ Awards, which spotlight the best representations of HIV/AIDS in media and culture.

The POZ editorial staff selects the nominees, but POZ readers choose the winners.

Eligible nominees were active or were presented, published or produced between October 1, 2017, and September 30, 2018.

Be sure to vote for your favorite nominees by the World AIDS Day deadline: Saturday, December 1, 2018. DEADLINE EXTENDED: Saturday, December 8!

Here are the nominees:

After Silence: A History of AIDS Through Its Images (Avram Finkelstein)

Finkelstein is forever immortalized in HIV history as a member of the SILENCE=DEATH artistic collective that created the iconic (and still essential) early meme. In After Silence, Finkelstein conducts a fascinating class in art history and the power of messages created for the public sphere. His backstory about the creation of SILENCE=DEATH is alone worth the read, but Finkelstein generously shares his insights for today's activists about the process of creating an impact in the here and now.

The Great Believers (Rebecca Makkai)

This sweeping novel begins in 1985, a time of high anxiety and mortal dread for the gay men who populate this wondrous work. Makkai then stretches her timeline to modern day Paris and the generational repercussions of the ongoing epidemic. As the chanteuse Jane Oliver once sang, "Just because it's over doesn't mean it didn't happen, doesn't mean it wasn't beautiful even with the pain..."

Punishing Disease: HIV and the Criminalization of Sickness (Trevor Hoppe)

“Punishing Disease looks at how HIV was transformed from sickness to badness under the criminal law,” writes Trevor Hoppe in the introduction of this fascinating book, “or what this book terms the ‘criminalization of sickness.’” Hoppe takes a broad view of societal fear of illness and its attempts to place blame onto sufferers via the courtroom. The result is a historical look at our discomfort with illness that, while it may predate AIDS, has few harsher examples than the treatment of people living with HIV.

Safe Danger (Stephen Zerance)

Zerance is dead set on provoking you and he succeeds in often unsettling ways in this poetry volume. He’s obsessed with pop culture and morbid imagery, and while his references to HIV may be oblique — the danger suggested in the title is often exactly what you think it might be — the threat of viral infection is a recurring theme scribbled throughout the pages (and in the margins) of this powerful book.

The World Only Spins Forward: The Ascent of Angels in America (Isaac Butler and Dan Kois)

The theatrical juggernaut that is Angels in America gets the oral history treatment in this fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the original production. All the major players are represented here, and what comes through is Tony Kushner’s near-obsessive focus on his brilliant words (he was re-writing until the 11th hour and beyond) and the cast changes that shaped the production throughout its infancy.

VOTING IS NOW CLOSED!

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