



POZ Awards 2024 / Best in Literature

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

October 1, 2024

Welcome to the 9th Annual POZ Awards, spotlighting the best representatives of HIV and 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, 2023, and September 30, 2024.

VOTING IS CLOSED

BEST IN LITERATURE

[My Body Is Paper: Stories and Poems](#) by Gil Cuadros

Many people may know Gil Cuadros for his landmark 1994 book *City of God*, which told the story of Cuadros's body, from his earliest instances of eroticism up until its decline after years living with AIDS. Cuadros died in 1996, two years after his first book's release, but since then *City* has become a classic book, one with an essential place in the AIDS canon as well as the canon of its homebase, Los Angeles. *My Body Is Paper* is a collection of Cuadros's recently-discovered writings that were written after *City*'s publication and before his death at the age of 34. These stories and poems plumb his own body — in terms of erotics and illness — and go on to discuss family, religion, culture and survival.

[Blood Loss](#) by Keiko Lane

So many stories about AIDS activism focus on New York City. However, in recent years, the life-saving work being done in Los Angeles has gotten a closer look, including in documentaries such as 2023's *Commitment to Life*. Adding to that rich history is Keiko Lane's *Blood Loss*, which tells the story of her life as an activist after joining the Los Angeles chapters of both Queer Nation and ACT UP in 1991. In telling her own story, she also tells a story of the many fights that ACT UP-LA were fighting, many of which are still with us today, including the fight for more needle-exchange programs, reproductive justice and hospice funding. While this book is about Lane, it's also about mutual aid, building a community of care and how collective power is built.

[Criminalized Lives: HIV and Legal Violence](#) by Alexander McClelland

Despite the many advances made in HIV treatment and prevention since the beginning of the AIDS crisis, the legal framework regarding people with HIV lags woefully behind in many cases. Aiming to lay out this harmful legal framework is the work of *Criminalized Lives* by Carleton University professor Alexander McClelland, who is also a member of the Canadian Coalition to Reform HIV Criminalization. Not only does McClelland dive deep into the ways that Canada's laws harm people with HIV, he also emphasizes its disproportionate impact on marginalized people, including people of color, indigenous people, LGBTQ people, and people living in poverty. More than just offering McClelland's views, the book includes personal stories from many people who faced HIV criminalization firsthand.

[Funny Boy: the Richard Hunt Biography](#) by Jessica Max Stein

If you were wondering when Miss Piggy and the AIDS epidemic might finally meet in the pages of a book, then you're sure to love *Funny Boy*. Hunt was one of the original Muppet performers and was integral to the success of shows such as *The Muppet Show*, *Sesame Street* and *Fraggle Rock*, as well as many of their films. He voiced nerdy Scooter, and Statler (one half of the heckling pair Statler and Waldorf), as well as rocker girl Janice and early versions of Miss Piggy. He was a joyous and loving person, as well as someone who was living with HIV. Stein's biography recounts Hunt's life as full of joy and community, even in the midst of an ongoing AIDS crisis that would claim many of his friends and loved ones.

[Radiant: The Life and Line of Keith Haring](#) by Brad Gooch

By now, Keith Haring is one of those artists about which almost everybody has an opinion. His iconography is ubiquitous, from the walls of real buildings to museums, to T-shirts found in several major retailers. Several people you know might have some of his work tattooed on their skin. To the lore and mythology around Haring, biographer Brad Gooch, who has previously done biographies of other enigmatic artists who died early, such as Flannery O'Connor, adds a heavy amount of detail, adding a month-by-month breakdown of Haring's life that includes lists of who was attending the parties he frequented. Ultimately, Gooch attempts to answer a lot of questions about Haring's influences, the commercial nature of his art and the man behind the baby.