

Poet's Work Intersects the Personal, Political

November 03, 2010 11:15 AM Mary Ann Travis
mtravis@tulane.edu

Poetry reminds us to slow down and pay attention to language, says poet Brenda Hillman. Words bring us into deep places within our psyche and connect us to the world.



As this year's honorary Florie Gale Arons Poet at Tulane, Brenda Hillman will read from her work on Monday (Nov. 8) on the uptown campus. (Photo by Chloe Aftel)

Hillman is this year's [Florie Gale Arons Poet](#). She'll be presenting a poetry reading sponsored by the Newcomb College Institute that is free and open to the public on Monday (Nov. 8) at 7:30 p.m. in Freeman Auditorium at the Woldenberg Art Center.

"Poetry is meant to take us to a place of using language carefully and precisely," says Hillman. Her latest book of poetry is *Practical Water* (Wesleyan University Press, 2009).

Choosing words with care and awareness of their precise meanings is part mental activity and part spiritual undertaking, says Hillman. Poetry can contribute to honest

public discourse. But the larger role of poetry is to bring metaphor into a culture “that is sorely lacking in imagination,” says Hillman.

She lives in California and has been writing about the earth's elements for the last decade, exploring such topics as the turbulent geology of California as a metaphor for rocky mental processes (*Cascadia*, 2001). She's also written about the air as an international medium for consciousness (*Pieces of Air in the Epic*, 2005). The poems in *Practical Water* explore the connectivity of water between things. And they engage with Hillman's anti-war and environmental causes.

“My work makes an intersection between the personal, the political and the interest in the language itself,” says Hillman.

She'll read poems for a general audience on Monday night. She says that the audience can expect to hear “strange little turns of phrase,” reflecting her own interior worldview.

“I have a feeling there's life in everything,” Hillman says. She hopes her poems put listeners in touch with their own vast mysteries. “The mystery of the human mind is what language is best at conveying.”

For more information about Hillman's reading, e-mail [Charlotte D'Ooge](#) or call 504-314-2721.