



Border Arts Network Artist Spotlight

Telling the stories of the Border.

Name

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Bio

Christina Hoag is a former journalist who has had her laptop searched by Colombian guerrillas, phone tapped in Venezuela, was suspected of drug trafficking in Guyana, hid under a car to evade Guatemalan soldiers, and posed as a nun to report from inside a Caracas jail. She has interviewed gang members, bank robbers, thieves and thugs in prisons, shantytowns and slums, not to forget billionaires and presidents, some of whom fall into the previous categories. Now she writes about such characters in her fiction. Christina's most recent work is *Law of the Jungle*, a psychological thriller (Better Than Starbucks Press). Her noir crime novel *Skin of Tattoos* was a finalist for the Silver Falchion Award for suspense, while her novel *Girl on the Brink* was named one of *Suspense Magazine's* best for young adults. She co-authored the nonfiction *Peace in the Hood: Working with Gang Members to End the Violence* (Turner Publishing), used as a textbook at University of California Los Angeles, University of Southern California and other academic institutions. She has had short stories and essays published in numerous anthologies and literary journals including *Black Cat Mystery Magazine*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Shooter*, *Other Side of Hope* and *Toasted Cheese*, and has won several awards. Christina is a former staff writer for the *Miami Herald* and *Associated Press* and reported from fourteen countries around Latin America for *Time*, *Business Week*, *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Sunday Times of London*, *Houston Chronicle* and other news outlets. A graduate cum laude of Boston University, she won two prizes from the New Jersey Press Association in her newspaper career.

Interview

1) *How does your home state influence your art?*

I live next to Los Angeles, which is a fantastic setting for fiction. There's such a variety of social environments, people from all over the world, and of course Hollywood. It's also instantly recognizable throughout the globe.

2) *What inspires you to create?*

I won a small prize when I was about six years old for "writing interesting stories" so I believe writing is something I was born with. As a child I loved to read and wanted to write books when I grew up. Where it comes from, I don't really know!

3) *What is your art? Literary? Music? Drawing, painting, sketching? Photography? Film? Or other?*

Writing of all sorts. I've written poetry, fiction-long and short, screenplays, essays, and I was a journalist. Anything involving words!

4) *Which creators influence you?*

Probably my all time favorite novelist is Graham Greene, who travelled a lot and set in his works in different countries, many in Latin America, which I know well.

5) *How is your art (or art in general) important to society in the border states??*

I'm fascinated by the paradox of being a stranger where you live, resulting from my own experience of growing up among seven countries. I think that is a feeling that many border-straddlers can relate to, not fully belonging to any place.

6) *Is there a specific purpose for your art?*

Not intentionally, but I like to have an underlying social message within my works. The *Escape*, the story in the anthology, is about class difference between a maid and her employer. My novel, *Skin of Tattoos*, is about the gang culture.

7) *Are there other artists that you collaborate with, network, or recommend?*

N/A

8) *Do you have a "real" job or is your creative work your fulltime gig?*

I was a print journalist for many years. My most exciting period was working in Latin America. I spent 10 years in Guatemala and Venezuela. Now, I freelance, doing corporate writing and editing mainly.

9) *Do you collaborate with other artists/creators?*

I don't. I work by myself although I find it useful to bounce ideas off other people. I always have trouble finding those people though!

10) *Tell us about an upcoming project you are working on currently?*

I'm currently working on a mystery novel set in New Jersey, far from the borderland, as well as an essay collection about my lifelong search for belonging and feeling of never fitting in.

Additional info:

I have an original audiobook about the life of Venezuelan-born 1970s terrorist Carlos the Jackal currently being recorded. I covered his story while I was in Caracas. You can find out more about me and sign up for my newsletter at <https://christinahoag.com>.