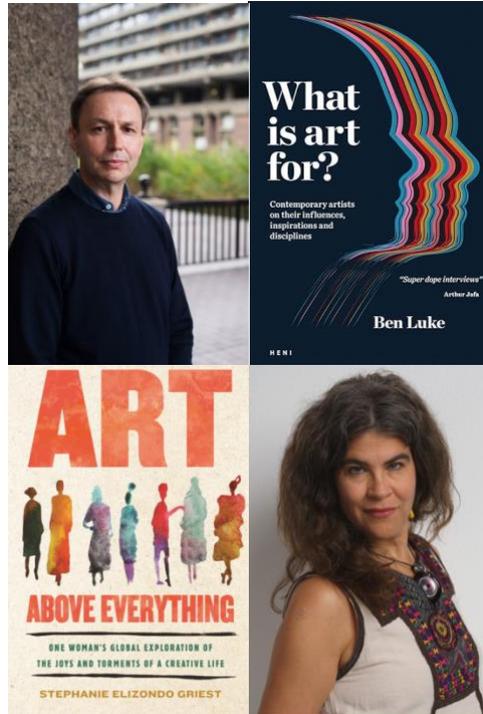


RUBY CITY

For Immediate Release



**FROM LONDON TO THE BORDERLANDS:
WRITERS BEN LUKE & STEPHANIE ELIZONDO GRIEST DISCUSS
THE POWER OF ART AT RUBY CITY**

An Evening with Ben Luke

Friday, April 10, 2026

6-7PM

Ruby City, 150 Camp St.

FREE ([Registration recommended but not required](#))

Author Panel with Ben Luke & Stephanie Elizondo Griest

Saturday, April 11, 2026

2:30-3:30PM

San Antonio Book Festival, Central Library, 600 Soledad St.

FREE

San Antonio, TX (March 17, 2026) — What is art for? It is a deceptively simple question that has shaped conversations with some of the world's most influential contemporary artists. At a moment when artists around the world are grappling with urgent social and political questions, Ruby City will welcome two leading voices in contemporary art writing to San Antonio this spring.

International art critic and podcaster Ben Luke will offer a free public talk at Ruby City on Friday, April 10, 2026. The next day, he and award-winning author Stephanie Elizondo Griest will join Ruby City Director, Elyse A. Gonzales, for a featured panel discussion at the San Antonio Book Festival on Saturday, April 11, 2026. Both events will offer audiences a rare opportunity to engage with two writers whose work explores the importance of art and how artists shape the cultural conversations of our time.

Luke, a contributing editor at *The Art Newspaper* and host of the widely followed podcast [A brush with...](#) will discuss ideas from his book, ***What Is Art For? Contemporary artists on their influences, inspirations and disciplines.*** The publication gathers conversations with 25 leading contemporary artists working across disciplines—from painting and sculpture to film, installation, and sound.

Adapted from Luke’s acclaimed podcast interviews, each artist responds to a set of thoughtful questions about the works, writers, and ideas that guide their creativity and ultimately culminating in a central inquiry: *What is art for?* The resulting conversations illuminate the many ways artists confront political realities, reflect on history, and imagine new possibilities for society. His talk on Friday will address the inspirations, influences, and philosophies that shape artistic practice today and which he gleaned through interviews with artists for his new book.

Registration for Luke’s public talk, ***An Evening with Ben Luke***, is scheduled for Friday, April 10, 2026 6-7PM, at Ruby City (150 Camp Street) is recommended but not required. Interested attendees are encouraged to register for Luke’s public talk at Ruby City at [this link](#). More information can be found at WWW.RUBYCITY.ORG under the events tab.

At the **San Antonio Book Festival**, Luke will join Stephanie Elizondo Griest, whose new book ***Art Above Everything: Exploration of the Joys and Torments of a Creative Life*** examines the profound personal and cultural stakes of creative life. A globetrotting writer from the Texas–Mexico borderlands, Griest traveled across ten countries, from Cuba to Iceland and Rwanda to Qatar, to meet women artists who have devoted their lives to creative expression despite social, political, and economic challenges.

Blending memoir, cultural criticism, and journalism, *Art Above Everything* asks a timeless question: *Is art enough?* Through encounters with painters, dancers, poets, musicians, and performers, Griest reveals how artists persist in the face of adversity and how creative expression can become a powerful force for resilience, community, and transformation. Her work has received numerous honors, including a Margolis Award, an International Latino Book Award, a PEN Southwest Book Award, and the Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Gold Prize.

Together, Luke and Griest offer complementary perspectives on the role artists play in shaping our cultural moment. Their conversation will revolve around contemporary art, creative practice, and storytelling. **Their panel, *Why Create?*, will take place in the Festival Room located on the 3rd floor of the Central Library and will explore how artists and writers navigate inspiration, discipline, and personal experience in their work and how art can shape**

our understanding of culture, place, and identity. Directly following the discussion, both authors will be hosted at the Nowhere Bookshop & Book Signing tent where each of their books may be purchased and signed.

“Artists help us see the world differently—sometimes more clearly, sometimes more critically, and sometimes more compassionately,” says Gonzales. “Bringing voices like Ben Luke and Stephanie Elizondo Griest to San Antonio offers opportunities for our community to engage directly with the ideas and forces, societal and personal, that shape contemporary art and the ways artists reflect and challenge the times we live in.”

These types of public programs reflect Ruby City’s ongoing commitment to creating spaces for thoughtful dialogue around art and its impact on individuals and society at large. By bringing together international and regional voices, Ruby City invites audiences to consider how artists stimulate the senses, at times through moments of striking visual pleasure as well as through forms that challenge, unsettle, or even resist conventional notions of beauty, and help us navigate complex histories, confront urgent issues, and imagine more dynamic, inclusive communities.

No registration is required for the Author Panel at the San Antonio Book Festival which takes place at the Central Library (600 Soledad St.) and the neighboring UTSA Southwest Campus. Ben Luke WWW.SABOOKFESTIVAL.ORG.

About the Authors:

Stephanie Elizondo Griest is a globetrotting writer from the Texas-Mexico borderlands. Her six books include *Around the Bloc: My Life in Moscow, Beijing, and Havana*; *Mexican Enough: My Life between the Borderlines*; and *All the Agents and Saints: Dispatches from the U.S. Borderlands*. She has also written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Believer*, BBC, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and *Oxford American*. Her work has won a Margolis Award for Social Justice Reporting, an International Latino Book Award, a PEN Southwest Book Award, and two Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Awards. Professor of Creative Nonfiction at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she has performed as both a Moth storyteller and as a literary ambassador for the US State Department. Stephanie joins the Book Festival to discuss her book *Art Above Everything: One Woman’s Global Exploration of the Joys and Torments of a Creative Life*.

Ben Luke is a writer and broadcaster based in London. He is a contributing editor of *The Art Newspaper* and presents its podcasts *A brush with...*, of which there are now more than 100 episodes, and *The Week in Art*, of which there are now more than 300 episodes. From 2009 to 2024 he was an art critic at the London Evening Standard. He is a regular guest on BBC Radio 4’s *Front Row*. Ben has contributed to books on artists as diverse as Phyllida Barlow, Glenn Brown, Michael Craig-Martin, Mark Dion, Matthew Krishanu, George Shaw, and Jiro Takamatsu. He was selected in the Critics’ Critics section of *Artforum’s* Best of 2024 issue. Luke joins the Book Festival to discuss his new book *What is art for? Contemporary artists on their influences, inspirations and disciplines*.

About Ruby City

[Ruby City](#) is a contemporary art center in San Antonio, TX, dedicated to providing a space for the city's thriving creative community to experience works by both local and internationally-acclaimed artists. Envisioned in 2007 by the late collector, philanthropist and artist [Linda Pace](#), Ruby City presents works from the Linda Pace Foundation Collection of more than 1400 paintings, sculptures, installations and video works. The building which opened in 2019 is designed by [Adjaye Associates](#) and is part of a campus, which also includes a sculpture garden, [Chris Park](#), a one-acre public green space named in memory of Pace's son, and Studio, an auxiliary exhibition space which presents curated shows and [programming](#) throughout the year.

Ruby City is open Thursday through Sunday, 10am to 6pm. Admission is always free; reservations are recommended. Information and reservations are available at www.rubycity.org.

For further information please contact: Patricia Morales, Head of Public Engagement & Communications, Ruby City by emailing pmorales@rubycity.org or calling 210-678-4191.

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