

The Historic New Orleans Collection

presents
the 29th annual

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS SCHOLARS CONFERENCE

Friday, March 27, 2026

Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres Street, New Orleans

9:00–9:15 a.m.

Welcome and opening remarks from the conference codirectors: Margit Longbrake, Historic New Orleans Collection; Bess Rowen, Villanova University

9:15–10:30 a.m.

New Currents in Williams Studies

Emerging scholars use the lenses of performance art, Southern studies, queer time, and a fashion studies approach to the dressed body to shed new light on *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Night of the Iguana*, lesser-known late works, and more.

Moderator: Matthew P. Smith, Tulane University

Panelists:

Lital Dotan, Graduate Center, City University of New York
Pune Dracker, Graduate Center, City University of New York
Cody Norris, Miami University of Ohio

10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

The Catastrophe of Success

From the moment *The Glass Menagerie* became a sensation in 1945, fame took a starring role in shaping Williams's life and career, a part it continues to play in the performance and reception of his work in the 21st century. Scholars with expertise in literary analysis, history, performance, and directing discuss the various blessings and burdens that did and still do go along with Williams's personal fame, the fame of his works, and the fame of the actors and directors involved.

Moderator: Bess Rowen, Villanova University

Panelists:

Kelly I. Aliano, New York Historical
Jaclyn Bethany, Independent scholar
Michael S. D. Hooper, Independent scholar

12:15–2:00 p.m.
Lunch (on your own)

2:00–3:30 p.m.

Roundtable: Writers and Directors Influenced by Tennessee Williams

What do revered 20th-century playwright Lorraine Hansberry (author of *A Raisin in the Sun*), boundary-pushing auteur John Waters (director of *Pink Flamingoes* and *Hairspray*), celebrated Irish dramatist Brian Friel (author of *Dancing at Lughnasa*), and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwrights Eboni Booth (2024) and Branden Jacobs Jenkins (2025) have in common? Esteemed academics trace Williams's surprising hidden and not-so-hidden influences on groundbreaking authors and works in two centuries.

Moderator: Bess Rowen, Villanova University

Panelists:

Stephen Cedars, Graduate Center, City University of New York
Benjamin Gillespie, Santa Clara University
John “Ray” Proctor, Tulane University
Sara Warner, Cornell University

3:45–4:45 p.m.

Staged Reading: “*Fin du Monde* (A Postscript to the Casualty List)”

Theater director and emeritus professor Tom Mitchell and members of the University of Illinois theater company present a staged reading of a previously unpublished short story by Tennessee Williams, in which a gay couple in the French Quarter muses on how the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor stands to change the lives of artists and outsiders forever. An experienced editor and researcher, Mitchell provides additional historical context for the story and insight into Williams's circle and way of life in the years before and during World War II.