

## Non-profit begins publishing fiction in the midst of economic downturn

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Despite the fact that the global economy is in shambles and doom-and-gloom abounds in the publishing industry, **\*culture is not optional** (\*cino) will be making a foray into the fiction department with the release of *Clutching Dust and Stars*, a debut novel by Laryn Kragt Bakker.



"Much of \*cino's work is about storytelling, which is a fundamental practice for learning and connecting as we all attempt to live into meaningful visions for our lives," says Publications Director Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma. "Our focus until now has been on telling the lived stories of actual people, but I look forward to seeing how the fictional story of Rob and Natalie—two broken people searching for healing and acceptance—will invite our readers into a different kind of reflection about themselves and their communities."

When Kragt Bakker began developing characters and writing first drafts nine years ago, he was a resident of Bellingham, Washington, and the story takes place in a fictionalized version of the city at that time.

"It's gratifying to see this process so close to completion," he said. "It's been long, hard, and also quite rewarding. I wasn't sure it would ever see the light of day at times."

In the novel, a shadow of 1999's "Battle of Seattle" can be felt in the streets of Bellingham in the form of protests and an anarchy collective. Natalie and Rob are twenty-somethings who have been out of school for a few years and are charting various paths of downward mobility. Natalie has retreated into the back room of a thrift shop with canvas and paint. Rob has abandoned his dream of edgy mainstream journalism and is trying to tap into the activist energy with photocopies and self-made stickers.

The novel will be released on November 20, 2009. See <http://clutchdustandstars.com> for more information and for high res images of the cover and the author.

### About the Author

Laryn Kragt Bakker was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has a degree in graphic design and computer science from Dordt College and is currently living in the Washington, D.C. area with his wife and daughter. He painted the original cover art used for the novel. In addition to writing and art, he is a graphic designer and web developer for non-profit organizations. This is his first novel.

### About \*culture is not optional

\*culture is not optional has been publishing online since 2002 when *catapult magazine* went live with bi-weekly, themed issues that weave together faith and everyday life with communal storytelling. The spirit of *catapult* has been embodied in print through the quarterly *road journal* and *The Road Map Series*, and in person through camping, conferences, workshops and, most recently, the purchase of an historic school building in Three Rivers, Michigan. With an off-campus program for college students and services for at-risk youth, the building will be a hub for imaginative, integrated personal and community development.

*Clutching Dust and Stars* is currently available for pre-order directly from \*culture is not optional through the online store at <http://clutchdustandstars.com>.