

Honoring Our Friend and Co-Founder Paula Merwin

To Paula in Late Spring

Let me imagine that we will come again
when we want to and it will be spring
we will be no older than we ever were
the worn griefs will have eased like the early cloud
through which the morning slowly comes to itself
and the ancient defenses against the dead
will be done with and left to the dead at last
the light will be as it is now in the garden
that we have made here these years together
of our long evenings and astonishment

— W.S. MERWIN,
from his Pulitzer Prize winning book,
The Shadow of Sirius

Photograph by Diane Cook & Len Jenshel



Merwin Tribute Exhibit
to Open in Chicago



Young Inspiration Sprouting
in the Palm Forest



Merwin Collection Receives
Rare Palm Donations



Conservancy
to Host
Award-
Winning
Scientist
and
Author of
Lab Girl

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OUR MISSION

*The Merwin Conservancy's mission is
to preserve the legacy of
W. S. Merwin, his home and palm forest,
for retreat and study for writers,
for environmental advocacy and community education.*

Honoring Our Friend and Co-founder Paula Merwin

*It is with a profound sadness
that we mourn the passing
of Paula Merwin.*

Through their nearly four decades together on Maui, Paula and William Merwin have created a unique oasis for writers, artists, activists and the more than 3,000 palms they planted on the property they transformed in the Pe'ahi watershed. The Merwins' life together in Pe'ahi, which they chose as their home after living for many years in New York City, represents an unwavering commitment not only to a place, but to a way of being.

Paula's vivacious and loving character, so beloved by all who met her, created the conditions under which William's poetry flourished as surely as the palms they planted grew into a living forest around them. Through her steadfast care for William, and her attention to the details of their lives and relationships, Paula helped William produce some of the greatest poetry of the last half-century. As William has lost his eyesight through macular degeneration, Paula literally became his eyes, reading aloud to him and keeping him in touch with words on the page, the news, and his mail. Above all, the poems and the palms became as inseparable as Paula and William themselves were to her last breath, which came on March 8th, two days short of her 81st birthday, at home with William beside her.



Jessica Pearl Photo

PAULA MERWIN
MARCH 10, 1936 – MARCH 8, 2017

A thoroughly modern woman engaged in politics, literature, art, cooking, fashion and the state of the world, Paula was William's active partner. Together they founded The Merwin Conservancy, not just to preserve the extraordinary place that she and William had made their home since the seventies, but also to inspire the rest of us to plant our own forests, turn our own dreams into reality, wherever we live. Paula shared and contributed to William's vision of restoring the formerly barren patch of land with its self-built home, rain-catchment water and solar PV systems as a sustainable sacred space.

Paula was famous for her graciousness with visitors to the Merwin home, surprising them with culinary arts not normally found in a palm forest to go along with her probing questions and enthusiasm. She was a master of cultivating emotional intimacy and eliciting confessionals with just about everyone she met. Above all, she was a champion of the best in the individual, often taking an active part in coaxing and coaching those around her to reach higher. She didn't mince words, she wasn't sentimental, yet her intuitive understanding of people generated a sense of warmth and safety. She was in your court, and she was committed to making us all better.

Paula was William's constant companion in helping to breathe life back into this earth, and in loving and being loved. With Paula's passing, we have lost not only our co-founder but an exceptional woman who created a hallowed place, one that she helped to craft so that others might be inspired to honor a different way of being in this world.

She is survived by her husband of 33 years, William Merwin, her aunt Joan Packer, her brother Don Carlos Dunaway, her sons Matthew Carlos Schwartz and John Burnham Schwartz and her grandchildren Luke and Garrick.



The family asks that in lieu of flowers or cards, friends and admirers of the Merwins make donations in her honor to The Merwin Conservancy.



The Green Room

An Environmental and Literary Salon Series

Fostering a reverence for nature,
language and imagination

Special thanks to our sponsor at FIM Group and our venue partner Maui Arts & Cultural Center for making this event series possible.

Bryan Berkowitz



No. 12 with William Finnegan

In December 2016, William Finnegan, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and longtime reporter at *The New Yorker*, drew a sell out crowd at Maui's McCoy Studio Theater and had the audience riveted, telling stories of his "surfing life" featured in his award-winning book *Barbarian Days*.

Bryan Berkowitz



No. 13 with Bill Porter (aka Red Pine)

In February 2017, Bill Porter – a renowned translator of Chinese sacred texts and poetry (under the name Red Pine) who is also a popular travel writer – gave a presentation entitled *The Search for Solitude: China's Hermit Tradition* to an enthusiastic Maui audience. He also recited sacred Chinese poetry – first sung in Chinese, then followed by his spoken translations in English.

Coming Up April 7

No. 14 with Dr. Hope Jahren



Restler Photography

Joining us in The Green Room at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center: award-winning geobiologist and best-selling author of *Lab Girl*.

Friday • April 7th • 7pm
Maui Arts &
Cultural Center
McCoy Studio Theater



GREEN ROOM EXPANDS TO O'AHU

Iconic Liljestrand House Becomes New Partner Venue



Courtesy Liljestrand Foundation



In late 2016, The Merwin Conservancy began organizing a small Honolulu-based event in conjunction with the larger Green Room literary and environmental salon series held at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center on Maui. To make this possible, the Conservancy partnered with The Liljestrand Foundation, a nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve the historic home in Honolulu designed by Vladimir Ossipov. The Foundation opens the house for charitable, cultural, and educational events. The Liljestrand House is an excellent venue for this intimate, private gathering in Honolulu, as we begin to bring The Green Room to neighbor islands.

So far, two events have been held in Honolulu, beginning with Pulitzer Prize winning author William Finnegan in December, and translator/travel writer Bill Porter (aka Red Pine) in February. Another Honolulu event at the Liljestrand House is scheduled for April, with best selling author and geobiologist Dr. Hope Jahren, featuring her best-selling memoir *Lab Girl*. If you are interested in learning more about the Green Room events held at Liljestrand House, please contact us at 808-579-8876.

William Finnegan
reads to a Green
Room audience
in Honolulu

Exhibit Debut May 6th – Film Screening May 8th – Museum Opens May 16th

Opening in Chicago in May 2017, the American Writers Museum will be the first national museum in the United

States dedicated to

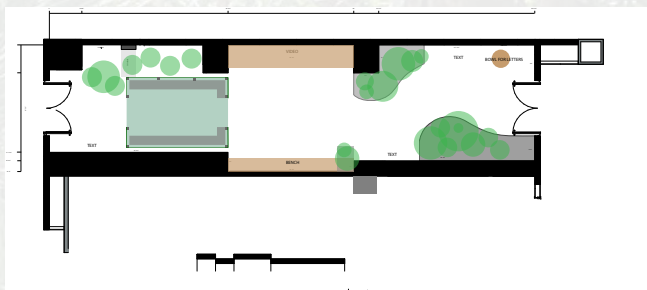
engaging the public

in celebrating American writers and exploring their influence on our history, our identity, our culture and our daily lives. Through innovative and dynamic state-of-the-art exhibitions, as well as compelling programming, the American Writers Museum will educate, enrich, provoke, and inspire the public.

In addition to hosting over 13 permanent exhibits in the museum's six galleries, the "Changing Exhibits Gallery" will debut an inaugural temporary exhibit, the changing gallery space will feature an installation titled "Palm", which celebrates our founder W.S. Merwin and the capacity of writers to connect readers to nature. This installation – sponsored by The Poetry Foundation - will create an immersive experience including a living palm forest inside the gallery, sound design with spoken words by a selection of writers and spaces for viewers to interact with poetry.

Created by the artist duo Sayler/Morris of The Canary Project, the installation will have its international debut at this space and is inspired by their time in the Merwin Palm Forest.

"When the American Writers Museum asked us to create an installation that somehow inspired in viewers an understanding of how writers can create a deeper understanding of ecology and the place of humans within it, we immediately thought of W.S. Merwin," said Ed Morris of The Canary Project.



Above: The Canary Project's artistic renderings of their exhibit "Palm"



American Writers Museum's new Chicago location



Susannah Sayler and Ed Morris of The Canary Project visiting with Paula and William Merwin on Maui

"William has been an inspiration and a source of deep engagement for us for many years. No poet better exemplifies the spirit and state of consciousness to which we aspire. The work we are making would not be possible without our visit to Merwin's garden/forest and the generosity of both William and Paula and the Merwin Conservancy."

When W.S. Merwin learned about the development of the American Writers Museum, he called it an idea that is "long overdue".

He continued, "the literate world has known and prized American writers since the generation of Emerson and Thoreau. Whitman and Emily Dickinson have influenced poets and readers in English and in translation into many languages. The great current continues, and a museum honoring and portraying American writing would be an honor to the suffering and vision from which our literature came."

The Merwin Conservancy's board and staff have been enthusiastically assisting in the development of the exhibit with the creators and connecting with museum staff to plan partner events and outreach efforts around the museum's opening. In addition, the Conservancy has become an official Museum Affiliate, and will continue to support the mission of the American Writers Museum for years to come.

Save the Date

May 8 • 6:00 pm
Columbia College's
Film Row Cinema

1104 S. Wabash Ave., 8th Floor, Chicago

SPECIAL SCREENING OF
W.S. Merwin documentary

*Even Though
the Whole World is Burning*



RARE PALM GIFT



Palm Forest Welcomes New Rare Pritchardia Palms

In January, the Merwin Palm Forest welcomed the addition of

two young native Hawaiian fan palms of the species *Pritchardia glabrata*. The palms were a gift from the Kahanu Garden, part of the National Tropical Botanical Garden. With only two hundred plants left in the wild, this small palm is listed as endangered by the IUCN. The Merwin Conservancy's Palm Forest will provide refuge for these two young trees and some insurance against losing the species forever.



About this palm:

Pritchardia, with 24 species scattered among the islands, is the only genus of palm native to Hawaii. Most *Pritchardia* species are found only on a single island but *P. glabrata* is an exception occurring naturally on both Lana'i and west Maui. This unusual distribution is a biological reminder of a time when sea levels were lower and Maui, Lana'i and Moloka'i were connected as the single, large island of Maui Nui.

KIDS IN THE PALM FOREST

Maui Students Connect with the Conservancy in the Spirit of Service & Learning

Now in its second year, The Merwin Conservancy's student education partnership with the Montessori School of Maui is – literally and figuratively – *sprouting* into a healthy program. Students from Montessori's Koa Class (middle school students), under the guidance of Conservancy staff, has been stewarding a small plot of land in a previously unplanted part of the Merwin property. Nicknamed *Haumana Hill* (*haumana* means *student* in Hawaiian), the area has been cleared of invasive weeds and planted with a combination of native groundcovers, native trees and shrubs, and young palms.

The students are participating in this partnership as a part of the school's Service Learning Project, which provides a diverse balance of hands-on and intellectual activity while students are involved in supporting their community.



Yasimina (above), Gabe (left), and Zach (right) gaining inspiration from the Merwins' palm forest

The Montessori students, in addition to students from many other schools around Maui, have been spending quality time in the Merwin Palm Forest, integrating critical thinking skills, design skills, basic botany knowledge, knowledge of W.S. Merwin's approach to gardening, and exposure to his poetry. They are creating artistic works of their own in addition to being involved in a hands-on way.

You can help share the Merwins' inspiring story with the world.

Make a Donation

A Merwin Conservancy supporter recently said, "the world needs W.S. Merwin's poetry now, more than ever." Your donation will ensure that Merwin's brilliant contributions will thrive and continue to shape our imaginations and foster a reverence for language, nature and imagination for many years to come.



You can secure this unprecedented literary and ecological legacy, which will touch many lives locally and globally. With your generous gift, William and

Paula Merwin's lifelong dedication to nature and creativity may be forever shared with future generations.

Leave a Legacy

The Merwin Conservancy has been selected as a non-profit partner in Hawaii Community Foundation's Legacy



Giving Campaign. Please consider leaving a legacy gift to The Merwin Conservancy in your last will and testament. Your bequest will help protect and conserve the Merwin Palm Forest and W.S. Merwin's poet's home forever. For more information, contact Jason Denhart at (808) 579-8876 or jdenhart@merwinconservancy.org.

You are Inspiring the Next Generation



"During and after our Merwin Palm Forest visits I have some very insightful conversations with my students. They really take these experiences to heart, and feel more aware of their own responsibility of taking care of this earth."

—MARY ANNA GRIMES,
Sacred Hearts School,
Lahaina, Maui

In Gratitude to Our Supporters

Through your generous support, your philanthropic investment and your partnership, you are ensuring that the legacy of William and Paula Merwin, their biodiverse palm forest and hand-built home will endure for future generations. Thank you.

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