

Threshold

Swallows streaking in and out through the row of broken
panes over the front door went on with their conversation
of afterthoughts whatever they had been settling
about early summer and nests and the late daylight
and the vacant dwellings of swallows in the beams
let their dust filter down as I brought in my bed
while the door stood open onto the stone still smoothed to water
by the feet of inhabitants never known to me
and when I turned to look back I did not recognize a thing
the sound of flying whirred past me a voice called far away
the swallows grew still and bats came out light as breath
around the stranger by himself in the echoes
what did I have to do with anything I could remember
all I did not know went on beginning around me
I had thought it would come later but it had been waiting

— W.S. Merwin, from his book *The Vixen*, also found in *Migration: New & Selected Poems* (Copper Canyon Press). Copyright © 1996 by W. S. Merwin. Used by permission of the publishers.

Photo: *Licualis grands* and *Archontophoenix* by Larry Cameron



Welcome from Our
New Executive Director



Artist Alexis Rockman
to Appear in The Green Room



Merwin Teaching Fellows
Return to Their Classrooms



New Open Garden Days
Announced for 2019

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Sara Tekula
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OUR MISSION

The Merwin Conservancy's mission is to inspire innovation in the arts and sciences by advancing the ideas of W.S. Merwin – his life, work, house and palm forest – as fearless and graceful examples of the power of imagination and renewal.



Dear Friends,

I write from Massachusetts, where I await the arrival of the shipping container that will soon cart my family's belongings across the Pacific, to our new home on Maui. In these last days in the Berkshires, I watch the autumn colors spread across the hills, and think about the jeweled greens of W.S. Merwin's garden, where I will soon very happily plant my feet. All the while, I am savoring a lucidity that visits only when one finds oneself on a threshold. I am grateful for the opportunity to pause here to share some early thoughts with you.

The move ahead is a kind of homecoming for me. I spent swaths of my childhood on Kaua'i, where my mother's family has lived and thrived for many generations. With each summertime visit, I would feel dimensions of myself and my curiosity about the world open up.

Each departure at summer's end deepened my resolve to re-establish roots in the place I felt most alive, connected, and creative. Never could I have imagined the incredible privilege that would call me back to Hawai'i: the opportunity to steward W.S. and Paula Merwin's vision and own deep connection to place.

To lead The Merwin Conservancy in this next phase of its growth is to honor in every gesture the fearlessness, grace, and conviviality of its founders. I feel incredibly energized as I get to know the programs and partnerships that so beautifully articulate the Conservancy's mission, and connect people to and through its values. I am struck by how mindfully they scale intimacy and a sense of wonder. Open Garden Days invite visitors to see, feel, and smell what can happen when the imagination beckons a garden, and then a forest, into being; the Merwin Creative Teaching Fellowship program awakens Hawai'i teachers to their own creative energy, and inspires them to awaken the intrinsic and all-too-often under-recognized creativity in their students; and The Green Room series brings artists, writers, scientists, and thinkers into conversation with Hawai'i communities to foster a reverence for nature, language, and imagination. I am excited to build on these initiatives by envisioning and launching a residency program that brings visionaries across fields and disciplines to the garden to elucidate, through their own practices, the complicated beauty of the world around us.

As I think about this range of transformative work, I am also thinking about how we accomplish it, how we embody these values in our daily practices. I understand arts organizations to be living, evolving, creative entities in and of themselves, activated by the curiosity and creativity of their leaders and stakeholders. I felt an immediate kinship with Director of Programs Sara Tekula, with members of the outstanding Board of Directors, and with the committed supporters I've had the good fortune to meet in my early days.

When I first visited the garden, watched the play of light in the palms, and listened to William's poems amidst the garden's sounds, I knew that I would emerge changed, and indeed I did. I emerged committed to fostering the power of the imagination and the possibilities of renewal, and to looking with wonder, always, at the world around me. I am honored to do this alongside all of you. I look forward to getting to know you as I settle in and look ahead. Please reach out to share your stories and ideas.

Sonnet



The Green Room

An Environmental and Literary Salon Series

Fostering a reverence for nature,
language and imagination.

Photo: Meri Hoffsten



No. 19 with Bill McKibben

During "Earth Week" in April, The Merwin Conservancy hosted best-selling author and leading climate change activist Bill McKibben for two sold-out appearances in Honolulu and Kahului. On O'ahu, McKibben was introduced by Maya Soetoro-Ng of the Institute for Climate and Peace at University of Hawai'i. On Maui, he was introduced by best-selling author and Green Room alumnus Susan Casey.

Photo: Bryan Berkowitz



No. 20 with Naomi Shihab Nye and Cathy Song

While in Hawai'i for the Merwin Creative Teaching Fellowship, celebrated poet, author and educator Naomi Shihab Nye graced stages on Maui and O'ahu, inviting her dear friend, O'ahu poet Cathy Song to join her. The two shared stories and poems, touching on thematic areas of concern in their lives and in the world.

Photo: Larry Cameron



No. 21 with Susan Middleton

In August and September, photographer, author and Guggenheim fellow Susan Middleton presented a visually stunning collection of her photographs curated specifically for the Conservancy. She was joined by renowned field botanist Steve Perlman, and together they shared the stories behind the making of two of her books, *Spineless* and *Remains of a Rainbow*. They highlighted W.S. Merwin's involvement in the making of *Remains of a Rainbow*, reading selections from his eloquent foreword.

Coming Up

No. 22 with Alexis Rockman

Oct 24 (O'ahu) & Oct 27 (Maui)



A visual artist who works at the confluence of art and science, Alexis Rockman boldly depicts what he calls "a natural history psychedelia." Alexis will highlight his dynamic engagement with ecological change, from prehistory through the present.

No. 23 with Lewis Hyde and Matthew Zapruder

Dec 5 (O'ahu) & Dec 6 (Maui)



Join us for an intimate conversation about the power of creativity led by scholar, writer and MacArthur Fellow Lewis Hyde and poet and former poetry editor of *The New York Times* Matthew Zapruder.

Special thanks to our event sponsor FIM Group and venue partner Maui Arts & Cultural Center for making the Maui event series possible. Deep gratitude to our O'ahu venue Honolulu Museum of Art for their partnership, and to the Halekulani hotel, Omidyar Fellows and Slow Food Maui for their supporting sponsorship on O'ahu. Additional support for the Green Room is provided by the Atherton Family Foundation.

NEWS FROM THE CONSERVANCY

Exciting Changes on Staff and Board

In early September, the Merwin Conservancy welcomed its new Executive Director, Sonnet Coggins, to the staff. Sonnet begins full time on Maui on October 24th; get to know her better in the pages of this newsletter. Sara Tekula, who served as Interim Executive Director since February, was promoted to Director of Programs (her former title was Director of Communications and Outreach). The Board of Directors welcomed two new members, W.S.

Merwin's longtime editor Michael Wiegers of Copper Canyon press, and Maui businessman and philanthropist, Michael Moore. Leaving the board earlier this year were Sarah Cavanaugh and Naomi Shihab Nye, to whom the Conservancy owes much gratitude.

Maui Staff Hosts First Summer Intern

In June, the Merwin Conservancy enthusiastically welcomed its first college intern, Bethany Fitts, who is in her senior year at the University of Mississippi,

where she is an honors student double-majoring in English and History. Earlier this year, Bethany won the competitive Barksdale Award, which provides \$5,000 to exceptional students who wish to test themselves in environments beyond the classroom. She chose to use her award as an opportunity to travel to Maui, support the Conservancy program staff, and spend time imagining and writing in W.S. Merwin's garden. Bethany provided critical support during a transitional period, and was integral to the success of the Merwin Creative Teaching Fellowship Institute.

Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art | American Bison, Bison bison, 2017, La Bodega Red Clay and acrylic polymer on paper, 18 x 24 in

Photo: Radcliffe Institute (left), B.A. Van Sice (right)

PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS

2018-19 MERWIN CREATIVE TEACHING FELLOWSHIP UNDERWAY

Summer Institute in June a Success, Teachers Now Translating Their Experiences into Their Classrooms

During the five day Summer Institute, held June 20-24, 2018 on Maui, the Merwin Creative Teaching Fellows enjoyed an expert-led, immersive and restorative retreat. Poet/Educator Naomi Shihab Nye and Educator/Consultant Marnie Masuda-Cleveland of The Creative Core facilitated, with help from Conservancy Director of Programs Sara Tekula and Hawai'i based poet Cathy Song. During the retreat, fellows embarked on two "mini-residencies" in W.S. Merwin's garden while exploring and expanding their own capacities for imagination, attention, and renewal; gleaned a wide variety of pedagogical strategies to help students expand and apply imagination, attention and renewal in their own academic and social/emotional lives, and conceptualized "W.S. Merwin inspired and infused" place-based, project-based lessons and units to implement during the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers, now with their students back in their classrooms, are using the online collaboration and coaching platform "Edmodo" to connect remotely, share ideas and drafts of their work, and receive personalized mentorship and guidance from Marnie, Naomi, Sara as the school year continues. At the end of the current school year, all lessons and units will be written up, refined, and shared with teachers locally through community forums on each island, and globally via The Merwin Conservancy's website.



Merwin Fellows at the Green Room and during the Summer Institute
Photos: Bryan Berkowitz

GEO-INQUIRY WORKSHOP HELD IN THE GARDEN

On April 21st, National Geographic explorer and photographer Anand Varma shared his knowledge and experiences with 25 public school social studies and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) teachers from across Hawai'i as part of a workshop on National Geographic's "geo-inquiry" process, using W.S. Merwin's garden as a location for study and exploration. The gathering of 6th to 12th grade teachers was put together by the Hawaii Geographic Alliance in

collaboration with The Merwin Conservancy, National Geographic and the Hawai'i Department of Education. The one-day workshop, entitled "Using Photography to Analyze Space, Place and the Interconnections Between Both the Human and Natural World" offered tools for the teachers to bring geo-inquiry into their indoor and outdoor classrooms using smartphone cameras. As part of the geo-inquiry process, teachers explored questions about the history of the landscape, W.S. Merwin's restoration efforts on the land, and his poetry inspired by his home and garden.



Workshop Participants in the Palm Forest

GARDEN EXPERIENCES

GROWING OUR COMMUNITY

A place rich in story, botanical diversity, and a language all its own, W.S. Merwin's garden is a magnet for visitors, outdoor education opportunities and school field trips for local students on Maui. In addition to our popular Open Garden Days program available to the public, we've had the pleasure of collaborating with our Maui-based Teaching Fellows to bring their students to the garden in early Fall. Plans are in the works for more field trips later this year. Customized experiences in the garden are created in collaboration with the teachers to ensure that time in the garden enhances existing curricula and classroom goals.

Artists are also welcome in the garden, and for a second year in a row, we've collaborated with the Mālama Wao Akua native species exhibition at the Hui No'ēau Visual Arts Center on Maui. This year, local plein air painter Maggie Sutrov, who spent time painting the native *Pritchardia* palms in the garden, created "Heart of the Palm Garden", a series of paintings selected for the show by the jurors.



Maui painter Maggie Sutrov creating native palm-inspired works in the garden for Mālama Wao Akua



Maui students spending time walking, reflecting, and writing in the garden.



OPEN GARDEN DAYS IN 2019

The community is invited to experience W.S. Merwin's expansive garden, a one-of-a-kind place that is as much of a botanical historic treasure as it is a singular artistic expression. One of the most extensive palm collections known to exist on Earth, located on the slopes of Maui's once barren Pe'ahi Valley, this nearly 19-acre property has been lovingly restored by hand by W.S. Merwin and his late wife Paula. Led by knowledgeable Conservancy staff, these intimate, once-a-month visits allow us to share the land, the ideas, and the poetry of our founder that have flourished on Maui for 40 years. These experiences inspire conversations about possibility, through the lens of ecological restoration and the power of the imagination. Join us.

Open Garden Days for 2019* are as follows:

Tuesday, Jan 8th

Wednesday, Feb 6th

Tuesday, March 5th

Wednesday, April 10th

Tuesday, May 7th

Wednesday, June 5th



**Registrations are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, and Open Garden Days fill up at least a month or two in advance. Dates for 2018 are completely booked. Dates for the second half of 2019 coming soon.*

Learn more about the Open Garden Days program or send a registration request here:

www.merwinconservancy.org/open-garden-days

Your Donation Sparks Imagination and Possibility

Make a Gift

The Merwin Conservancy—guided by W.S. Merwin's literary work, ecological conviction, and transformation of the Maui land—seeks to share this story of creativity and renewal with the widest possible audience. Our goal is to inspire a conversation about the connection between the human spirit and the natural world, sparking imaginations to the possibilities inherent in a heightened awareness of this connection. Your gift makes our innovative and meaningful programs possible, and helps us realize this vision. Please join us today!



Paula and William Merwin
Photo: Jon Letman

Leave a Legacy

Through The Merwin Legacy Circle, please consider leaving a planned gift to enhance and sustain your legacy with The Merwin Conservancy. Your gift will preserve W.S. Merwin's poet's home and hand-planted palm forest and will provide the foundation with the ability to launch a residency program for creative visionaries and thought leaders. If you would like to learn more about how to leave a legacy gift please contact Sonnet Coggins, Executive Director, at scoggins@merwinconservancy.org

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES AN IMPORTANT COMMUNITY IMPACT



"Fellowships like ours are necessary, vital tools for educators. I am

humbled and thankful for the opportunity to carry on W.S. Merwin's vision with the next generation of leaders, learners, and artists. I cannot thank those who've made this experience possible enough".

— MATTHEW MARTIN, 2018 MERWIN CREATIVE TEACHING FELLOW, SEABURY HALL, MAUI

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AND VISIT

www.merwinconservancy.org to enjoy our latest news, weekly poems, and images from the palm forest.

With Gratitude

Thank you to our generous donors for their philanthropic investment and their partnership in ensuring that the legacy of William and Paula Merwin, their palm forest and hand-built home will endure for future generations.

MERWIN LEGACY CIRCLE (Planned Giving/ Estate Gifts/ Bequests)

Anonymous (2)	J. Kevin Tighe and
Paula and William Merwin	Rebecca Fletcher
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Please let us know your plans! If you have left The Merwin Conservancy in your will or estate plan, we would like to thank you and welcome you to The Merwin Legacy Circle.

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