Dear Friends of the Writers House

The Arts Café, our main events space at Writers House, was originally a parlor for receiving guests, a nineteenth-century room with little need for any frills beyond furniture and windows. In the house-wide renovation of 1997, we left the room nearly as bare as we had found it. With a microphone, a podium, and an assortment of mismatched chairs, we were able to welcome small audiences for simple events in the intimate space.

We’ve come a long way in twenty years. The Arts Café is now home to 150 public events each year. Many of our public programs fill the room beyond capacity, requiring overflow seating in the living room. Sometimes one microphone at the podium is enough, but it’s often the case that we’ll set up several mics, a few laptops, and a digital interface to allow for real-time conversations with participants around the world. The lovely old parlor is still a gathering place, but it’s also a complex performance venue, a broadcasting studio, and an innovative classroom. Our old-style lighting, retro acoustics, and internet 1.0 wiring hasn’t kept pace.

Thanks to the generosity of Christine and David Gross-Loh (W’92), who have made a transformative gift to Writers House, we have been able to reimagine our beloved Arts Café. Taking absolutely everything we’ve learned in two decades of innovative programming, we’ve undertaken an ambitious renovation project to enlarge the room and retrofit the historic parlor with integrated, flexible technology. The renovation plan calls for increased seating in a newly-enclosed porch, multiple cameras for live streaming, webcasting, and recording, theater-quality lighting, sophisticated acoustical treatment, and new (and silent!) air handling for heating and cooling — all while scrupulously maintaining the historic look and feel of the space.

Of course in renovating the Arts Café we would never sacrifice the warm, homey environment that differentiates Writers House from other art venues, and so we sought out an architect who would understand and maintain the ambiance of comfort and the sense of home that are so important to our history. In DIGSAU, a local up-and-coming architecture firm, we found design partners sensitive enough to bring the Arts Café into the twenty-first century without compromising the throwback intimacy and personal face-to-face intensity that is its hallmark. Their careful work has ensured a good balance of old and new.

And in true Writers House style, this project has required many hands. In addition to the Gross-Loh family, who made everything possible, we have several other friends to thank for their contributions. Howie Lipson (W’86) helped fund the technology package and encouraged us to focus on the possibilities of a state-of-the-art performance venue. Andrew Beal, our jack-of-all-trades Associate Director of Development and Finance, pored over every plan and drawing, making sure we’d considered all angles and options, including electrical conduits no one knew we’d need. Our colleagues at Penn’s Facilities and Real Estate Services pitched in to help with building-wide upgrades to our air-handling infrastructure. Our partners in the Office of the Provost helped keep the project running smoothly.

And, as always, we are grateful to all of the generous organizations and people who helped out this year with ideas, financial support, and cheeringleading, including alumni, students, faculty, ModPo participants, Penn parents, Philadelphians, and Friends of the Writers House from all over the world.

On behalf of the Writers House Planning Committee, thank you for everything you bring to this community!

Al Filreis
Faculty Director
Kelly Professor of English

Jessica Lowenthal
Director

DIGSAU

The Kelly Writers House
> RACE AND FORM: A DIALOGUE
In October, an interdisciplinary panel sponsored by the Creative Writing Program asked audience members to consider a complex question: how does race embed itself in literary form? Three panelists—ranked by moderator David Eng as “among the most compelling thinkers today on form and form”—were here to help break that question down. ICA curator Mag O’Neill opened the conversation with a look at images from Speakeasy, an ICA exhibit that explored the ways “Blackness is constituted in language.” Dorothy Wang, whose research focuses on Asian American poetics, followed with a call to scholars to rethink poetic terms—to include race as a more fundamental category. Poet John Keene responded to Onli and Wang by recalling a period in the late eighties and early nineties when Black literary history might be “fuzzy-headed, poetic, humanities types” (as Feresi put it) gathered in the Arts Café: “Take nothing for granted,” Zweig said. “Question everything.”

> TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED
For this year’s WEBER Symposium, we invited Wall Street Journal personal finance columnist Jason Zweig to talk money with KWH Faculty Director Al Filreis. It turned into a fascinating conversation about the language — and jargon — of Wall Street: “A large part of my job,” Zweig said, “is to look at language and to pick it apart until I find out what’s in it.” This confession came as no surprise: Zweig is known for work that seeks to demystify finance and investing, including, for example, his indispensable glossary of Wall Street lingo, The Devil’s Financial Dictionary. From language, the discussion moved to human behavior, particularly our irrational behavior around money and risk. “Deliver us from this wildmessen!” Zweig jokingly demanded. Zweig’s simple and memorable advice seemed tailor-made for the “fuzzy-headed, poetic; humanities types” (as Feresi put it) gathered in the Arts Café: “Take nothing for granted,” Zweig said. “Question everything.”

> STAND-UPS SIT DOWN
“All you can speak to is what you think is funny,” said comedian Aparna Nancherla, responding to a question about minority representation in stand-up. Nancherla visited KWH in April, along with comedian Billy Wayne Davis, for Stand-Ups Sit Down, an annual event hosted by Penn funnyman Lew Schneider (C’86) that gives comedians an opportunity to share stories and jokes and reflect on their experiences — positive and negative — in the entertainment industry. Stories this year included pointed critiques of cancel culture and magic (“magic’s just lying,” said Davis) and an earnest yet upbeat discussion of depression and anxiety among comedians.

> WRITE YOUR OWN ODYSSEY
When Penn Classical Studies professor Emily Wilson came to KWH to read from her extraordinary new translation of Homer’s Odyssey, classics fans crammed into the Arts Café, with overflow seating all the way back to the kitchen. And with good reason. Wilson’s translation distance itself notably from earlier versions by updating anachronistic language and metaphor. “There’s a sort of similarity in prejudices and preconceptions about what the Odyssey is like as a poem, which don’t necessarily march the Greek,” Wilson explained with a laugh. “There was quite a lot of cultural baggage which I didn’t want to import.” Wilson encouraged readers and future translators to approach canonical texts with a critical lens—“the translator’s job,” she said, “is not to shield the reader from the truth about how disturbing the original text might be.”

> THE DREAM OF THE STYLE GUIDE
A lovely yet technical hour-long discussion with Brooke Bovee fulfilled one of hills Bloch’s dreams: to host a public conversation at Writers House about an editorial style handbook. Borel’s The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking offered Bloch and students from her Art of Editing class, including panelists Caroline Curran (C’20) and Justin Vaeder (C’21), an opportunity to talk about the best practices of fact-checking and the importance of accuracy and accountability in reporting. Panelists explored the difference between “fact” and “truth,” why fact checkers don’t write articles themselves, and the “many tenacles of the problem that make fake news possible.” Borel charmed the assembled group of editors and style-guide wonks with an embarrassing story about the time she witnessed a picture of a baby polar bear that turned out to be a picture of a stuffed animal. Her “polar bear test” now helps caution reporters about the thrills of the retweet. Her “polar bear test” now helps caution reporters about the thrills of the retweet.

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Our Creative Ventures project, funded with extraordinary generosity by Marc Wolpow (W’80) and Robin Wolpow, permits us to seek out and encourage innovative modes of teaching, learning, and making.

- The waterways of Philadelphia inspired Carlos Price-Sánchez (C’79) to develop a geographic poetry project that explored, in part, how at-risk hidden streams affect the lower-income communities in the Wissinoming neighborhood of Northeast Philadelphia.

- Creative Writing instructor Sam Apple invited media-tech entrepreneur Ben Lerer (C’03) to chat about his experience growing some of the biggest digital media companies around, including Thrillist, NowThis, The Dodo, and Seeker.

- Friends from The Woodlands Cemetery, Asian Arts Initiative, ICA, and elsewhere visited over a series of informal lunches to talk with KWH summer interns about the pleasures and challenges of nonprofit work in Philadelphia.

- Dave Knittle (GR’20) staged two conversations in his ongoing City Planning Poetics series. Historic Preservation professor Randall Mason joined poet Simone White for a discussion about “urban memory.” Urban cultural geographer Jen Jack Gieseking came together for a discussion about “urban preservation.”

- Tonya Foster (GR’20) designed a multifaceted visit for Creative Writing instructor Amanda Silberling (C’18) who completed her documentary film We’re Here, We’re Present: Women in Punk documentary film at Toronto Film Festival, and the Unnamed Film festivals, including the Tribeca Film Festival, and the Unnamed Film Festival right here in Philadelphia.

- The intrepid writers of the student-run Moviemaker magazine attended a number of film festivals, including the Tribeca Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, and the Unnamed Film Festival right here in Philadelphia.

- Our annual Mind of Winter event featured soups made in-house by KWH staff and readings by community members including Syd Baloue (C’11, community members including Rosenberg) that were made in-house by KWH staff and readings by community members including Rosenberg. The waterways of Philadelphia inspired Carlos Price-Sánchez (C’79) to develop a geographic poetry project that explored, in part, how at-risk hidden streams affect the lower-income communities in the Wissinoming neighborhood of Northeast Philadelphia.

- Our beloved Arts Cafe (pictured on this page) is undergoing a complete renovation! An extraordinary gift from Christine and David Gross-Loh (W’72) and a creative, sensitive design by DIGSAU has enabled us to upgrade all the tech, improve the air handling, and enlarge the space. Of course we’ve decided to keep our famed creaky old chairs, each one lovingly picked out by a Hub member. You’ll feel right at home.

- Maya Arthur (C’78)—a Creative Ventures staff assistant—expanded the work of her 2016–17 Berry Prize by adding to the KWH Zine Library collection and hosting a number of zine-making workshops.

- Visual artist Erica Baum joined KWH Faculty Director Al Filreis, graduate student Dave Knittle (GR’20), and Morgan Library archivist Christine Nelson for a discussion of Baum’s Dog Ear, a book of photographic poems, in which each poem is a meticulous reproduction of a dog-eared page of a mass-market paperback.

- Julia Levitan (C’78) received a Creative Ventures Capital Prize to create a series of poems etched onto scraps of glass.

- Katie Moore (C’78) looked toward the skies for an astral photography project in New Zealand that culminated in a Brodsky Gallery show called We Are Here. For the show’s opening event, Moore moderated a discussion about art and science with a UFO expert, a neurologist-in-training, and a Virginia Woolf—aficionado.

- This year’s 7-Up program, 7-Up on Blue, featured seven people speaking for seven minutes each about blue things, including Ryan Briggs on law enforcement, Ashley Goddeer (C’21) on the blues, Gabriel Ojeda-Sagastume (C’78) on blue jeans, Amber Rose Johnson (GR’21) on The Bluest Eye, Zoe Stoller on depression, and Penn Museum curator Jennifer Houser Wegner on Egyptian Ayes. Kayla Bernstein (C’20) capped the evening with an original tune.

- Amber Rose Johnson (GR’21) and Dave Knittle (GR’20) designed a multifaceted visit for poet Tonya Foster that included a “poetics lab” about alternative forms of academic writing, held at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

- Philadelphia artist and teacher of Previous Owners Allison Parish (GR’07), along with Alison Purush, and Rafael Pérez y Pérez to speak to her history of the Cuban students about Using Electricity, a series of computer-generated poetry books.

- Novelist Rebecca Trail (C’78) shared excerpts from her book Fingerprints of Previous Owners and commented about July’s Writer House as the first place she ever read her work.

- Karen Bile described her former student Chris Landseider’s SP’78, who visited KWH to read from his debut novel The Minions, an in a kind and generous critic, whose characters are unforgettable totally reliable.

- We partnered with the Jewish Studies department to welcome Beth Kissileff (S’93, GR’98) for a discussion about her novel Questioning Pesak, which considers the idea of American Jews who return to traditional religious practice in Israel.

- Siege warrior and multi-instrumentalist Robin Delsass (C’14) was the main guest for a LIVE at the Writers House showcase of experimental fiction in Israel.

- Arielle Dresner (C’37, SP’78) 12) taught a class about the musical guest for a celebration of children’s books. Sarah Absharaw (C’11) shared her story about the mythical metamorphosis of A Series of Unfortunate Events.

- Alex Koppelman (C’07, SPP’12) joined KWH Faculty Director Al Filreis for a lunchtime discussion about the history of media and the ways in which media and politics intersect.

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**Another Morning in London**

Finger sandwiches and tea set the scene for Rodney Bailey (C’72) to read from his in-progress collection of poems and essays, *Another Morning in London*. As the 2017–18 recipient of the Heled Travel and Research Grant, a prize sponsored by Mali Heled Kinberg (C’95, G’95), Bailey traveled to London to visit (and be inspired by) the places that inspired Virginia Woolf. “I have a disproportionate fascination with Virginia Woolf,” he confessed. “I have to keep reminding myself we’re not on a first-name basis.” Bailey’s resulting project, a remarkable “location-intensive” meditation, is informed by his careful reading of Virginia Woolf and equally careful navigation of place — including his own placement or belonging in the world. “I am sitting! On a stone bench, almost levitating / above the Thames.”

**A Celebration of Short Stories and Meatloaf**

This year’s Cheryl J. Family Fiction Program fell on Halloween — a fitting day for a celebration of short-story writer and Penn Artist in Residence Carmen Maria Machado and her genre-straddling debut book *Her Body and Other Parties*. Joining Machado was Jenny Zhang, author of the award-winning collection *Sea Heart*, featuring short stories about Chinese American girls growing up in and around New York City. Zhang, wearing a green ribbon around her neck (a reference to Machado’s hit story “The Husband Stitch”), read a part of “The Empty, The Empty, The Empty” (the only story in the collection featuring a costume, Zhang told us), while Machado, resplendent in a Star Trek uniform, read a brand new piece of erotic fiction centered on the return of celestial body Solo y Program Coordinator Ali Razi, who wore a bright pink Sesame Street Martian costume for the occasion, invited everyone to join the readers for “an extremely body-themed reception,” featuring a lot of meatloaf and a brain made out of SpaghettiOs.

**Food Matters**

According to food writer Irina Duminetescu, who visited KWH for a conversation about food and food writing hosted by Penn English professor Emily Steinher, it’s not always the “best” food that matters. Sometimes “bad food” — snack food from our childhood, secret pleasure food, food weighed with personal and emotional history — is a better tool for telling our stories. And through her experiences as an immigrant, scholar, and serious foodie and eater, Duminetescu has also come to understand that food plays a complex role in cultural relations. “Food divides just as much as it brings together,” she muses. Ultimately, though, Duminetescu feels uncomfortable around people who have little interest in food beyond its most basic nutritional function. Luckily, KWH is her kind of place. “You’re among food” — snack food from our childhood, secret pleasure food, food that matters. Sometimes “bad food.”

**Poetic Foot**

Poet Tonya Foster kicked off her spring reading by showing off her poem-foot, that is, shaped from words and printed on a sheet of plain white office paper. Despite its poetic nature, Foster’s editor had refused to include this podiatric calligram in her book (apparently, “you can’t just have a random foot”). But the KWH audience was much more receptive. Foster’s reading of the foot poem, followed by readings of several other unpublished works that visited the slavery-era South, present-day New Orleans, and 21st-century Harlem, left the packed room wanting more. After the performance, listeners swarmed to grab a copy of Foster’s *A Sparrow of Bears* in High Court.

**Finding Happiness**

This year’s Bob Lucid Fiction Program featured Nobel Prize–winner Orhan Pamuk, whose visit was made possible through special partnerships with the Middle East Center and the Wolf Humanities Center. KWH Faculty Director Al Filreis told the standing-room-only crowd that he’d never been quite so “godly and nervous and excited” to introduce an author. “Is it easy to be oneself after hearing so much praise?” Pamuk replied, jokingly, after the effusive intro, and then he settled in to a freewheeling reading/lecture hybrid that neatly balanced literary history with dramatic, anecdotal asides. He was, in other words, very himself, and quite funny. Pamuk’s treatment of complex political history and equally complex familial baggage was marked by a personal humor that made everyone feel right at home. Pamuk concluded the reading with an admission about his desire to write, excerpted from his Nobel acceptance speech: “I write because I’ve never managed to be happy,” he confessed. “I write to be happy.”

**We Are Here**

The opening reception for *We Are Here*, a Brodsky Gallery showing of astrophotography by Katelin Moore (C’17), fell — fittingly — on Pi Day (3/14). Framed against a backdrop of constellations and swirling nebulae, Moore introduced a panel of “speculative souls” from the Penn community who take special interest in the tenuous border between science and the arts: Isha Khurana (GR’27, M’29), a neurologist interested in what humanities can teach us about the brain; Kate Dorsch (LPS’11, GR’22), a historian who studies UFOs; and Rodney Bailey (C’72), a writer whose work incorporates mathematical concepts. Panelists agreed that artists and scientists ultimately aren’t so easy to distinguish from each other. Bailey put it most succinctly: “Art is science, and science is art.” After the discussion, the crowd dispersed to take a closer look at Moore’s photographs, which communicate both the scale and distance of astronomical objects — and to sample baked goods from Beiler’s (whose bakers know a thing or two about pie).
**JOURNALISTS IN THE HOUSE**

“If you work on a story that’s really touching a nerve, you’re probably going to get yelled at, cursed at, threatened, [or] sued,” said Philly reporter David Gambacorta during a discussion about the importance of local journalism. “The reason you do it is you’re drawn to something vaguely noble sense that you’re providing a service, you’re helping people, you’re telling stories that are really touching a nerve, you’re doing it is you’re drawn to some noble sense that you’re doing something for the public good.”

Hosted by political columnist and Creative Writing faculty member Dick Polman, the conversation with Gambacorta was one of a robust series of events supported by our Povich Journalism Fund, funded by Maury Povich (C’79) and Connie Chung, which every year allows for ProPublica. Ben Vagoda emphasized the importance of accuracy and credibility in reporting, especially now, when accusations about “fake news” dominate the discourse. And Jamielle Robinson, Slate’s chief political correspondent, talked about, among other things, doing this job is about finding your fascination,” said professor and writer Stephen Fried (C’79) during a roundtable discussion about careers in journalism featuring Ashley Parker (C’05) of The Washington Post, Joe Pinsker (C’07) of The Atlantic, and Jess Goodman (C’72) of Cosmopolitan, who joined Fried in encouraging aspiring writers to pursue their passions.

**HOW TO BE A DOLL: DRAG AND WRITING**

Conceived by 2017–18 Junior Fellows Prize–winner Gabriel Ojeda-Sagué (C’16), "How to Be a Doll: Drag and Writing" was emceed by drummer/editor Kenna O’Brien (C’15) and a haunted doll named Anabelle. This night of “all things words and wigs” began with a Proustian performance by Mark McCloughan, which featured a guest appearance by Alex Tatarsky as a polyamorous bouquet of flowers. Local Libra queen Fyzaa (C’07) performed an alien possession scene in which she interrogated who drag was really for. Hadeeja Soufflé, Gabriel’s alter ego, lip synced to a buzzing, creepy, and distorted original poem with occasional Bernadette Peters interludes. Pearl Harbor capped the evening of voice modulators and costume changes with a jaw-dropping multimedia performance that included family history, a silent film, clips from Chopped, a rossetiere chicken, a red onion, and a rendition of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.”

**LIP-THINK: KYOO LEE AND M. NOURRESE PHILIP**

Philosopher/writer Kyoo Lee and poet/essayist M. NourbeSe Philip met at KWH in December for an exploratory public dialogue introduced by Lee as “lip-think.” The longtime friends discussed all kinds of things—ideas about counting, documentation, the binary, and the importance of women’s friendships. When they read from Philip’s essay “Interview with an Emperor,” they giggled along with the audience at the irony of Philip taking the role of “Q” while Kyoo took A. Other moments of pleasure emerged throughout the intimate and intricate conversation, amid profound investigations of racism, accountability, and language.

**DEAD PARENTS SOCIETY**

The idea for Dead Parents Society, a yearlong project organized by Jamie-Lee Josselyn (C’07) and supported by the Beltran Family Award and the Bassini Apprenticeship Program, emerged from conversations she’d had with friends and co-workers at KWH. “I know how lucky I’ve felt to have friends to talk about what’s otherwise a topic that we’ve learned to avoid in our day-to-day conversations,” she said. To share this sense of community, Josselyn launched Dead Parents Society, a forum for people to write, talk, and think about grief. Bassini Writing Apprentices Maya Arthur (C’19) and Sabrina Qiao (C’19) helped Josselyn develop an ongoing podcast, a biweekly show with a rotating cast of featured guests, including law professor John Culhane, novelist Scott Gould, and a series of KWH alumni writers: Gabriel Ojeda-Sagué (C’16), Emily Harrozi (C’13), Kristen Martin (C’13), Victoria Ford (C’15), Jess Bergman (C’14), Catherine Ricketts (C’09), and Arielle Brousse (C’09). A public event at KWH in April featured additional project participants who shared moving personal essays: Seth Laracy (C’14), Mingo Reynolds, Catherine Ricketts (C’09), Anna Strong Safford (C’13), and Isabella Simonetti (C’22).
FELLOWS PROGRAM

Paul Auster  FEBRUARY 14–15
Bernadette Mayer  MARCH 26–27
Charles M. Blow  APRIL 23–24

SUPPORTED GENEROUSLY since 1999 by Paul Kelly (C’62, WG’64), the Kelly Writers House Fellows Program invites three eminent authors to Writers House for intensive two-day visits. In this nineteenth year of the Fellows program, we welcomed Paul Auster, a multi-genre author known for postmodern detective stories and wild experiments with narrative form; Bernadette Mayer, a poet/editor/mentor/teacher associated with the New York School writers, whose procedural writing experiments have inspired generations of poets and teachers; and journalist Charles M. Blow, whose influential New York Times column covers the most pressing topics of the day, including national politics, policing, racial equality, and social justice.

A unique undergraduate seminar is at the core of the Kelly Writers House Fellows project. Students in this for-credit class spend the semester reading and discussing the work of the three Fellows to prep for their no-holds-barred workshop time with each Fellow. This year’s seminar devoured over one hundred articles and columns, four novels (including 4321, Auster’s nine-hundred-page whopper of a book), four collections of poetry, and a memoir. To supplement this extensive reading list, each student also completed independent research and shared their discoveries with classmates. Jamie Albrecht (C’21) studied up on the history of the St. Mark’s Poetry Project in the early 1980s, when Mayer was director. Zoe Stoller (C’18) combed Blow’s Twitter feed — over fifty thousand tweets, going back to 2009. And Charlie Sosnick (C’18) and Dan Spinelli (C’18) researched the critical reception of Blow’s memoir Fire Shut Up in My Bones to help the class formulate nuanced questions.

Through this intensive and collaborative approach, Fellows students connected deeply with the work of each author — and their feelings of connectivity carried over to the in-person Fellows visits. Blow was delighted by a snack tray lovingly prepared by students that recalled his mother’s vegetable garden. Mayer felt so moved by her experience that she invited Julie Levitan (C’18) and Emily Rush (C’19) to join her in upstate New York as summer research assistants.

KWH audiences also had opportunities for meaningful exchange with the visiting Fellows at readings and conversational interviews. To say these public events were well-attended would be a gross understatement. At Auster’s Valentine’s Day reading, Fellows coordinator Lily Applebaum (C’12) gracefully acknowledged the tightly packed seating: “Thanks for being so cramped together,” she said. But despite the crowds, the Fellows events remained intimate affairs. One attendee was so moved by Blow’s reading that she wrote a poem about her experience and shared it with Blow and the assembled crowd the following morning.
Jane Levy helped several students accept special learning opportunities, and faculty — and the extraordinary work of R.J. Bernocco (C’12) and Mingo Reynolds in the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing — RealArts@Penn offered twenty-six paid summer internships in summer 2018.

For the twelfth consecutive year, the Bassini Apprenticeship Program matched Penn students with professional writers affiliated with Penn’s Creative Writing program, giving students firsthand experience in the day-to-day pleasures and difficulties of working on long-term professional writing projects.  

Maya Arthur (C’18) and Sabrina Qiong (C’19) worked with Jamie Lee Josselyn on the development of Dead Parents Society, a podcast series featuring writers who’ve written about death of a parent. The apprentices helped establish the podcast’s format, guest lineup, and tone, and served as co-hosts on the first dozen episodes.

Tracy Pontil (C’19) apprenticed with fiction writer Carmen Maria Machado, conducting research about same-sex domestic violence for Machado’s forthcoming memoir, House in Baden. Pontil opened up several new avenues of inquiry for Machado through her wide-ranging research on trauma, gothic romance, and domestic violence.

Alyia Chaudhry (C’18) assisted Yolanda Wisher with a documentation project-collecting, organizing, and assessing project materials from Wisher’s tenure as Philadelphia’s poet laureate, including testimonials and impact data. Chaudhry also helped develop materials for a spoken-word festival.

THE FRIEND FELLOWS PROJECT

Supported generously by the Harris Family Foundation, Katherine P. Harris, and Bill and Linda Friend, the Friend Fellows Project enables a mix of internships, research projects, and teaching assistantships during the school year.

Sarah Figgatt (C’18) accepted an internship in the Program Development department at CNN, where she worked on shows undergoing development, including a miniseries on the Kennedys.

Rebecca Heilwell (C’18) took an internship at The Philadelphia Inquirer, where she was assigned to work on news features with Dan Rubin.

Becca Lambright (C’19) found an internship at The Glass Entertainment Group to help her learn production skills, including research, filming, and editing for broadcast.

Orchid Tierney (GR’23) developed a research project using materials and metadata from PennSound that focused on the relationships between poets and reading venues.

Amber Rose Johnson (GR’21) and Davy Knittle (GR’20) TAD for ModPo, a massive open online course on modern and contemporary American poetry led by Al Filreis.

Julia Dusbach (GR’23) and Ariel Resnikoff (GR’24) TAD for Representations of the Holocaust, a course taught by Al Filreis. Of this experience, Ariel said: “I have learned firsthand the power of an egalitarian pedagogy, wherein students are motivated to participate out of sense of communal and reciprocal responsibility, rather than from fear of the teacher or simply to make a certain grade.”

POVICH INTERNSHIP PRIZES

With a generous donation from Maury Povich (C’62), RealArts@Penn sponsored an Internship Prize program that enabled students to accept internship opportunities at creative companies, including: Brieanne Alphonso (C’18) at Electric Literature, Lisa Babin (C’10) at ABC’s General Hospital and Max Plant Productions, Derek Cano (C’20) at Untitled Entertainment (Talent Management), Yujiao (Cecily) Chen (C’22) at BGR/RE/Search Publications, Emily Girecki (C’19) at American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME), Joshua Kahn (C’19) at William Morris Endeavor, Colin Loderwich (C’19) at The Philadelphia Citizen, Isabella Lopes (C’19) at WriteBoston’s Summer Journalism Institute, Melissa Maza (C’19) at Sothby’s, Sefie Parisgard (C’17) at ViaCom Creative Catalyst, and Isabella Simonetti (C’21) at Philadelphia Magazine.
Our Online Book Groups were conceived in 2000 by KWH Faculty Director Al Filreis. “We wanted to create a learning community for alumni who wouldn’t be able to be involved otherwise,” he said. Thanks to generous support from David (W’54) and Deborah Roberts, we’ve hosted well more than one hundred moderator-led online discussions for alumni, Penn parents, and our extended Penn family. Several of our groups this year connected directly with Philadelphia-area literary events, including some right here at Wexler. Wexler staffer Lily Albumbaum (C’12) timed her ten-day discussion of Patricia Lockwood’s memoir Priestyددdy to coincide with Lockwood’s visit to Writers House in September. Social worker and educator Allaire Wohlgemuth led a discussion of MK Asante’s Buck. Asante’s story, which chronicles his childhood in North Philly, served as the centerpiece for a series of events and projects organized by Lorene Cary (C’78, G78) and Safe Kids Stories. And Jamie-Lee Josselyn (C’05) once again offered her wildly popular book group for high-school students: a ten-day taste of writing by Penn faculty members, including Lorene Cary, Kenneth Goldsmith, Paul Hendrickson, and Beth Kephart (C’82).

Since 2011, KWH has housed the international online poetics journal, Jacket2. Each year, Jacket2 editors Kenna O’Rourke (C’15) and Julia Bloch (GR’11) teach students the work of editing an academic journal, including proofreading, copyediting, image design, and managing website content. This year, student assistants Brianne Alphonso (C’18), Meerie Jesuthasan (C’19), Kelly Liu (C’21), and Amy Sthidam (C’18) had more on their plates than ever with a new edition of the Chicago Manual of Style to learn. Not only did the student staff adapt admirably to new proofreading rules, but they helped adapt admirably to new proofreading rules, but they helped...
Summer Workshop for Young Writers

Twenty high-school students — from Pennsylvania, South Carolina, New Jersey, Texas, New York, and elsewhere — joined us in July for our second-ever Summer Workshop for Young Writers. Made possible by Maury Povich (C’72) and Connie Chung, the Summer Workshop provided full, need-based funding to half of the participants in the ten-day residential program.

Workshops spent their mornings in a +nonfiction class led by Summer Workshop Director Jamie-Lee Josselyn (C’05) and Assistant Director David Marchino (C’62), with support from Van Doren Fellow Gina DeCagna (C’16) and CUREF intern Sarah Goldfarb (C’21). The group engaged in energetic, challenging conversations about the tools and rules of personal narrative, what writers owe and do not owe their readers and those they feel at home here. Beloved Creative Writing teacher Beth Keplert (C’02) joined the Summer Workshop on the last day for a inspirational reading of her recent work. KWH Program Coordinator Alli Katz made picnic lunches and daily fruit snacks for this year’s workshop, which took place in the midst of renovations at 3805 Locust Walk.
INTERNSHIPS, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND MENTORSHIPS

Bassini Apprenticeship Fund - Working one-on-one with professional writers associated with Penn’s Creative Writing Program, undergraduate apprentices gain firsthand experience in the real work of a writing career. This year, Maya Arthur (C‘18) and Sabrina Qiao (C‘19) helped essayist Jamie Lee Josselyn (C‘05) develop a podcast series about grief. Tracy Fantil (C‘20) conducted research about domestic violence with short-story writer Carmen Maria Machado, and Ayla Chaudhary (C‘18) assisted 2016–17 Philadelphia Poet Laureate Yolanda Wahe with project documentation. Endowed by Reina Marin Bassini (C‘72, GED‘72) and Emilio Bassini (C‘71, W‘71, W‘73).

Eisler Internship Fund - The Eisler Internship Fund offers financial assistance to students who have accepted unpaid or modestly paid internships at cultural institutions, so that any student, regardless of financial circumstance, can pursue specialized learning opportunities in the arts. In summer 2019, the Eisler Fund made it possible for Delaney Keenan (C‘19) to intern at The Morgan Library and Museum in New York. Endowed by Bonnie Eisler (C‘79) and CLL Eisler (C‘79).

Kate Levin Community Outreach Internship Fund - This fund permanently endows our Outreach Coordinator Internship through which students help organize writing-based community service efforts. This year, Maya Arthur (C‘18) and Iman Dastjerdi (C‘20) worked with Community Partnerships Developer Rachael Zolf to teach writing workshops in a women’s correctional facility and a local high school.

RealArts Internship Fund - RealArts@Penn helps students make meaningful connections beyond the university, particularly through paid summer internships at leading cultural institutions. Thanks to strong partnerships cultivated by Mingo Reynolds and R.J. Bernocco (C‘72) with alumni and friends at 21st Century Fox, Pitchfork Media, V IOCcom, The Morgan Library and Museum, and elsewhere, we supported thirty-nine interns in the summer of 2018. Funded with a special gift by Marc Welply (W‘18), Robin Welply, and the Marc and Robin Welply Family Fund, with additional support from the Cape Branch Foundation, DVF Wittenborn (C‘72), and Kirsten Wittenborn; and Susan Tracy.

RealArts Program Fund - Anyone can contribute to the RealArts Program Fund, which supports the core mission of the RealArts@Penn project: mentoring undergraduates. With the help of this fund, the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing creates a series of opportunities for undergraduates to meet with alumni mentors working at organizations or in creative fields. Alumni mentors who volunteered for informal lunches this year included Bizu Bisiager (C‘79), David Borgenicht (C‘90), Cheryl J. Family (C‘91), Caryn Karmatz-Berlack (C‘92), Lee C. and Robert Cohen, Jackie and Debbie Brousse; Jacqueline Good, Deborah Brown, Marc and Betsy Brown, Laynie Browne; Ann and David Brownlee; Alexis Bruner; Robert Bylawski; Mary Ann Burtl; Nathalie Burg; Lenny Cassuto; Daniel Castiello and Nancy Ruskin; MC Catanea; Sandra Todd; Mandana Chaffa; Stanely Chodorow; Sam Choi; Leah and Peter Clarrnan; Bruce, Darcy, Kendra, and Jordan Clark; Sara Cornette; Cathy Cohen; Harris Cohen; Gail Spiegel Cohen; Charles Cohen; Michael Cohn; Robin Cohn; Blayney Colmure; John Conley; Robert Cort; Randall Couch; David Cowen; Pam and Mike Crane; David Crawford. Susan Croll and Paul Monsewitz; Michael Cullina; Barbara Daniels; John Davidson; Colleen Davis; T. de los Reyes; Gina DeCagna; Anthony DeCurtis; Tom Devaney and Amy Sadow; Danette Devine; Linda Diamond; Greg and Lyza Djanjian; Debra Censits Donnelly; Annette Dorsky; Chuck Downey; Murray Dunbin and Libby Rosset, Drew Dubing, Rachel Blau DuPlessis; Philip Eager and Mimi Calter; Sabrina Eaton; George Economou and Rochelle Owens; Sarah Eisein Nanus; Rebecca Entel; Eliza Erickson; Galina Espinoza; Daniel Evans; Michael Farrow; Steven Farnsworth; Robert Faron; Robert Faunce; Harvey Feldman, Andrew Ferris; Catherine Field; Lois Filer; Al Fileres; Joe Finton; David and Barbara Fishback; Marjorie Fiterman; Luellen Fletcher; Mimi Fogelson; Our 2017–2018 year:

We thank the following Friends for their generous support of the Writers House in our 2017–2018 year: Anne Ates; Alyson Share Adler; Marco Alborch; Marit Alper; Nathalie Anderson; Alorna Arpach; Derek Arthur; Carol Avins; Duff Assoum; Sylvia Baker; Kay Barned-Smith and St. John Smith; Dennis and Debbie Barone; Arthur and Susie Becker-Wiseman; Susan Bee and Charles Bernstein; Donald Beetham; Leah Bogg; Jay Bogun; Craig Behreinfeld; Evelyn Bender; Nancy Bentley, Mary Kay Benz; Carol Bergere; Ed and Jenn Bergman; Alan Benteheimer; Bernardo Bayer; Sara Bingham; David Blas; Ronn Wineberg Blaser; Larry Blum; Megan Bly; Scott and Roxanne Bok; David Borgenicht; Merl Born; Neil Braun and Anne Flick; Jay Broder; Marietta Brill; Ellen Brooks and Robert Cohen; Jackee and Denis Brousse; Jacqueline Good; Deborah Brown; Marc and Betsy Brown; Laynie Browne; Ann and David Brownlee; Alexis Bruner; Robert Bylawski; Mary Ann Burtl; Nathalie Burg; Lenny Cassuto; Daniel Castiello and Nancy Ruskin; MC Catanea; Sandra Todd; Mandana Chaffa; Stanely Chodorow; Sam Choi; Leah and Peter Clarrnan; Bruce, Darcy, Kendra, and Jordan Clark; Sara Cornette; Cathy Cohen; Harris Cohen; Gail Spiegel Cohen; Charles Cohen; Michael Cohn; Robin Cohn; Blayney Colmure; John Conley; Robert Cort; Randall Couch; David Cowen; Pam and Mike Crane; David Crawford. Susan Croll and Paul Monsewitz; Michael Cullina; Barbara Daniels; John Davidson; Colleen Davis; T. de los Reyes; Gina DeCagna; Anthony DeCurtis; Tom Devaney and Amy Sadow; Danette Devine; Linda Diamond; Greg and Lyza Djanjian; Debra Censits Donnelly; Annette Dorsky; Chuck Downey; Murray Dunbin and Libby Rosset, Drew Dubing, Rachel Blau DuPlessis; Philip Eager and Mimi Calter; Sabrina Eaton; George Economou and Rochelle Owens; Sarah Eisein Nanus; Rebecca Entel; Eliza Erickson; Galina Espinoza; Daniel Evans; Michael Farrow; Steven Farnsworth; Robert Faron; Robert Faunce; Harvey Feldman, Andrew Ferris; Catherine Field; Lois Filer; Al Fileres; Joe Finton; David and Barbara Fishback; Marjorie Fiterman; Luellen Fletcher; Mimi Fogelson;
PROJECTS

Kelly Writers House Fellows Fund - The Kelly Writers House Fellows project enables undergraduate writers to interact with eminent writers they greatly admire through seminar-style discussions in the Arts Café, home-cooked meals in our dining room, and public interview-style conversations hosted by KWH Faculty Director Al Filreis. The experience is transformative for students in the Fellows seminar and existing Fellows alike. This year’s Fellows were novelist Paul Auster, poet Bernadette Mayer, and journalist and commentator Charles M. Blow. Supported annually by Paul Kelly (C’62, W’64, Trustee 1997-present).

The Brodsky Gallery Fund - The Brodsky Gallery Fund supports the work of young and emerging art curators, who select, hang, and showcase works by visual artists. Brodsky Gallery curator Connie Yu (C’77) produced an eclectic and intellectually stimulating 2017–18 series, including A/FULIC, a group show of femme and queer Asian artists, Things Fixed and Stuck, featuring artists working with material objects, Interiors, a collection of collage works by poet Rachel Blau DuPlessis; and We Are Here, a collection of astrophotography by Katlin Moore (C’18). Endowed by Michael Brodsky (W’84) and Heidi Hombach Brodsky (C’87).

The Herman and Jeanne Robinson Letterpress Fund - Through the Robinson Press, students discover and explore print culture. Led this year by Faith Padgett (C’20) and Alyson Del Paso (C’21), with additional guidance from Andrew Real and support from Gabriel Ojeda-Sagastegui (C’16), Robinson Press projects included broadsides, postcards, and special book covers for the transcribez youth writing project. Endowed by Nina Robinson Vitse (C’70, W’72) in memory of her parents Herman and Jeanne Robinson.

Zarin/Rosenfeld Endowed Fund for the Literary Journalism Magazine - The Zarin/Rosenfeld Fund nurtures journalistic talent by making possible the publication of magazines that feature substantial longform nonfiction pieces by Penn students. Endowed by Penn parents Judih Zarin and Gerald Rosenfield.

The Creative Ventures Fund - The Creative Ventures project enables students and faculty to pursue ambitious projects and ideas, especially those that emphasize innovation, discovery, and imagination. The Creative Ventures Fund made possible a range of projects this year, including writing workshops, travel to film festivals, a series of interdisciplinary discussions (about urban space, food, intersections of science and art, entrepreneurial journalism, and more), and playful community engagement projects, such as our annual Edible Books Party. Supported annually by Marc Wolpow (W’72) and Robin Wolpow.

CPCW/PMA Seminar Fund - Every other year, we partner with the Philadelphia Museum of Art to offer a unique year-long undergraduate course, sponsored by the CPCW/PMA Seminar Fund. The 2017–18 seminar was taught by Kenny Goldsmith and focused on Marcel Duchamp. Funded annually by Dirk Wittenborn (C’72) and the Cape Branch Foundation.

TARGETED OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN-ENDED SUPPORT

Kane-Wallace Kitchen Fund - A beautiful new countertop shines in the Kane-Wallace Kitchen, thanks to the Kane-Wallace Kitchen Fund, which honors the centrality of our kitchen, a place for ridiculously good food, late-night conversations fueled by abundant coffee and tea, and study sessions around the old green table. It’s a true working kitchen, where students experiment with new recipes or remind themselves of home by recreating family favorites. As in most homes, our kitchen is the heart of our house. Endowed by Ed Kane (C’76), Trustees 1996–2001 and Mary Wallart.

Hartman Dining Room Endowment - The Hartman Dining Room Endowment provides support for the many and various activities of the Writers House dining room: intimate dinners cooked by students, informal receptions with visiting authors, zine-making workshops and bookbinding parties, and late-night Scrabble sessions. Endowed by Alan Hartman (W’67) and Kim Hartman.

Faculty Director’s Discretionary Fund - This flexible fund enables Faculty Director Al Filreis to take out and encourage students’ innovative ideas and to invest in creative projects proposed by KWH community members. Filreis helped several students undertake special projects in 2018, including Jane Levy (C’19), who interceded at Silvergate Media, Charlotte Bausch (C’20), who was a Fellow at the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia, Shana Berman (C’20), who completed groundbreaking archival and web development projects for Writers House Fellow Bernadette Mayer. The fund also provided a generous award to incoming Philadelphia Poet Laureate Raquel Salas Rivera (G’18,2), who hosted poetry events all over the city in summer 2018. Supported by Joe (C’77) and Barabara Avnet, Rhina Marie Bassini (C’79, GED’72) and Emilisa Bassini (C’79, W’73), Rhayan and Jennifer Daniels (W’91), Ronald Kepesman, Maria Popova (C’07), Caryn Karmatz Rudy and Leo Rudy (C’92), Mark (C’95) and Rachel Sherman (C’95), Merci (C’80) and Jeff Schindler (C’84), Henry (C’90) and Talia Siegel, and Melissa and Larry Stoller.

Student Initiatives Fund - The Student Initiatives Fund — a pool of seed money to which anyone can contribute — supports creative projects and enterprises dreamed up and driven by students affiliated with KWH. Supported projects this year included RAWP, a book about food for adolescents and young adults; a play development workshop organized by Meerie Jothusan (C’17); and the students of Penn's student-led experimental theatre troupe; and a storytelling workshop led by Farzin Pardal (C’19) and co-sponsored by the Alpha Delta Phi literary society. Supported annually by the KWH community, with a special gift from Penn parents Howard and Cami Gordon.

Alice Cooper Shulberg Scholarship Fund for the Support of Creative Writing — A stellar student who graduated from Penn's College for Women in 1955, Alice Cooper Shulberg went on to a brilliant career as a Philadelphia public school teacher. Established in her memory, the Cooper Shulberg Fund supports the technological needs of our Student Projects Space, where undergraduates depend on computers for design projects, magazine production, and more. Endowed by Overbrook High School classmate of Alice Cooper Shulberg.

Gordon Walls ’38 Van Doren Arts Engagement Fellowship - Through this flexible fund we support fresh initiatives and ideas, especially the creative (and sometimes outlandish) dreams of our Hub members, who constantly revitalize the KWH project with proposals for new publications, outreach programs, literary celebrations, and other community-driven projects. This year the Gordon Walls Fund helped stock our annual Hub Thanksgiving withThanks by Gordon Lippincott and Sunny Road.

Van Doren Arts Engagement Fellowship - The Van Doren Arts Engagement Fellowship — a two-year fellowship open to recent college graduates — helps establish ways for undergraduates to connect with creative opportunities at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing (CPCW), and beyond. Inaugural Van Doren Fellow Gina DeCagna (C’16) curated a guide to Philly’s art scene with the ICA student board, and helped CPCW’s RevArts Penn project match students with paid summer internships in creative fields. Supported annually by Penn Parents John Van Donel and Sally Van Donel.

EMILY DICKINSON CIRCLE

Irvyn and Lucy Applebaum; Stuart Applebaum; Jon and Barbara Aven; Reina Marin Bassini and Emilio Bassini; Amyan and Christine Melo Bernstein; Gordon Black; Edward and Betty Bernstein; Ronald Blue; Joseph Bienenstock; Jean Chatzky and Eliot Kaplan; Les and Gary Clarr; Lucy Cook; Reuben and Jennifer Daniel; Allen and Dorothy Daniels; Dirk Wittenborn; Joseph Fidanque; Christopher Gilmore; Martin and Cindy Hunt; Michael Hyde; Sharon Ingraham; Jane Ginns; Howard and Cami Gordon; Jon and Mindy Gray; Alan and Kim Hartman; Georgia Johnson; Jenny Kalynovsky; Ed Kane and Mary Wallart; Nathan and Elizabeth Leach; Marc Wolpow; Ed and Marlena Muré; Connie Chung and Måuy Plovich, Hadley Riosen and Lee Riosen; David and Deborah Roberts; Caryn Karmatz Rudy and Lee Rudy; Leslie and Ricardo Salomon; Steven and Miriam Sosnick; Steve Ken, Melissa and Larry Stoller; Paul Williams; and Marc and Robin Wolpow.

Jenny Ford; Sally Foster; Ben Fountain; Peggy Fox; Adam Frank and Marnie Gordon; Tovia Friedman; Jacqueline Friedland; Lisa Funderburg; Michelle Futernick; Roy and Vicki Gainsburg; Greg Gallaher; Pamela and Mark Gallaher; Lisa Geisler; Steve Gerkis; Nadia Ghen; Seamus and Mary Ann Gilson; David Glancy; Norm Glickman and Elyse Pivnick; Ryan Godfrey and Jessica Lowenthal; Nancy Goldberg; Ken Goldman; Danny Goldstein; Markakia Godbee; Mark Gordon and Aldo Buonno; Richard Graves; David Green; Patricia Green; Alison Greenberg; Deborah Green and Michael Winnick; Rabbi Lisa Greene; Adele Aron Greepmur; Mary Jane Groninger; Jane Gutman; Amy Gutmann and Michael Doyle; Jennifer Gwartz; Matthew Hall; Alexander Halpern; Billy Joe and Susan Harris; Kenneth Hay; Steven and Tom Heller; Kathryn Heflester and David Stein; Jackie Hennion; Lauren Hermann; Michael Herztin; Stephen and Jane Heumann; Lisa Hoffstein; Sara and Brian Holland; Jeffrey and Cindy Hunt; Michael Hyde; Sharon Ingraham; Hilal Isler; Alexander Jacobs; Diane Jacob;
Digital Poetries Fund  • Our Digital Poetries Fund allows us to make our vast digital resources freely available to anyone, anywhere. The fund pays for staff and equipment to support PenSound, the largest online collection of free digital poetry recordings in the world. Powzuki, a monthly podcast hosted by Al Filreis and co-sponsored by the Poetry Foundation, Jacket2, an online journal of critical writing about poetry, and ModPo, our MOOC on modern and contemporary poetry taught by Filreis and a team of TAs, which is growing and evolves  • involves a number of meetups and special webcasts to engage new audiences, including, this year, a trip to London. Supported annually by the KWH community, with special support this year from the Stuart S. Applebaum Giving Foundation, MC Guttenis, Michael Cohen (C’92), T. de los Reyes, Charles Kuttite, Aileen Hester Krasner, David (W’84) and Deborah Roberts, and Susan Small Savitsky (CW’79).

KWH Alumni Online Book Group Term Fund  • Thanks to the KWH Alumni Online Book Group Fund we’ve hosted more than one hundred moderator-led online book discussions for alumni, Penn parents, and our extended Penn family. Group leaders this year — including Victoria Ford (C’07), Erica Kaufman, Max McKenna (C’07), and Lauryn Yates (C’07) — organized discussions about a diverse range of topics, including the poetry of Bernadette Mayer, essays and stories about whiteness, identity, and responsibility; and the memoir Pretendress by Patricia Lockwood. Supported annually by David (W’84) and Deborah Roberts.

Maury Povich Summer Workshop Fund  • For ten days each summer, talented high-school writers come to Writers House for our Summer Workshop for Young Writers. The rigorous residential program, which is directed by Jamie-Lee Josselyn (C’05), emphasizes writing in a community setting, and leaves room for baking tutorials in the kitchen, letterpress experiments at the Common Press, and off-campus explorations. Thanks to the Maury Povich Summer Workshop Fund, some of our most talented participants receive some form of financial assistance. For several students, the program is entirely free of charge. Funded by Maury Povich (C’62) and Connie Chung.

Esther T. Saxon Term Fund  • The Esther T. Saxon Fund supports our community outreach efforts, particularly programs and projects for children in under-resourced local elementary schools. The cornerstone of these efforts is Write On!, a student-led literary project that engages students from nearby Lea Elementary in playful creative writing exercises with peers and mentors. Supported annually by Jerilyn Saxon Porman (C’56) and Brian Porman (W’90), in honor of Esther T. Saxon.

Outreach / Beyond the Campus

SUPPORT FOR EVENTS

Irwyn and Lucy Applebaum Fund  • With help from the Irwyn and Lucy Applebaum Fund we host conversations with editors and publishers we admire — the people who curate, refine, and disseminate the writing we read and enjoy. The Applebaum Fund sponsored two conversations this year: Brooke Borel offered thoughts about the art of fact checking and David Daley spoke about the process of compiling Flat, a book, his exposé on gerrymandering. Endowed by Irwyn Applebaum (C’75) and Lucy Applebaum.

Blurt Songwriting Symposium Endowed Fund  • It’s riveting when RollIng Stone editor Anthony DeCurtis interviews a rock legend for an audience of fifty in our Arts Café — and that’s just what the Blurt Fund makes possible. This year’s symposium featured the incomparable singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams. Endowed by Marco Kreder Blatt and Mitchell J. Blatt (C’79, M’94, E’84, Trustee 1998-2008).

Bok Endowed Visiting Writers Series Fund  • We celebrate the full range of contemporary writing at KWH with support from the Bok fund, which allows us, year after year, to pay honoraria to a remarkable number of visiting writers. Poets who visited this year thanks to the Bok fund include Clark Coolidge, Divya Victor, James Sherry, and Peter Gizzi. The fund also helped us host an Alumni Weekend fiction showcase featuring Ariel Dbianch (C’04), Amina Gautier (GR’04), and Melissa Jensen (C’79, C’93). Endowed by Roger Bok (C’70) and Scott Bok (C’84, W’84, Trustee 2005--present).

Lucy F. DeMarco Fund for Youth Literature  • Established in memory of Lucy F. DeMarco, a preschool educator and voracious reader, this fund supports programs that engage with children and young adult literature. We were thrilled to host another year of The Sensible NonSense Project, curated by Annitelle Brouse (C’07, SP’11), to celebrate the foundational impact of early reading experiences. Endowed by Kathy DeMarco Van Cleve (C’88, W’88).

Cheryl J. Family Fund for Fiction Programming  • The Cheryl J. Family Fund for Fiction Programming supports an annual reading by a young or emerging fiction writer. Our special Fiction Program on Halloween featured short-story writer Carmen Maria Machado and Jenny Zhang and concluded with an over-the-top spooky reception (with edible body parts sculpted in meatballs). Endowed by Cheryl J. Family (C’92).

Fund for Feminist Projects  • For the third year running, our Feminist(s) is series filled the house past fire code for Shifting the Gaze, a panel discussion about women in music, hosted by Amanda Silberling (C’88). Through engaging and sometimes challenging programming from Feminist(s) and its predecessor Feminist is series — supported by the Fund for Feminist Projects — explores how writing, art, criticism, and other political acts can enact social change. Endowed by an anonymous donor.

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We remember Blaze Bernstein

We were devastated by the death of Blaze Bernstein, a member of Penn’s Class of 2020, who was the newly elected managing editor of Penn Appétit, a copy associate for Penn Review, and a member of our planning committee. It was a staggering loss that continues to affect our community. Blaze was well known at KWH for his cooking, his wit, and his generosity. He spent many hours happily testing out recipes in the KWH kitchen, often right up until closing time. His potted dirt recipe so that we could all make it again. Blaze was never one to waste food, which Blaze later complained about, since he knew the cake was delicious. He shared his cranberry upside-down cake at Writers House Thanksgiving — and afterward shared the recipe so that we could all make it again. Blaze was generous that way.

A memorial gathering here at KWH in February allowed us to celebrate Blaze’s life, and to remember him in a way that felt right: friends and family members brought food for a potluck feast and we came together in the Arts Café to share memories. We remembered Blaze for his kindness and his commitments to his friends. We laughed about his kombucha and his love of LaCroix. We talked about his writing, his compassion and skill as an editor — and about all the ways he’d be remembered and missed.

We will cherish Blaze’s memory here forever. And in partnership with his family, we have established a fund to help honor and remember him. The Blaze Bernstein Memorial Fund at the Kelly Writers House will, every year, provide a stipend to a Penn student undertaking an otherwise unpaid summer internship in a creative field. Funds raised in Blaze’s memory above and beyond the cost of a summer stipend will be used to support community-oriented programs at the Writers House that center on writing and food, two of Blaze’s great loves.

The Blaze Bernstein Memorial Fund

Anyone may contribute to this fund in memory of Blaze. To find out more, email Andrew Seal at seal@writing.upenn.edu or visit writing.upenn.edu/wh/support/funds/blazememorial.
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