



PRESS RELEASE

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Four Chambers Presents *Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum* Saturday April 4th

Phoenix, AZ (March 7th, 2015)... Four Chambers—an independent community press based in Phoenix, AZ—will be staging a live performance of their latest release, *Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum*, as a walking tour through the Phoenix Art Museum (1625 N Central Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85004) on Saturday, April 4th at 2:30 pm.

Interested parties should meet in the Greenbaum Lobby at the main entrance of the Phoenix Art Museum at 2:30 pm. The event is free with Museum membership or general admission. Excerpts and order forms are available online at <http://fourchamberspress.com/phxart>.

Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum features 26 poems and 4 prose works from 30 authors (86% local) reinterpreting and responding to various works throughout the Phoenix Art Museum's collection (including such prominent exhibits as Yayoi Kusama's Firefly Room, Deborah Butterfield's Ponder, Felix Gonzalez-Torres' Untitled (Rossmore II), and multiple works by Philip C Curtis). The tour will pair each author with the piece that inspired them for a live reading.

Four Chambers was founded in June 2013 with the mission of giving greater visibility to the literary arts and encouraging their larger participation in the cultural scene. So to give local authors a platform, the organization began printing an annual journal (in addition to sponsoring other events and activities). Recently, though, the magazine has been looking to take a more collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to its programming, especially as it relates to public art.

“We’re not sure when the idea gelled, exactly” explains Jake Friedman, the magazine's Founder and Editor in Chief. “But at some point, as we were visiting the Phoenix Art Museum as regular museum-goers, we realized that a lot of us were writing poems or short stories about the work that we saw there. And given how strongly we were responding as individuals, we figured a project like this would present a good opportunity to put a call out, get structured, and see what we could do together, as a community.”

After all, Phoenix is a big city. “And while it's well-known for the visual arts and possessing of a strong

local music scene,” observes Four Chambers Director of Events and Programming Jared Duran, “Phoenix has yet to establish itself as a strong, substantial literary presence—which is important for any city that seeks to be culturally significant. This high-profile collaboration with the Phoenix Art Museum is a significant step in achieving that goal outside of the traditionally exclusive academic setting.”

Often times, literature can exist independently of the public sphere—in private spaces, at readings, in books or at home. If literature is going to connect with people and have an impact in their lives, argues ASU English Lecturer Rosemarie Dombrowski, “It has to get off the page and into the community, into the spaces inhabited by ‘non-poets.’ The Phoenix Art Museum project provides poets with that very opportunity—to insert themselves (and their work) into a larger artistic dialogue, to bring poetry to a broader audience—in addition to enriching the arts community through collaboration.”

Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum is for the Phoenix Art Museum. As such, it is not only intended to resonate with people's experiences at the Phoenix Art Museum but to enhance and deepen their appreciation of the artwork as well.

It's this kind of thoughtful, creative engagement, explains Phoenix Art Museum Director of Education Kathryn Blake, “that keeps the museum vital and relevant for our community. Art museums can fulfill so many needs in people's lives; I believe one of our roles is to spark imagination and serve as a point of inspiration. Responding to artworks or spaces in the museum brings fresh insights and perspectives for all of us to ponder and enjoy.”

At the same time, *Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum* is meant to be able to stand alone, independently of the works that inspired it. As local poet Jia Oak Baker elaborates, leading with a quote from poet Reginald Shepard, “Poems are or should be experiences in themselves and not just accounts of or commentaries on experience; they should be additions to the world, not simply annotations to it.” I wrote ‘You Who Are Getting Obliterated by the Dancing Swarm of Fireflies’ the night I saw Kusama's installation for the very first time at the Phoenix Art Museum. I tried to capture the feeling and the movement I experienced. And whether I was successful or not, I tried to create an ‘addition’ to the world versus just describing the art.”

At the end of the day, *Poetry and Prose for the Phoenix Art Museum* is simply about providing people with opportunities to have meaningful experiences and feel like they are part of something larger than themselves.

Contributor Alicia Brall is a case in point. After seeing a friend post the call for submissions on Facebook, Alicia decided to take her kids to the Phoenix Art Museum and see what happened. “I figured if something struck me, I'd write. And if not, no big deal.”

She continues. “I ended up submitting because a lot of things struck me while I was there—sentiments and questions that wanted a breath of life. I submitted because it was local and a specific project and the call for submissions seemed less intimidating this way. I submitted because I wanted to be a part of

something again. That's why it was such a great thing for me. I'm home with my kids all day—and I love my kids and I love that they're my work and my purpose and my everything right now. But it's been years and years since I was a part of something like this—voices collected to sing out to the community--and about such beautiful things. It was so great to be included with this group of writers and to be able to identify with a wonderful body of people based on this love we have, this bug, this thing buried in me under dust and diapers and dog hair and all the things that cloud my view sometimes. And that's not unlike how it's a good thing for the city... It's sending out a pulse. It's saying 'Wake up. Get out. Look. Sing. Write. Plant. Remember. Discover.'”

People move to cities because, among other things, they want to experience arts and culture; because, in certain respects, arts and culture are what make life worth living. “My hubby and I moved to the Midtown area because we wanted to be closer to everything that's happening along the Central corridor,” explains Phoenix resident and local author Katie Hae Leo. “First Fridays, the museum district, the light rail, the local restaurants and Four Chambers Press are all contributing to make Phoenix the kind of vibrant and creative city that we'd want to live in.”

All of these things being said, Four Chambers is ultimately concerned with giving people something to believe in and, in some small way, improving their lives. Rebecca Wise-Eklund echoes the sense of belonging and identity she gained from participating in the project: “On the night of the reading at the Phoenix Art Museum, I met Jake, who then introduced me to another Four Chambers staff member, 'She's also a fan of yours.' Suddenly I didn't feel so untitled myself. I have fans? Of my work? Once again I found myself greeted. I found myself welcomed. To Four Chambers Press and the Phoenix Art Museum, I am grateful, for helping an untitled piece of art and an untitled human find a place among the rest.”

Four Chambers is not simply publishing work. It's publishing work to build community.

About Four Chambers Press

Local-National

Four Chambers Press is an independent community press based in Phoenix, AZ whose mission is to give greater visibility to the literary arts and encourage their larger participation in the cultural scene. For more information please visit <http://fourchamberspress.com>.