



Echolocations: Poets Map Madison

Cowfeather Press

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Here's a literary block party filled with both echoes and locations, as more than 100 poets share poems that refer to specific Madison places. Long-time residents live next door to writers who passed through for only a while. Local streets intersect with myth, history, personal narrative and ecology. More than geography, more than chronology, what emerges is something akin to the shifting psyche of a city. Poem by poem, a new map evolves, folds back upon its own stories, and rewrites itself over and over through its sounds and its silences, taking into account a variety of perspectives, a multitude of voices. In the end these poets ask us, How many Madisons are there? This anthology project was conducted by Madison, Wisconsin's poets laureate, Cowfeather Press, and Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf. Madison has had a poet laureate since 1977, when Paul Soglin named John Tuschen to the volunteer post, now overseen by the Madison Arts Commission. Co-editors Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman work together as the current poets laureate (2012-15). Their mission is to integrate poetry into the fabric of civic life, ritual, and the everyday, and toward that end: place poetry before the public in surprising places/spaces; create conversation about poetry; connect poets and groups of poets to each other and to other artists; build bridges between people using poetry. Visit cityofmadison.com/mac/poet.cfm for more information, as well as how to donate to the John Tuschen Poet Laureate Memorial Fund, established by Andrea Musher, the city's second poet laureate. Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf (PoetryJumpsOfftheShelf.com) is a program launched in 2004 by poet and co-editor Shoshauna Shy in Madison, with the mission of bringing poetry out of the libraries, bookstores and classrooms into the general public arena. Calls for submissions are conducted largely via cyberspace. PJOS published ten of these poems on decals that were affixed to Madison B-Cycles in April, 2013, for the riding season. Other projects have included poetry on specific themes published on java jackets, bookmarks, palm-sized books for glove compartments, postcards, and inside jawbreaker capsules. Partnerships for distribution included a wide variety of companies, businesses, and organizations all across the country. Cowfeather Press, founded by Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman in 2011, is a two-woman volunteer operation committed to developing a place for poetry in civic discourse, serving others through poetry, and expanding and connecting communities of poets and readers. At Cowfeather Press, we believe poetry matters, and we reach towards an aesthetic that represents the diversity of the upper Midwest. We encourage conversations on the page, the stage, and in public spaces which embrace, challenge, and explore both our differences and our common humanity. Supporting materials for book groups & community reads are at cowfeatherpress.org.

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