



2022 Annual Report



Welcome to Woodland Pattern's 2022 Annual Report.

We're a little later than we'd like in delivering this to you, so we want to let you know why and hope you'll consider what follows a partial preview of our 2023 update.

The first reason we're tardy is fairly straightforward—we've had a very busy 2023! If you've been following our newsletters, you already know that over the past twelve months we've introduced two ambitious initiatives, the Milwaukee Youth Poet Laureate program and the Milwaukee Emerging Poet Fellowship, along with two new permanent full-time positions to help us manage these endeavors and much else. And in addition to launching these programs and expanding our staff, we've been working nonstop to finalize architectural plans that will allow us to comfortably accommodate all this growth, and we can't wait to reveal to you our vision for a renovated Woodland Pattern.

Amid all we planned for and accomplished this year, we've also had several surprises. In January, we were notified by the Wisconsin Center of its decision to deaccession *Portals and Writings by Wisconsin Writers*—the largest installation of text-based public art in the country. Fighting to protect these works has dominated our 2023. Happily, however, just two weeks ago we finally signed a contract that will preserve a significant portion of the original works while allowing us to reimagine and relocate others. (To all of you who spoke up on behalf of saving this uniquely Wisconsin installation, we extend our deepest thanks.)

And of course, as you probably have guessed, the pandemic has continued to throw us its curveballs. While our staff's unofficial nickname for 2022 is "The Year Everybody Got Sick," we've actually experienced more simultaneous cases of Covid on staff this year than last, as well as deeper resulting disruptions. Earlier this year, Woodland Pattern participated in a panel discussion with Create Wisconsin titled *Journey Through the Pandemic*, which served as the culmination of a study we have been a participant in since 2020. Documenting our trajectory over this period has been revelatory: Every aspect of our programming and operations in this era requires significantly more time, labor, staff, and money than it did in the "before times."

Despite the relentless challenges (or indeed because of them), Woodland Pattern has again and again emerged from its chrysalises stronger after each adaptation. As you'll see in this annual report, by every benchmark we have grown as an organization. To each of you who have helped enable our continued flight, we send you a universe of gratitude, and look forward to our shared future ahead.

Jenny Gropp & Laura Solomon
Executive Directors



How “Day by Day Became Ever After”: The Tale of an Art Retrospective

After more than four years of archival work, conversations among artists and curators, and collective scheming, Woodland Pattern’s major art retrospective, *Then as Now: Woodland Pattern 1980–2022*, finally made its sweeping debut last October at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design. For all who attended, *Then as Now* was truly worth the wait. Pursuing intergenerational and interregional lineages and affinities, the mammoth show featured over 250 pieces by more than 100 artists who have exhibited at Woodland Pattern over the past four decades, and represented hundreds of hours of labor by a curatorial team led by MIAD professor emerita and visual artist **Jill Sebastian**.

Working alongside Sebastian were Executive Directors **Jenny Gropp** and **Laura Solomon**; Woodland Pattern co-founders **Karl Gartung** and **Anne Kingsbury**; MIAD professor and book artist **Leslie Fedorchuk**; UW–Milwaukee professor and visual artist **Nicolas Lampert**; musician, instrument builder, and visual artist **Hal Rammel**; and UW–Milwaukee Head of Special Collections and book artist **Max Yela**. Equally integral to the retrospective’s installation and execution were Woodland Pattern’s Art Director **Marla Sanvick** and Executive Assistant **Molly Hassler**.



“Every single artist was enthusiastic about participating, generous and most grateful to be part of this celebration,” Sebastian said in an interview with *Milwaukee Magazine*. “The most difficult aspect of the curating was keeping everything straight—communication, shipping, minute details. The general flow of the installation was worked out in a scale model and though it was challenging, it tended to flow together fairly naturally due to the exhaustive advance work by the team.”

Indeed, the seamlessness achieved among so many discrete works of art was a common point of praise. And no doubt, the internal coherency of *Then as Now*—which spanned two floors and three spaces—further benefited from Woodland Pattern’s historically consistent emphasis on interdisciplinary practices and the fluidity between poetry and other forms of art.

The downstairs Layton Gallery held the majority of the artworks, including contributions from book arts, printmaking, fiber arts, collage, photography, film, sound art, performance art, painting, and sculpture, with a particular focus on works that incorporate text. Also on display were various examples of visual poetry, and works pertaining to the language of music, such as visual scores and handmade instruments. Down the hall in the MIAD Library, visitors were



welcomed into a miniature Woodland Pattern reading room specially designed and installed by Hassler, which held more than 100 books on the shelves for perusing, each chosen to expand on various aspects of the retrospective—while upstairs in the Community Hub & Gallery, MIAD’s street-level venue, exhibition-goers had the opportunity to take in *The New Art of Making Books*, which provided a deeper look at Woodland Pattern’s rich, longstanding history with book arts.

In November, Yela and Fedorchuk led a tour of the book arts selections, one of many guided experiences held during *Then as Now*’s run. Several visiting artists also came to town from far and wide to share their talents: Dutch avant-garde composer and performance artist **Jaap Blonk** (who performed Kurt Schwitters’ *Ursonate* in its entirety, along with American free-improv bassist **Damon Smith**); Jamaican multi-instrumentalist, instrument maker, and composer **Douglas Ewart**; Cherokee author and filmmaker **Diane Glancy**; American visual artist and performer **vanessa german** (a self-declared “citizen artist”); Canadian filmmaker **Kim Kielhofner**; and **The Bridge**, a transatlantic network of French and American jazz and improv musicians.

A year later, all of us at Woodland Pattern continue to feel an immense amount of gratitude for each artist who participated in the exhibition, and for the opportunity to have carefully gathered and presented Woodland Pattern’s interdisciplinary story to the public. The exhibition also increased awareness of our programs, and we’ve seen many new faces come into the book center since last fall.



“There’s been just an incredible number of poets, musicians, and visual artists who have come through Woodland Pattern . . . it’s always been rooted in the community,” said Fedorchuk, speaking with *Milwaukee Magazine*. “To still provide these wonderful opportunities for folks to get in there and hone their craft or share their craft with others has been an incredible thing to watch.”

Donor Spotlight: Robert Ragir

Behind every nonprofit that endures are donors whose vision matches that of the organization they are supporting, which is why we'd like to introduce you to **Robert Ragir**, who for more than two decades has remained one of Woodland Pattern's most active and steadfast patrons. Both through regular contributions and as a behind-the-scenes problem solver, Robert has been instrumental in forwarding Woodland Pattern's mission since the arrival of his first gift in 1998 through his just-established **Meyer & Norma L. Ragir Foundation**.

Anne Kingsbury, one of Woodland Pattern's co-founders and its original Executive Director, remembers the moment well. "Robert was one of our first big donors," she said, noting that his \$5,000 check came with no strings attached, but rather with a promise: *We are ready to help you in any way we can*. "I was moved by the foresightedness of someone who would trust an organization to determine its most important priorities and needs."



The main philanthropic goal in my life right now is to see a new space built for Woodland Pattern

Current Executive Directors Jenny Gropp and Laura Solomon can testify that Robert has faithfully upheld the pledge he made twenty-five years ago. Within weeks of their arrival in 2018, he showed up unannounced, excited to discuss with them his desire to help establish an endowment fund. "Some donors invest in a particular leader, rather than in an organization or its mission, but Robert's generosity didn't fade with Anne's retirement," Laura said. "If anything, his commitment has only deepened."

With his help, the endowment fund did indeed come to pass in 2021, and Robert's support for this priority continues. In fact, as an incentive to others, he has offered to match all endowment gifts up to \$60,000 over the next year. But his eyes are also on another major step in securing Woodland Pattern's future: "The main philanthropic goal in my life right now is to see a new space built for Woodland Pattern," he recently told us.

In Robert's view, the two objectives—seeding the endowment and pursuing the expansion and renovation of Woodland Pattern's building—go hand in hand. "Growing the endowment fund will make it seem more possible that a bigger vision could be achieved, that a bigger contribution to Milwaukee could be made." And he knows what he's talking about. As a former board president for Walker's Point Center for the Arts, he helped WPCA establish an endowment fund in 2000 for the purpose of eventually purchasing a building, which the organization achieved ten years later.

True to his word, Robert has been preparing the ground for a renewed capital campaign after a pandemic-imposed hiatus. In 2022, he helped establish a new **Board of Advocates**, composed of founders, former board members, and donors like him who share a deep history with the organization. This new body, which is non-voting and meets semi-annually, functions as a think tank working to ensure the organization's long-term sustainability. Already the group has been actively involved in envisioning renovation plans and will soon provide supplemental fundraising muscle to Woodland Pattern's Board of Directors during the next phase of the Campaign.



Jenny Gropp had this to say about Robert's drive: "As a donor, Robert strikes me as someone who is more interested in Woodland Pattern's future than its past," and added, "which is remarkable, given how illustrious that past happens to be."

Speaking openly about his philanthropic legacy, Robert explained: "I would like to leave something, a mark, on the Earth. I'm not different from anybody else—everybody wants to do that. For me, I think if Woodland Pattern could have a new building in which 150 people could see an event or a reading, that would be amazing . . ."

Pushed further, he elaborated on his motive to preserve Woodland Pattern for future generations: "If there's ever another Robert Ragir someday, I would hope that there would be a place for him to produce ideas, and that place should be Woodland Pattern, because Woodland Pattern is cool."

Suffice to say, we think Robert's pretty cool, too.

An Inaugural Retreat for Indigenous Nations Poets

Since its founding in 2020 by former Wisconsin Poet Laureate **Kimberly Blaeser** (Anishinaabe of the White Earth Nation), Woodland Pattern has been the proud fiscal agent and administrative partner of **Indigenous Nations Poets** (In-Na-Po)—a national organization committed to nurturing Indigenous poetic practices, preserving tribal languages, and raising the visibility of all Native writers, past and present.



Established on the eve of the pandemic, In-Na-Po soared to new heights in 2022 as it hosted its first mentoring retreat, which brought sixteen fully-funded fellows from across the country along with ten distinguished faculty for five days of conversation and collaboration during National Poetry Month at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The week included workshops, craft talks, and readings;

tours of the American Folk Life Center and National Museum of the American Indian; and a special invitation to **Joy Harjo**’s closing performance and reception in celebration of her historic third term as U.S. Poet Laureate—and as the country’s first-ever Native American Poet Laureate.

The primary incentive and inspiration for In-Na-Po’s work comes from its understanding of the liberation that writers from tribal communities often experience when they gather together with other writers with similar backgrounds. Fortunately, In-Na-Po is continuing to prioritize making such gatherings possible. The organization’s second annual retreat took place at Wisconsin’s Write On, Door County earlier this year, and plans for 2024’s convening are underway.

You can learn more about In-Na-Po by visiting indigenouznationspoets.org, and you can support their efforts by making an online gift. Donations for In-Na-Po can also be mailed to Woodland Pattern’s Locust Street address. (Checks should be made out to “Woodland Pattern,” indicating “In-Na-Po” in the memo.)

“Wisconsin poets are continuing to write an archive of the many things it means to live here...”

Thanks to Wisconsin’s Own Library, The Poems Go On

For the past three years in a row, **Wisconsin’s Own Library** has generously served as the presenting sponsor of our annual Poetry Marathon, and we could not be more grateful. We additionally could not imagine a more fitting champion for an event which has kicked off each new year for nearly three decades by forwarding the voices of hundreds of poets from across our great state.

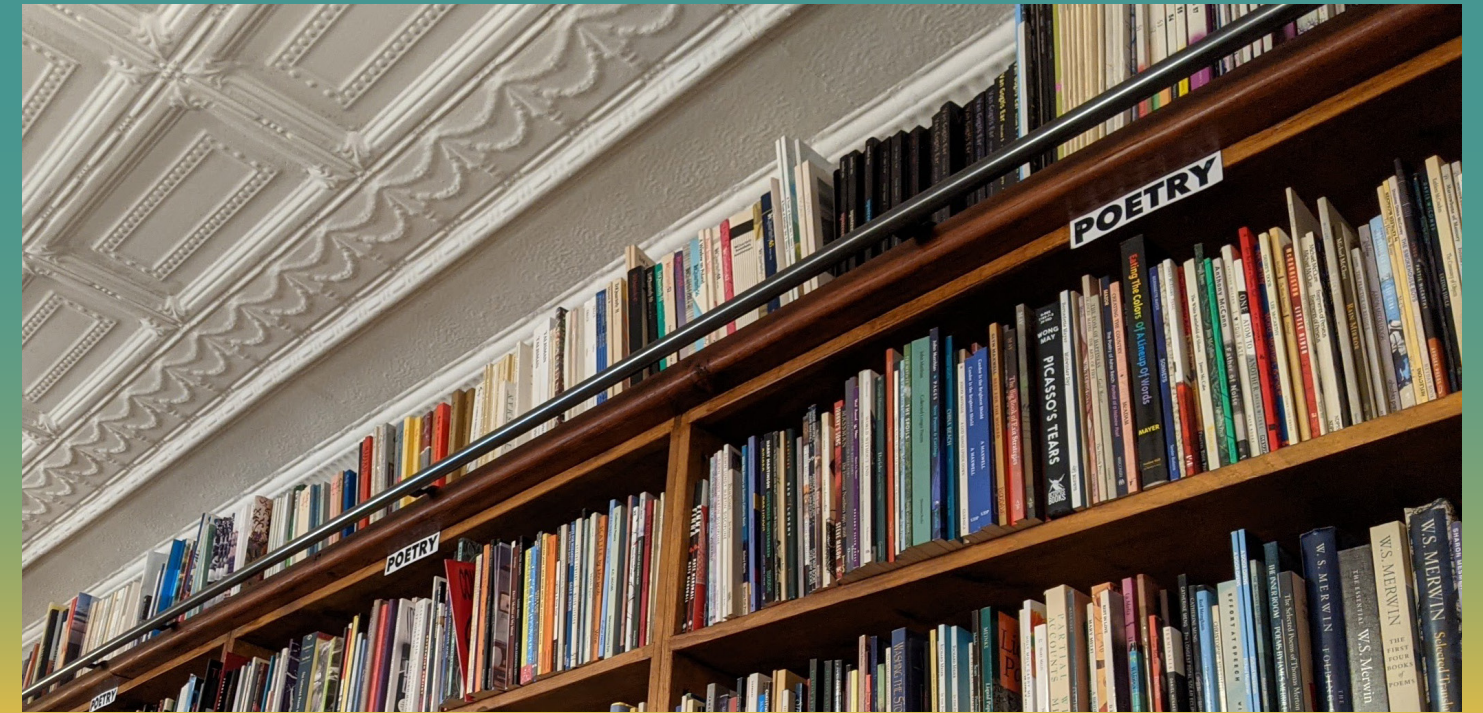
Owned by the **General Federation of Women’s Clubs-Wisconsin**, Wisconsin’s Own Library is an ever-expanding special collection of printed matter written, edited, and/or compiled by Wisconsinites—including numerous titles curated in collaboration with Woodland Pattern—all located within an hour’s drive of both Milwaukee and Madison, at Ripon College in Ripon, WI. While the catalog includes writings in every genre, since 2017, the collection’s focus has turned specifically to poetry. In fact, the GFWC-WI and library staff are aiming to create the largest collection of Wisconsin poetry ever compiled!

Recently we spoke with **Abby Lorenz**, Chairwoman of Wisconsin’s Own Library, to better understand the impact GFWC-WI is making through its signature project. One of the opportunities she was most excited to talk to us about is Wisconsin Own Library’s **Poet in Residence Fellowship**, which provides funding for a poet to devote time and attention to a poetry manuscript in progress. In exchange, the Poet in Residence offers two semester-long classes at Ripon College and contributes toward another WOL initiative on the horizon—a poetry-writing course for Wisconsin high school students that will eventually also be offered on Ripon’s campus.



In addition to a stipend and time to write, the Poet in Residence receives housing, an office, and even a travel budget for readings and appearances to the award winner. For the Fall 2022 semester, that writer was former Woodland Pattern volunteer and longtime Poetry Marathon participant, **Freesia McKee**. When we asked Freesia about her time at Ripon, she told us that she completed more than fifty new poems during the residency and was adamant that other poets with Wisconsin connections apply to take similar advantage of this opportunity. Interestingly, she also drew comparisons between her residency experience and that of the Poetry Marathon, explaining that spending ample time in the stacks of Wisconsin Own Library involved “encountering the new work of long-time poet friends and reuniting with poets I hadn’t seen in a while.”

Freesia expressed gratitude too for the work being done by GFWC-WI and librarians to preserve and build its poetry collection: “Wisconsin poets are continuing to write an archive of the many things it means to live here, and I’m glad there’s a library devoted to providing a home for these stories.”



2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

ASSETS & LIABILITIES: \$922,123

Long-term Assets: \$669,113

Fixed Assets: \$191,167

Small-Press Inventory: \$280,722

Endowment Fund (Restricted): \$139,876

Endowment Gift (Restricted): \$30,000

Capital Campaign Funds (Restricted): \$15,298

Capital Campaign Pledges (Restricted): \$12,050

Short-term Assets: \$137,364

Cash & Cash Equivalents: \$108,461

Accounts Receivable: \$28,903

Other Assets: \$127,787

Unemployment Insurance Certificate of Deposit: \$5,141

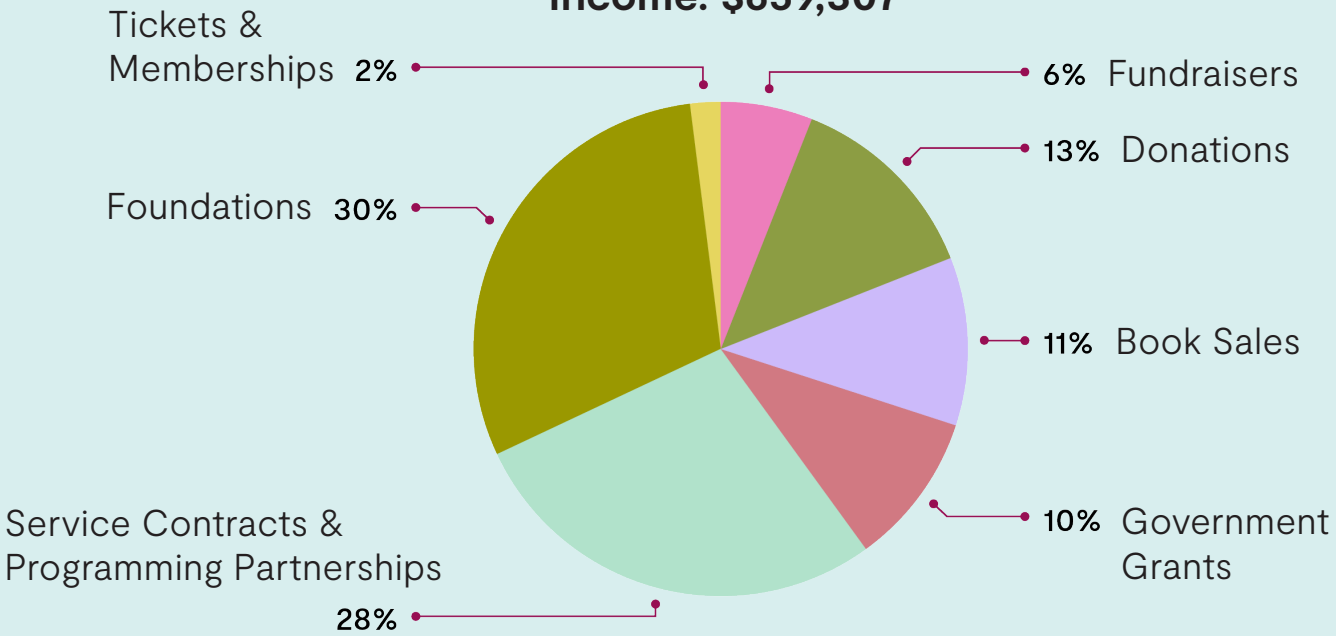
Assets Held for Other Organizations: \$122,646

Long-term Liabilities: \$0

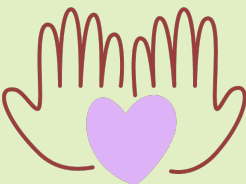
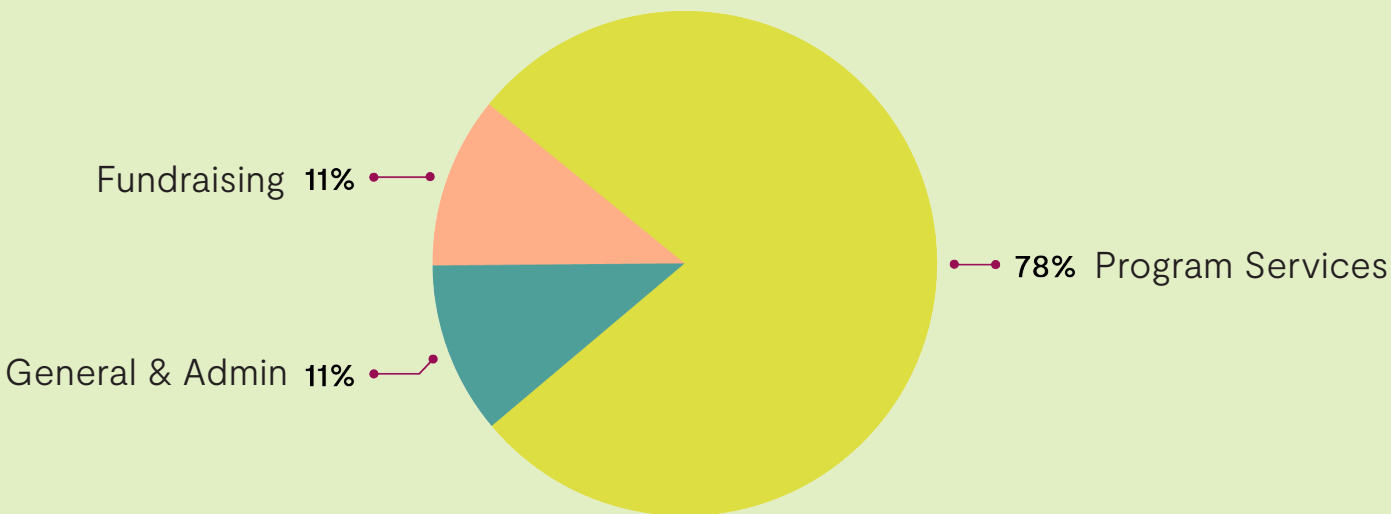
Short-term Liabilities: \$12,141

INCOME & EXPENSES

Income: \$659,307



Expenses: \$654,754



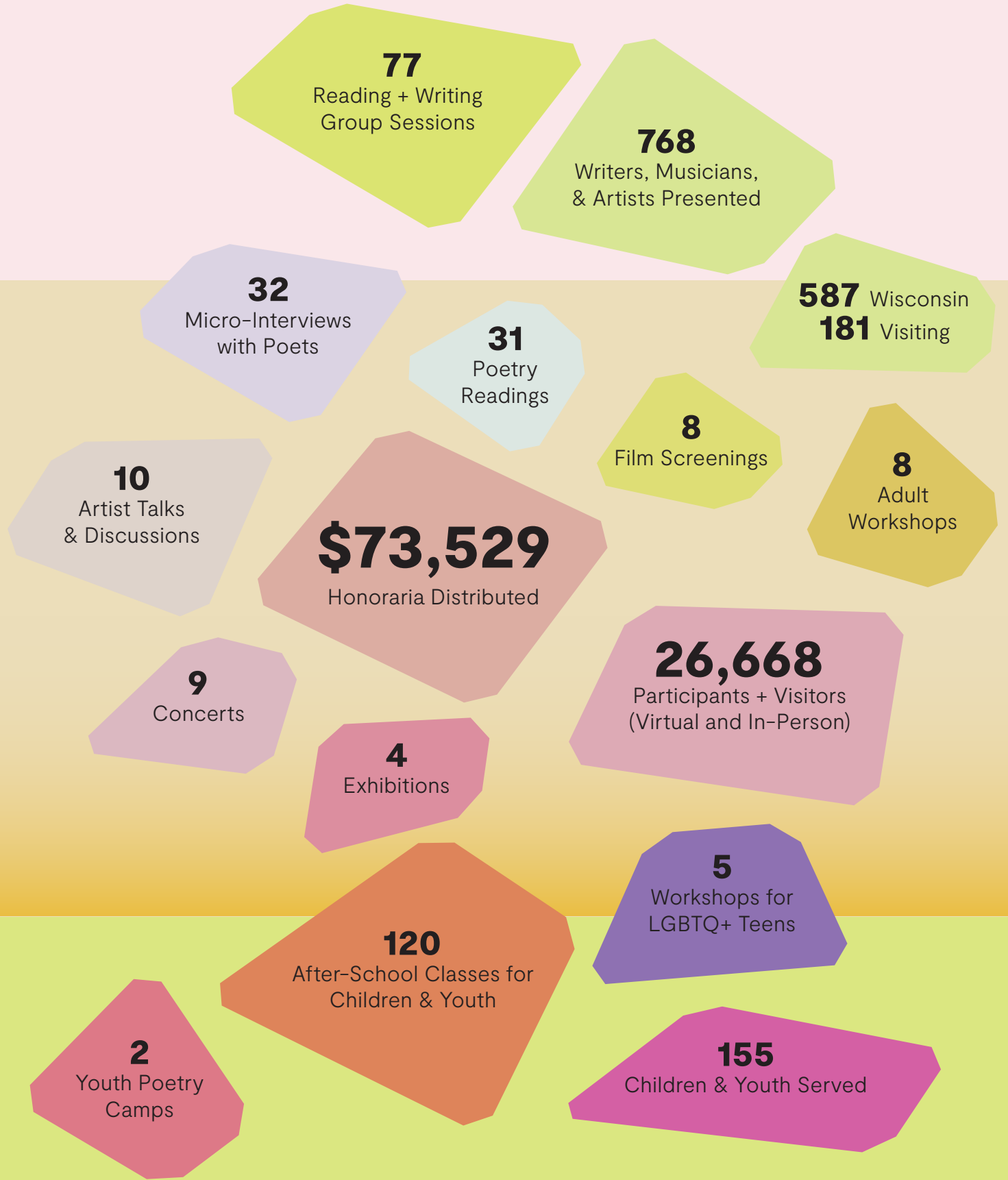
\$29,739
In-Kind Donations



531
Volunteer Hours



OUR IMPACT IN 2022



2022 Fellowships Offer Opportunities to Milwaukee Poets

Too frequently in recent years have we witnessed younger poets leave Milwaukee for other cities that offer them greater support as literary artists. These exoduses are not only painful— they also drain our city of culture over time and interrupt intergenerational exchange. So, in 2022, we decided to do something about it!

Our new **Milwaukee Emerging Poet Fellowship** aims to bring greater visibility and much-needed early support to younger Milwaukee poets through intergenerational mentorships, access to opportunities that encourage a poet’s practice and development, and investment in literary projects for which younger poets frequently lack resources. Serving as our inaugural mentor for this program was former Milwaukee Poet Laureate **Brenda Cárdenas**, while the fellowship itself went to **Bre Legan**, whose project turned poetry into public art stenciled onto sidewalks throughout the Riverwest neighborhood.

In 2022, we were also fortunate to be invited to serve as one of five national host organizations for the **Poetry Coalition’s Fellowship Program**, which is helping seed the next generation of administrative leaders in our field by placing promising young poets in 10-month paid positions. We were pleased to offer this opportunity to **Antonio Vargas-Nieto**, whose work with us led to the successful launch of another initiative aimed at mentoring future generations of poets—the Milwaukee Youth Poet Laureate program.

While Woodland Pattern’s participation in the Poetry Coalition Fellowship was a one-time event, we are excited that Antonio has now joined us as a permanent staff member, and are additionally looking forward to continuing and expanding our own fellowship over the year ahead. If you would like to join us in providing more opportunities to Milwaukee emerging poets, you can do so by making a gift that references this new initiative.





Volunteer Spotlight: Ae Hee Lee's #ALeetleMoment

Woodland Pattern has long been blessed by exceptional volunteers, and this year, we wish to shine a light on someone who has recently made an extraordinary contribution of her talents, **Ae Hee Lee**.

Born in South Korea and raised in Peru, Ae Hee is a poet, scholar, and translator, whose own poetry you can find at Woodland Pattern. After several years of variously assisting us in the book center, she came to us with a long list of books and a fantastic idea for helping poets find new readers—a made-for-Instagram, micro-interview series that would soon come to be known as #ALeetleMoment.

Since July of 2021, Ae Hee has interviewed more than 75 poets and perfected her three-question format, which typically combines sober questions like “What form does resistance take in your writing?” with those that disarm her interlocutor and result in self-reflective humor. (See, for example, “Pick one question from your book that ‘answers’ your book’s title” or “What is myth-making to you? Answer this question by metaphor.”)

Accompanying each brief, enchanting parlay is an equally interesting image, usually of the poet interacting with their book. What’s perhaps most remarkable about the series as a whole, however, is how seldom these photographs devolve into mere author “selfies.” Instead, the images often evoke a similar sense of serious play—of a poet encountering, rather than presenting, their book.

As #ALeetleMoment comes to a close this year, we look back with gratitude on its long run and for all the thought-provoking joy Ae Hee has made possible. If you have yet to read any of her sparkling exchanges, we strongly encourage you to find them on our Instagram.

9 WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR MISSION

Get Involved: Attend an event, join a workshop or writing group, make new friends, and be a force in our community!

Volunteer: Whether you’d like to help out regularly in the book center, or on occasion for a special event or specific program, we need your help!

Become a Member: An easy way to show your support while also receiving discounts on books, workshops, and ticketed events like our concert series.

Make an Annual Gift Go Further: When you sign up for a recurring donation, your total contribution has a deeper impact, ensuring stable cash flow throughout the year.

Sponsor a Fundraiser (or Create Your Own): Special events bring our community together while also helping us raise funds. You can also create your own fundraisers on social media. Last year, our supporters raised more than \$5,000 through personal campaigns!

Donate from a Retirement Account: If you’re over 70, contributing from your IRA can be beneficial to your tax bill, potentially saving you hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Contribute to Our Endowment Fund: Ensure Woodland Pattern has the resources it needs indefinitely. *Over the next twelve months, all endowment gifts will be matched up to \$60k!*

Help Renovate Our Historic Locust Street Home: In the coming months, we’ll be revealing renderings for an updated, expanded, and fully accessible building. Your Capital Campaign gift will positively impact our neighborhood and everyone who enters our doors for generations to come.

Leave a Legacy: If you are interested in planning or have already planned a bequest to Woodland Pattern, please reach out to us so that we may acknowledge you in next year’s annual report.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Antonio Vargas-Nieto
Assistant Programming Director

Alexa Nutile
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Marla Sanvick
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Book Center Manager

2022–23 TEACHING ARTISTS

Katie Bedolla
Ajamou Butler
LaDasia Bryant
Destinny Fletcher
George Jones
Liat Mayer
CJ Scruton
Kathrine Yets

2022–23 COMMUNITY CURATORS

Kimberly Blaeser (Native Writers in the 21st Century)
Nomka Enkhee (Ping Pong Book Club)
Karl Gartung (Readshop)
Roberto Harrison (Unwriting Borders)
Siwar Masannat (Unwriting Borders)
Jay Mollerskov (Formations Series for New & Improvised Music)
Hal Rammel (Alternating Currents Live)
Nakeysha Roberts Washington (Revolutionary Art & Culture Residency)
Takahiro Suzuki (aCinema)
Janelle VanderKelen (aCinema)

2022–23 VOLUNTEERS + INTERNS

Frischa Aswarini, Mya Bailey, Katie Bedolla, Neeraj Bhogvalli, Penelope Bowles, Caroline Calvano, Raymond Chung, Bill Embly, Jean Eske, Erin Fagan, Sophia Grapsas, Austin Greenberg, Ben Herbert, Curtis Hicks, Bryana Lisette Juarez, Lee Judilla, Tim Knapp, Oliver Krawczyk, Ae Hee Lee, In-Jee Lee, Hunter Lewinski, Mikayela Liggins, Egle Liutkaityte, Rachel Lyons, Elise McArdle, Hailey McLaughlin, Alex Niemi, Nick Pecucci, Sabine Peterka, Amy Pfile, Joey Reindl, Jacob Sindic, Rachel Skenandore, Wyethe Smallish, Jess Stanfield, Justin Stephani, Kristen Tetzmann, Max Thiede, Allison Thompson, Addie Thornsbury, Miranda Trimmier, Katrina Underwood, Jackie Valadez, Genevieve Vahl, Kayla VanProoyen, Gillian Waldo, Dalyn Ward, Ed Werstein, Justin Zambrano, Yuchen Zhao



Thank you for investing in the discovery, cultivation, and presentation of poetry and the arts

Total donors: **522**
New donors: **207**
Recurring + multiple gift donors: **129**
Percentage of donors who increased their giving: **18%**

In 2022, Woodland Pattern received private and public support from: the Academy of American Poets (with funds from the Mellon Foundation), Amazon Literary Partnership, Arts Midwest, Bader Philanthropies, Brico Fund, Create Wisconsin, Gardner Foundation, Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Herzfeld Foundation, Camille A. Lonstorf Trust, Milwaukee Arts Board, Milwaukee County CAMPAC, Milwaukee City Community Development Block Grant, MPS Partnership for the Arts & Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Foundation, Meyer & Norma Ragir Foundation, Lucy & Jack Rosenberg Fund, Ruth Foundation for the Arts, Christine A. Symchych & James P. McNulty Charitable Fund, Wisconsin Arts Board, Wisconsin’s Own Library (via the General Federation of Women’s Clubs–WI), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and gifts from many generous donors. **THANK YOU!**



WOODLAND PATTERN

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