

The Campaign *for* Poets House

72 SPRING STREET, 2ND FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10012 | (212) 431-7920 | WWW.POETSHOUSE.ORG

NO. 1, DECEMBER, 2005

A Permanent Place for Poetry

“Yet the books will be there on the shelves, well born,/Derived from people, but also from radiance, heights.” — From “AND YET THE BOOKS” by CZESLAW MILOSZ

POETS HOUSE WAS FOUNDED TWENTY YEARS AGO as a *place* for poetry, so nothing is more important to us than where we make our home. After a long and careful search for a permanent solution to our space needs, we found the right opportunity at last.

Battery Park City Authority has designated Poets House the long-term, non-profit tenant of a 10,000 square foot space in a new building in Lower Manhattan. Twice the size of our current location, with a highly visible, street-level presence and *rent-free occupancy guaranteed through 2069*, this is an opportunity that will truly secure the future of Poets House.

Repetition is a venerable poetic tradition, so let’s hear that refrain once again: more space, greater visibility, and *rent-free occupancy guaranteed through 2069*.

It is a dream fulfilled. The new facility will help us to do what we do even better. For our unparalleled library, which now holds 45,000 items and is rapidly outgrowing current shelf space, the move will provide room to grow and the promise that our collections will continue to serve generations to come. For our programs, too, there will be space to expand. The location itself—with a dramatic entrance, lots of windows, and a view of the Hudson—will create the conditions for many more people to discover Poets House.

As we work to design the space and raise the money, I’m inspired by the prospect of welcoming even more people to this House. Particularly in an age of double-speak and sound bites, poetry nurtures the human spirit by exploring the “singing underneath” intrinsic to language and, in so doing, renews our primary means of exchange. In our new home, Poets House will extend an invitation to all people to listen more carefully, and so enter into poetry’s timeless, intimate, artful conversation.

This newsletter is designed to keep our members, friends and supporters informed during this incredibly exciting transition. I extend grateful thanks to the many, many people who have helped us to reach this moment—and I invite you to join us in building what is certain to become one of the great poetry destinations on the globe.

LEE BRICCETTI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



\$6.5 MILLION GOAL

\$6 MILLION

\$4,975,738.00
as of 12/01/05

\$5 MILLION

\$4 MILLION

\$3 MILLION

\$2 MILLION

\$1 MILLION



GREAT BEGINNINGS | *Although we’ve only just begun, we are already 75% of the way toward our goal! In the coming months, we will be reaching out to you—friends both old and new—to ask your help in getting to the \$6.5 million mark.*

New Poets House, Designed by Louise Braverman, Slated to Open in Summer of 2007

POETS HOUSE WILL OCCUPY 10,000 square feet on the ground and second floors of a new high-rise apartment building. The 32-story building, developed by the Sheldrake Organization, will incorporate progressive “green” technology. The acclaimed architectural firm, Polshek Partnership, is designing the exterior of the building. Poets House, however, will be responsible for the interior design and construction of its own space.

Concrete slabs, bare ceilings, walls, and windows will have to be transformed into a comfortable, welcoming space that communicates the spirit of hospitality central to Poets House.

To complete this transformation, Poets House has engaged architect Louise Braverman. Braverman designed the current Poets House, a treatment that one critic described as “an architectural haiku: efficient, economical, and speaking volumes through a few well chosen lines.” (*Interior Design*, 9/1/2002.)

“Its physical space is one of the key ways in which Poets House animates its mission,” says Braverman. “In order to convey its democratic outlook, Poets House requires a space of permeability, openness, transparency and warmth.”

She is developing an architectural program that, she says, “Will open the organization’s heart to the world, and will invite the world into the heart of poetry.”

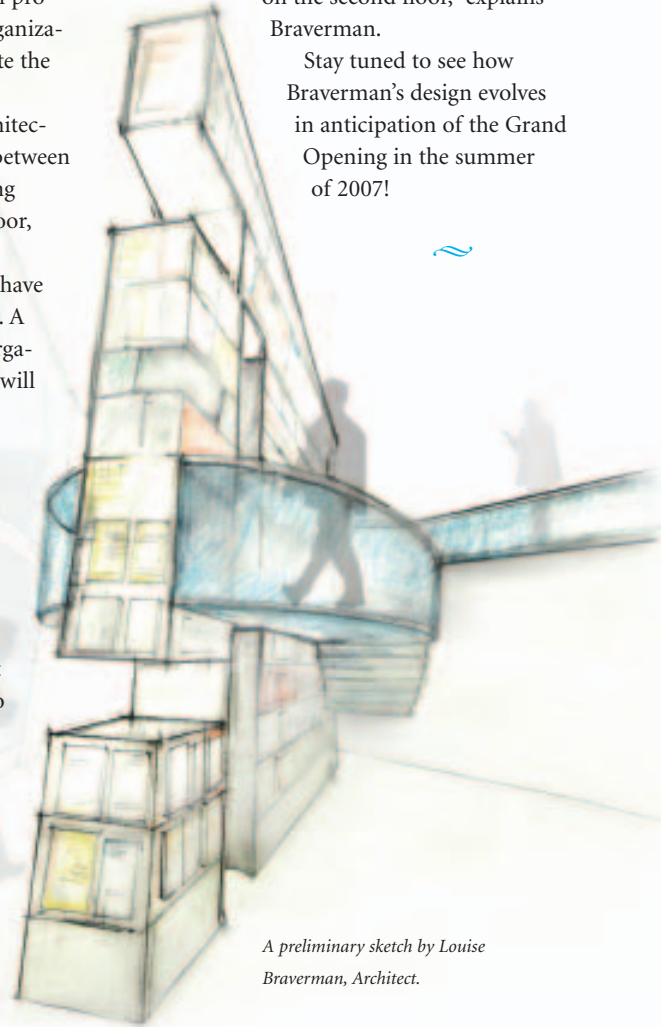
How do you accomplish this architecturally? By emphasizing connections between the inside and the outside. The Reading Room will span most of the second floor, providing views of the parks and the waterfront. The Children’s Room will have windows facing a popular playground. A gem-like Programming Hall for the organization’s signature literary programs will have an operable wall which, when opened onto the building’s courtyard, will transform the room into an enchanting indoor/outdoor venue.

Braverman is exploring ways to announce the presence of Poets House and distinguish it from the larger residential building. “We want people to know that it is a place about books,” she says, “but we don’t want to be confused with a bookstore or a public library.”

The sketch at the right is one of the possible solutions Braverman has devised. Here, she imagines a dramatic, double-height entry space dominated by a sculptural wall of books that is penetrated by a winding stairway. “People will literally enter the world of metaphor as they ascend to the Reading Room

on the second floor,” explains Braverman.

Stay tuned to see how Braverman’s design evolves in anticipation of the Grand Opening in the summer of 2007!

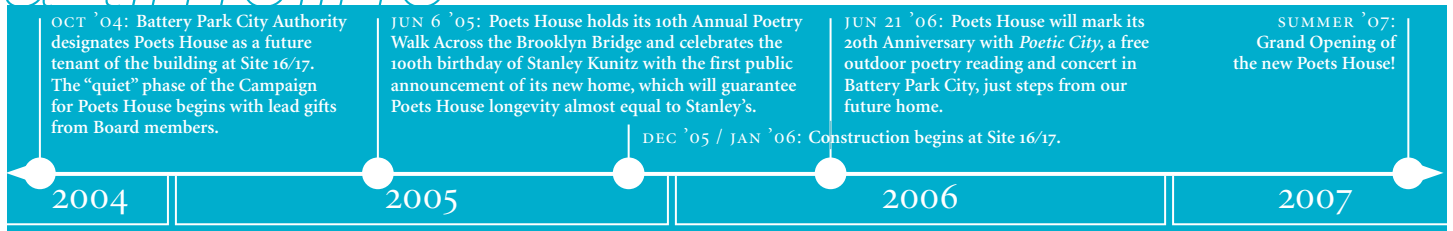


A preliminary sketch by Louise Braverman, Architect.



ON A CLEAR DAY | The new Poets House will face Battery Park City’s beautiful gardens, providing a stunning view of the Hudson River. (Composite image by Louise Braverman, Architect.)

a timeline



The Campaign for Poets House Sets Goal of \$6.5 Million

Board Members Lead the Way—Nearly \$5 Million Already Pledged!

“WE’LL DO IT!”

That’s what Poets House President Margo Viscusi thought when she heard the organization had been invited to consider moving to Battery Park City under extraordinary conditions: an ideal location, twice the square footage, and a rent-free lease until 2069.

Margo has been devoted to Poets House since two visionaries—her dear friend Elizabeth Kray and revered poet Stanley Kunitz—first started planning a national *place* for poetry. Kray died two years after Poets House began operations in 1985, and Kunitz asked Margo to step in to work with him to fulfill this dream. Poets House flourished, but the insecurity and high cost of rental space remained a big problem.

“We’d searched for years to find the right long-term solution, looking at both rental and purchase possibilities, and the picture was grim,” says Margo. “We knew right away that the Battery Park City opportunity was our best chance. And we embraced the idea of joining the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan. The number of people who

contacted us after 9/11 showed we have a major healing role to play.”

The Battery Park City offer required Poets House to cover the cost of the interior construction, or “fit-out,” of the space, esti-

mated at \$5 million. The Board decided the organization would also start building endowment and reserve funds to provide financial stability in the new location. This brought the total fundraising goal to \$6.5 million.

“It’s actually a terrific bargain,” Margo explains. Poets House currently has to raise over \$200,000 a year for rent. “When we projected that cost, with only modest growth of 4% a year and no increase in space, we found that we would have spent \$63 million for rent from now to 2069. Raising \$6.5 million to save \$63 million is a very wise investment indeed.

“Still, this is a tall order for a small literary organization,” Margo concedes. “But I knew we had to make this work.”

Her colleagues on the Board agreed. Margo made a lead gift and they quickly responded. “So far, Board gifts and pledges exceed \$1.7 million,” Margo says, with amazement and delight.

The Board’s generosity has already inspired major commitments from others, including The Tomorrow Foundation and The September 11th Fund. Others came forward even before a campaign was announced. Then, the City of New York allocated \$2 million for the project, bringing the total committed so far to almost \$5 million. An additional \$1.5 million must be raised by August 2007.

“We have a long way to go still,” says Margo. “But we’re determined to succeed. I’m certain we will,

because people will recognize this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do something of lasting importance for poetry, for New York City, and for the cultural life of our country.”



What we need is more people who
specialize in the impossible.

—THEODORE ROETHKE

Contributors

Poets House extends grateful thanks to the following for their early and generous support of The Campaign for Poets House.

The City of New York

Penny & John Barr

Robert Kissane

Stanley Kunitz

The September 11th Fund

Myra Shapiro

The Tomorrow Foundation

Anthony & Margo Viscusi

Roger & Helen Alcala

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Fredric Hugue

Wendy Larsen

New York State Council on the Arts

Frank & Judy Platt

Stewart G. Rosenblum

Seán & Valerie Sweeney

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Michael Bloomberg, MAYOR

Alan Jay Gerson, COUNCILMEMBER, 1ST DISTRICT

Deborah J. Glick, NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 66TH DISTRICT

Kate D. Levin, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Richard J. Schwartz, CHAIRMAN, NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

And special thanks to everyone at Battery Park City

Authority, including former CEO Timothy S. Carey.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING HOW YOU CAN HELP? Please call Poets House Development

Director Melissa Gradel at

(212) 431-7920 x 15.

Location, location, location

IN 2007, POETS HOUSE WILL MOVE to a stunning new facility at One River Terrace in Battery Park City. The site is just north of the World Financial Center, just east of the river, and west of the Embassy Suites Hotel. With a view of the Hudson River and the Statue of Liberty, the location is a fertile one for the organization that has been called “the House that Holds a Country”!

The move will place Poets House on the cusp of the financial district, a residential neighborhood, and one of the best-used and most beautiful public parks in the city. Poets House will become a haven for downtown workers, residents and tourists, as well as a place of quiet reflection just blocks from Ground Zero.

The location is readily accessible by subway, bus, car, and even by ferry. A major transportation hub planned for the corner of Church and Vesey Streets will improve access even further.



POETS HOUSE—CURRENTLY CELEBRATING ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Founded in 1985, Poets House is the nation's premiere poetry library and a lively international literary center. Visit Poets House at 72 Spring Street (Tuesday to Friday, 11 to 7 and Saturday 11 to 4) or on the web at www.poetshouse.org.

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