**Professional Development Award Documentation from Cindy Snow, GCC**

**Project Summary, August 9, 2017**

I traveled to The Netherlands in June 2017 in order to present at a conference, attend the conference, and conduct research on the subject of my writing, Maria Sibylla Merian. My flight left Boston on June 4, and I arrived in Amsterdam on June 5. After a day to adjust, I attended the 3-day symposium, *Changing the Nature of Art and Science. Intersections with Maria Sibylla Merian*. The event was organized by the Maria Sibylla Merian Society, in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam, the Artis Library, and the Artis Academy, in order to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of the botanical artist and naturalist, Maria Sibylla Merian. After the conference, I was able to stay with friends and explore the country and Merian’s work further. I left The Netherlands on June 16 and after a number of flight delays, arrived home the following day.

The Merian Symposium was a fascinating event. Presentations were carried out primarily by scientists, historians, and librarians. Two presenters, myself and one other (who shared short films she’d made of caterpillars and metamorphosis), formed the strand focused on art inspired by Merian and her work. I read a selection of the poems I’ve written on Merian, to a backdrop of slides of her art work, which inspired specific poems. I presented at the end of the first day, which was a relief; presenting early enabled me to enjoy the rest of the conference! Some of my favorite presentations were Redmond O’Hanlon’s “Maria, the Jungle, and Bird-eating Spiders,” Henrietta McBurney’s “Maria Sibylla Merian and Mark Catesby: Naturalist Artists,” Alicia Montoya’s “Maria Sibylla Merian’s Eighteenth-Century Readers: The Evidence from Library Auction Catalogues (1700-1800),” and Marieke van Delft’s “Surviving Copies of Merian’s 1705 Edition of Metamorphosis.”

I believe approximately 120 people attended the symposium. I had been somewhat nervous about presenting, given that I normally read my poetry to other writers and to individuals who attend events expecting to hear poetry. At the symposium, I was the only creative writer presenting, and the audience consisted of a wide variety of individuals, all fascinated with Merian and many quite knowledgeable about her. After my presentation, many individuals, including the organizers of the conference, congratulated and thanked me, which was incredibly gratifying. Perhaps one of my favorite pieces of feedback came from an attendee who said that the presentations that focused on science and art helped her understand Merian’s work, the presentation that included videos on caterpillars and metamorphosis helped her see Merian’s work, and my presentation helped her feel and experience Merian’s work.

As noted above, in addition to attending the symposium, I had time in The Netherlands to explore the country and research Merian, in particular by experiencing the areas where she lived, viewing her artwork, and stepping into buildings and viewing scientific collections from the 17th and 18th Centuries. I viewed original pieces of Merian’s artwork at the Artis Library, the Rijksmuseum, and the Cromhouthuis (Amsterdam Museum). At the Teylers Museum in Harlem, I saw scientific collections from the era. I took a walking tour of the Amsterdam neighborhood where Merian lived and worked, and I visited a 17th century church in Wieuwerd, Friesland, the northern region of The Netherlands, where Merian once lived in a religious community. Given that Merian traveled from Amsterdam to South America in 1699, in order to study and depict caterpillars and other creatures in Suriname, my visit to the National Maritime Museum, complete with 17th and 18th century Dutch ships and models, was another high point.

I returned to the U.S. tired, of course, but also inspired to revise my writing and send it out to potential publishers. The presentations, the artwork, and the trips to the various regions where Merian lived, made the work of this artist/scientist come to life. My next tasks will be to polish my own work, so I can make it as historically accurate as possible, while still maintaining the creative spirit important to poetry.

Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity to present my work in The Netherlands and explore the life and times of the subject of my writing, Maria Sibylla Merian. Below you will find links to conference materials available online, as well as my abstract and biography from the symposium’s program.

Symposium Home Page

https://www.aanmelder.nl/merianconference

Abstracts and Biographies of Presenters

<file:///C:/Users/Main/Downloads/Abstracts%20MSM%20(2)%20(4).pdf>

Excerpt:

*Cindy Snow Merian’s art as inspiration for modern artists and novelists Cindy Snow will read from her work “Let the Small Creatures,” a manuscript of poems on the life and work of Maria Sibylla Merian. The poems focus on close examination of cocoons and birds, embroidery patterns, religious community life, Arawak legend, Maroons, and the challenges of conducting science, making art, running a business, and raising a family. Many of the poems are ekphrastic in nature, inspired by specific works (“Branch of Apricots with Banana Quit,” “Passionflower,” etc.). Each poem is written from the imagined perspective of Merian, her daughters, the subjects she depicted and studied, and/or those who worked near her. I propose to read with a backdrop of slides of Merian’s work that inspired the poems. While the manuscript is primarily creative, the poems are the result of an extensive research.*

*Cindy Snow’s writing has appeared in the Massachusetts Review, Peace Review, Worcester Review, Crannóg, and elsewhere. She has been a writing fellow at Cill Rialaig, Ireland, a Platte Clove Artist in Residence, and the recipient of a Vermont Studio Center Writing Residency. Her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart, and she holds an mfa in Poetry from Drew University. Her chapbook, Small Ceremonies, is just out from Slate Roof Press. Cindy teaches and supervises writing tutors at Greenfied Community College.*