



NAME:

THREE

mm

📅 *40th Anniversary*

# Teachers & Writers, and Artists Too!

KATHERINE KOCH

**I**N 1988, TEACHERS & WRITERS WAS STILL HIRING NOT JUST WRITERS, but visual artists, dancers, choreographers, musicians, playwrights, filmmakers, artists of different kinds who would sometimes work together when they taught in the schools.

To celebrate T&W's twentieth anniversary that year, we had a big party at filmmaker and board member Roland Legiardi-Laura's loft. The writers and artists who worked for T&W at the time came up with an idea for entertainment—whoever wanted to participate would choose an art form he or she had never tried before, and perform it for the other guests.

Susana Tubert, a playwright and director, composed and conducted a song we all sang in four-part harmony, a toast to T&W's twenty years.

Kurt Lamkin, a performance poet, and I, a painter, decided to collaborate on a project in which I danced while setting out ceramic boats I'd made and filled with candles. Meanwhile Kurt painted on a life-size piece of paper behind me. I felt so comfortable that I lost all self-consciousness about dancing—I was *supposed* to not know anything about it, and this made my confidence expand. I could discover something new.


I knew I was in the right crowd.

T&W took something at its beginning from the collaborative nature of the New York School. Those artists and writers learned from the automatism of the Surrealists, were inspired by each other, got interested in outsider and children's art, and in general presumed that all kinds of odd and oddly-tutored artists could bring out exciting, meaningful, and profound work.

This sizzle in the downtown New York atmosphere led to the happily collaborative nature of T&W. It informed T&W's belief that putting artists in schools would result in strong and accomplished students, who in turn would believe that they could make anything they set their minds to. And the artists widened their collaborative

**This sizzle in the downtown New York atmosphere led to the happily collaborative nature of T&W. It informed T&W's belief that putting artists in schools would result in strong and accomplished students, who in turn would believe that they could make anything they set their minds to.**

efforts to include not just students and teachers, but also principals, parents, and people who weren't involved with schools at all.

At Roland's loft, we were just continuing this kind of work, and we were doing it for fun, which was the hope anyway—that students would take chances, have fun, and gain confidence from making poems and artwork they'd never dreamed of doing. 

*Katherine Koch is a painter who worked for T&W both as an administrator in the late 80s, and as a teaching artist for almost twenty years. Her own work has been in solo and group shows at the Arlene Bujese Gallery in East Hampton, New York, as well as in group shows elsewhere in the U.S. and in Europe. She has done collaborations with writers, musicians, choreographers, and theater groups. She now teaches art and art history to college students, who, unlike her lower-school students, bring their own materials and do their own set-up and clean-up.*

