



The Arion Press  
announces

# Woolgathering

an artist book by  
**Patti Smith**

with thirteen original photograms by  
**Christian Marclay**

Published in both  
Limited and Deluxe Editions  
at San Francisco  
April 2022

*Woolgathering* is a very special collaboration between two contemporary creative masters. Like many great classics of the artist book form, it is a meeting of exceptional minds: author and singer-songwriter Patti Smith and visual and sound artist Christian Marclay. Smith's first published prose work, written thirty years ago, is an incantatory memoir of the creative process and its wellspring in the world of childhood. Marclay, in response to this intimate, impressionistic work, has created a suite of original color photograms that echo the transcendence of the text and conjure the verdant orbits of Smith's natural world. The pairing could hardly be more apt.

Smith is a woolgatherer, after the old English term for those who collect the fluff from passing sheep snagged on a branch or fence. In this early work she picks up stray bits—of memory, experience and dream—and weaves them anew. Marclay too is a sampler, of images, sound, and objects—a vinyl record, a snip of film, a clutch of leaves. Each is unclassifiable, working fluidly across boundaries of genre and form. The Arion Press edition of *Woolgathering* uniquely reflects this artistic kinship.

#### THE AUTHOR

Long before Patti Smith became an icon of rock & roll, she was a writer. Her passion for literature emerged early, developing in adolescence with a reverence for Rimbaud and Baudelaire, followed by the classics in her first years as an emerging artist and poet in New York City. Her 2010 memoir *Just Kids*, which won the National Book Award, vividly captures her development as a writer who set her own words to music, starting with a first public appearance at

St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery in 1971. Her debut album of 1975, *Horses*, was widely acclaimed and is now considered a seminal recording in the history of punk rock.

Yet even as her musical career took off, "I always imagined I would one day write a book," Smith writes in this powerful recollection. *Woolgathering* was composed in 1991, the year she turned forty-five, during an extended period in which Smith withdrew from performing to raise a family in northern Michigan with her husband, the late Fred "Sonic" Smith. It was originally commissioned as a miniature Hanuman book, number 45 in an esoteric collection of short avant-garde works by authors including Henri Michaux, Eileen Myles, Jack Kerouac, and Jean Genet. In 2011, it was reissued by New Directions, illustrated with black-and-white Polaroids and photographs from Smith's personal archive. (An updated New Directions paperback edition appeared in 2021.) The Arion Press edition presents Smith's chronicle in a generous quarto format that both foregrounds the poetry of the text and dramatizes a pivotal time in Smith's creative life. Now seventy-five, Smith has since been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and produced eleven record albums. Over her long career she has published poetry, lyrics, and stories as well as four volumes of memoir.

Unlike the later memoirs, this first, luminous work is less a recounting of Smith's life than of her creative awakening. Written in the cadence of memory and dream, it invites the reader to dwell in its rhythms and images. Smith shares with us "the clear, unspeakable joy" of the natural world. She is alert to the numinous quality of the New Jersey woods in which she grew up, each place and object resonant with meaning. Looking back, she reckons she inherited

“the soul of a shepherdess”: she is a dreamer, singing softly as if from a porch rocker. In the section entitled “Two Worlds,” she slips out of the present and into “another universe:”

“I was satisfied to note that I was dressed exactly like the drunken poet,” she writes, arriving in the filmic world of Cocteau’s *Orphée*. A surreal series of encounters ensues, to conclude:

“I dreamed of being a painter, but I let the image slide into a vat of pigment and pastry-foam while I bounded from temple to junkyard in pursuit of the word. A solitary shepherdess gathering bits of wool plucked by the hand of the wind from the belly of a lamb. A noun. A nun. A red. O blue. Twittering threads caught in the thorns of an icy branch. Running in place, a ghost in vague expanse, I opened my arms to the sovereign trees and submitted to their pure, unholy embrace.”

### THE ARTIST

Christian Marclay is an internationally acclaimed American-Swiss conceptual artist who works at the intersection of art and sound. Trained in visual art, he was among the pioneers of the record turntable as instrument in the 1970s and works across multiple media, sampling and appropriating images and sound to create new forms and meanings in real time. He is best known for his titanic 24-hour video installation “The Clock,” which spliced together thousands of film scenes featuring clocks synchronized to appear at the precise time the film was screened. The work was a global sensation that earned Marclay the Lion d’Or at the Venice Biennale in 2011.

Over four decades Marclay’s practice has ranged from manipula-

tions of vinyl records and ¼-inch audio tape to his “theater of found sound” which incorporated Duchampian DJ performances. His visual representations of sound objects span photographs and sculptures of speaker holes and unspooling cassette tapes to video collages of comic book and found photographic material. “At the center of all my work is sound,” he says. In the early 2000s he began to experiment with the materiality of recorded sound to create photograms—exposures of objects related to musical recording onto light-sensitive paper. This is the approach to which he turned to make images for *Woolgathering*, perhaps the ideal encounter between an artist chiefly concerned with visualizing music and one of the world’s foremost musical performers.

It is Arion’s good fortune that Marclay agreed to take on this project in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, while preparing major exhibitions in Lausanne, Tokyo, and Paris. In the midst of lockdown in London, he found a darkroom and began creating the vibrant series of images that introduce chapters of Smith’s text. Layering sonic and natural objects, he composed what might be thought of as a companion visual score—abstract, yet evocative of the world beyond the visible which the writer’s words describe.

### THE PHOTOGRAMS

Using a variety of sound ephemera (variously colored 7-inch acrylic vinyl 45 rpm records, “spider” adapters that convert 45s for turntable spindles), organic and plant materials, light filters and gels, Marclay made this series of photograms at Chan Photographic, London, in 2021, where he exposed materials at different distances

and time intervals directly onto light-sensitive paper. By recording light, time, space, and gestures in motion, each could be considered an artefact of a live performance. Once a size format was agreed upon, Marclay proceeded to create a series of more than 20 images ranging exuberantly in character, color, and composition. From these we together selected 13 to harmonize with the book structure: a frontispiece facing the title plus 12 to accompany chapter openings. (As Smith revealed, the tenth chapter, comprised of lyrics for the song “Kimberly,” serves as a coda to its preceding chapter and so has no associated image of its own.)

Once high-resolution scans of the originals were prepared, edited, and positioned to maintain the natural scale of the 45s, the painstaking work began of converting the near-infinite color spectrum of light waves captured on paper to the much reduced gamut that can be reproduced with 4-color process lithography. The press is grateful to Fraenkel Gallery and Lexi Brown who facilitated the multiple rounds of color refinements necessary to create the reproductions.

#### **THE BOOK**

The Arion edition includes a new foreword by Patti Smith, with the addition of a “porch song” entitled “The Shepherdess Reel.” It is a small quarto, 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 inches, with 64 pages for the text and 13 unnumbered leaves for the artwork. The text is set in 13 point Monotype Veronese, cast onsite, with Bauer Corvinus handset for display. The type has been printed by letterpress on mouldmade 125 gsm Zerkall book laid in an edition limited to 300 copies for sale with 26 lettered *hors commerce*. All copies are signed by the author and the artist.



## THE EDITIONS

250 Limited Edition copies are handsewn with linen thread over linen tapes and bound in full pale blue cloth imprinted with a color gradient that fades upwards to enshroud the title. The author's and artist's names are stamped above in a complementary deep blue foil. These copies are housed in handmade slipcases wrapped in matching cloth and vividly silkscreened in opaque blue ink on both front and rear panels with a botanical motif in homage to Marclay's photographs. Silkscreened titling appears on the spines.

50 Deluxe Edition copies are also sewn by hand with linen thread over linen tapes and feature handsewn off-white silk headbands. These copies are bound with the same cloth treatment over the sides as the Limited but with sheep vellum spines blind stamped with titling. Deluxe copies are presented in custom-built light blue translucent acrylic slipcases etched front and back with the botanical motif described above, so that the underlying book's covers and titling show through the layered construction.

## "THE NEW WORLD" PRINT AND BROADSIDE

Deluxe copies of *Woolgathering* are accompanied by a gravure of an original manuscript poem by Patti Smith set in her expressive, chancery-style hand. In the vein of other of the poet's artsongs, lyrics, and verses, the poem is a prayerful invocation of a majestic world "of unprecedented calm" where honeybee hives rival "the gold of the plain and the amber of hearts." The prints are chine collé on 290 gsm vintage Tiepolo, measure 17h x 14w inches, and are signed by the poet. The total edition includes 50 prints, plus 5 Artist's Proofs, 5 Printer's Proofs, 1 B.A.T., and 1 Trial Proof.

In addition, a letterpress broadside of "The New World" is offered as a separate purchase. These, too, are reproduced at the full scale of the original, although in a slightly smaller, 15h x 12w inch format. They are printed from polymer plate on 175 gsm Revere book ivory in an edition of 150 copies for sale, with 26 copies *hors commerce*, and are signed by the poet. A transcription of the poem is included with both the print and the broadside.

## PRICING

*Limited:* \$980 with Subscription; \$1,400 retail  
*Edition:* 250 copies

*Deluxe:* \$3,200 with Subscription; \$4,000 retail  
Includes "The New World" chine collé print, signed  
*Edition:* 50 copies

*Broadside:* \$80 with Subscription; \$100 retail  
"The New World" letterpress print, signed  
*Edition:* 150 copies, sold individually

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