

# Yaddo



summer news 2010

## Hopes and Prayers

Eliza Griswold's *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam* is scheduled to be published on August 17 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Griswold, a published poet, spoke with novelist Elizabeth Gaffney about some of her experiences writing the book. Both Gaffney and Griswold are former Yaddo residents.

**Elizabeth Gaffney**—You were a poet before you became a reporter covering religious fundamentalism—which is to say, in many cases, a war reporter. How do the two pursuits fit together?

**Eliza Griswold**—There's a doggedness to sitting at a desk for fourteen hours a day, working on a nonfiction book. If you did that with poems, they'd be the worst ever written. For me, when my poems work, they come in about three minutes. The poems of my first book, *Wideawake Field*, came out of the things I couldn't understand in my reporting, moments of human nature I couldn't make sense of. With reporting, you have the privilege of seeing extremes of human nature. You could say I'm an angrier person and poet than I might have been, because of the things I've seen as a reporter.



**Elizabeth**—In the course of your reporting for *The Tenth Parallel*, you met with—and seemingly befriended—people whose ideologies were very different from your own. I'm thinking in particular of Franklin Graham, whom you describe as an “evangelical gunslinger” and the Indonesian jihadi Ibnu Ahmad. Did you have to fake friendship to get their confidence?

**Eliza**—I've found that writing long-form narrative nonfiction requires a suspension of judgment that I'm incapable of in my everyday life. One of the things the book is about is a complex paradox of my own identity. I am a person who grew up in a Christian household, but Franklin Graham would not consider me to be a Christian. Then again Ibnu Ahmad would say I'm nothing but a Christian. I would actually consider Franklin Graham a friend. With Ibnu Ahmad, it was different. One reason he seemed so sympathetic was the brain damage he'd sustained from electric

*continues over*

## Louise Bourgeois

The celebrated sculptor Louise Bourgeois passed away on Monday, May 31, at the age of 98. Louise, sometimes referred to as “the Mother of American feminist identity art,” enjoyed a 40 year association with Yaddo. She served as a Director and Member of the Corporation and on numerous admissions panels over the years. In 1995, Louise honored Yaddo by establishing an endowed residency for young sculptors. Individuals who have recently benefitted from her generosity include Jesse Farber, Judith Fox and JoAnne Carson. We mourn her death and gratefully acknowledge her encouragement and support.



## EXCERPT

### Jihad's Minor Celebrity

A Muzak rendition of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" echoed through the Jakarta airport's domestic terminal shortly after dawn on May 9, 2006. A forty-year-old man wearing knock-off Ray-Ban Wayfarers and an Al Jazeera baseball cap shuffled along with a large cardboard box poked with holes tucked under his arm. A minor celebrity within the world of international jihad, Farihin Ibnu Ahmad, aka, "Yasir," was barely known outside of it. He was renowned for his violent pedigree, although few people other than militants would have recognized his broad, hangdog face. He sidled up to a plainclothes security officer and thrust the box toward him.

"Will the X-ray machine kill them?" he asked. The officer pulled back one of the box's dog-eared corners to reveal a pair of rabbits, mottled black and white, noses twitching wildly at the unfamiliar smells of stale coffee and perfume. Ibnu Ahmad wanted to know if he should check the rabbits or if he could carry them on the plane. The officer glanced up from the rabbits to Ibnu Ahmad's face, half-hidden beneath the baseball cap. Though I was there to meet Ibnu Ahmad, I scooted furtively to the other side of the corridor, certain he was about to be arrested.

The rabbits should have been the least of the security officer's concerns: Ibnu Ahmad was a killer and a member of Jemaah Islamiyah, a lethal group of Southeast Asian militants most notorious for the 2002 Bali bombings, which left 202 people dead. The militants' ties to Al Qaeda were precisely through men like Ibnu Ahmad.

Apparently, the security officer at the Jakarta airport didn't recognize Ibnu Ahmad: after allowing the rabbits to be checked, he let him go without incident. Ibnu Ahmad strolled back across the gleaming terminal to where I stood.

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From Eliza Griswold's *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Our thanks to FSG.

## HOPES and PRAYERS

(cont'd from front cover)

shock. His being a torture survivor in no way excuses or forgives the horrible things he's done, but still, he is one of the most broken people I've ever seen.

**Elizabeth**—You write about praying with Franklin Graham and others you spoke to in your reporting. Was that a religious or a journalistic act?

**Eliza**—Before I went to meet Franklin Graham, I was sitting in the kitchen with my mother. She said to me, "You know he's going to ask you to pray with him." I asked her advice and she told me to go ahead and do it, if it was genuine. For me, it was an ecumenical kind of prayer. He asked me, "Are you sure, if your plane crashes tomorrow, that you're going to heaven?" I said no. My prayer had to do with my understanding of God. There was another time—this is not in the book—that I prayed with an incredible Pakistani journalist named Hayatullah Khan, who was later killed in Waziristan. He and I were going into Waziristan together, then, and before we set out, he did the prostrations of his Islamic prayer, and I prayed to my nondenominational God. It felt like a hierophany. In both cases, with Franklin Graham and with Hayatullah Khan, I felt I was in a genuine sacred space.

## Summer Reading List

Looking for a good book to read this summer? We've made the shopping trip easy—here, alphabetically by category, are new works by Yaddo authors, set for release this month or next.

### Fiction

*The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, by **Aimee Bender**; *My Sister's Voice*, by **Mary Carter**; *The Passage*, by **Justin Cronin**; *A Visit From the Good Squad*, by **Jennifer Egan**; *Beautiful Maria of My Soul*, by **Oscar Hijuelos**; *Double Happiness*, by **Mary-Beth Hughes**; *Dear Money*, a novel by **Martha McPhee**; *The Spot*, by **David Means**; *The Four Fingers of Death*, by **Rick Moody**; *Here Comes Another Lesson*, by **Stephen O'Connor**; *An American Type*, by **Henry Roth**; *Super Sad True Love Story*, by **Gary Shteyngart**; *Three Delays*, by **Charlie**

**Smith**; *The Ghost of Milagro Cree*, by **Melanie Sumner**; *Pirate Talk or Mermalad*, by **Terese Svoboda**

### Nonfiction

*The Art of Description* by **Mark Doty**; *Adventures in Reading Cormac McCarthy* by **Peter Josyph**; *The Fall of the House of Walworth: A Tale of Murder and Madness in Saratoga's Gilded Age* by **Geoffrey O'Brien**; *Pain Chronicles: Cures, Remedies, Spells, Prayers, Myths, Misconceptions, Brain Scans and the Science of Suffering*, nonfiction by **Melanie Thernstrom**

### Poetry

*World Enough* by **Maureen N. McLane**; *Early Collected Poems from 1965-1992* by **Gerald Stern**

## Stay in Touch

Subscribe now to our email list to receive up-to-date regional, national, and international news about Yaddo and its artist guests.

When you enroll, we'll ask you to volunteer limited information to make sure you know about programs, artists, and events that fit your specific interests or take place in your area.

Please know that you may unsubscribe at any time and that your information will not be shared with any third party.

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<http://yaddo.org/yaddo/signup.asp>

## Yaddo Switching to Online Application

The August 1, 2010 deadline will be the last one we will accept paper applications. As of the January 1, 2011 application deadline, Yaddo will be accepting applications in all disciplines through our online application portal: [yaddo.slideroom.com](http://yaddo.slideroom.com).

It is anticipated that this change will help streamline the process for applicants and make it possible for Yaddo to reach an even broader and more diverse range of artists, in the U.S. and around the world. The portal will also make it possible for artists to better understand what they can expect from a residency at Yaddo.

Work samples (images, video, documents, audio), individual application information, professional resumes and letters of recommendation will all be uploaded electronically. The application fee will be \$40 (payable by credit card) for all disciplines.

Further information will be provided. Contact Candace Wait, Program Director, [chwait@yaddo.org](mailto:chwait@yaddo.org) with questions and concerns.

## Mealtime at Yaddo: Your Gift Makes a Difference



Steve Dennin's arrival in January as Director of Development has been an occasion for us to think about the many ways we can express how financial support for Yaddo feeds back (please pardon the pun!) into our core residency program. One idea we are exploring is the Lunchbox Fund, recognizing that each year Yaddo spends over \$300,000 to pay our chefs and kitchen staff, and to purchase all the food needed to nourish

our 230 guests: starting—of course—with hundreds if not thousands of carrot sticks. Visual artist Sydney Licht was so touched by the quality and service provided by our kitchen that she created this gouache during a recent visit.

Almost all of Yaddo's operating expenses – everything from residencies to roof repairs – are funded by the contributions we receive from those who know us best and recognize the importance of providing space, a sense of community, and sustenance to some of the most creative individuals working in the arts today.

Feeling inspired to add to the cookie jar? You can contribute at <http://www.yaddo.org/yaddo/support.asp> or by using the enclosed business reply envelope. All of us at Yaddo are grateful for your generosity and look forward to keeping you informed of our continued progress, made possible with your help.

## Bored to Death? Hardly!

Yaddo's 2010 NYC Benefit offered a behind-the-scenes glimpse of **Jonathan Ames'** hit HBO series, *Bored to Death*, and brought a large and enthusiastic crowd to the historic Players Club for a celebration of Yaddo and its artists. The benefit raised more than \$184,000 in support of the residency program. Guests were treated to a special screening of an episode from the popular comedy and a conversation with Ames, the show's creator, executive producer, and writer. Jason Schwartzman, who stars in *Bored to Death* as a quirky Brooklyn writer-turned-private detective (his character, it so happens, is called Jonathan Ames!), was also on hand. Many thanks go to Yaddo Board Member and author **Patricia Volk** and her committee for organizing such a memorable evening, and to **James Siena**, who created a limited-edition signed print, "The Woods," for the event's top sponsors.



**Clockwise from top left:** Peter Gould and Hiram Gordon; Gloria Vanderbilt and Curtis Harnack; Alexi Worth and Andrew Solmon; Ruben Reuenes, Jaime Wolf, Joseph Caldwell and Gail Gregg; Lisa Cortes and Ellen Morton; Barbara Toll, Susan Slesin and Michael Steinberg; Peter Gould, Patricia Volk, Jonathan Ames, Fiona Apple, Elaina Richardson and Jason Schwartzman.



# Yaddo

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## Saratoga Benefit: Something to Tweet About



A capacity crowd of nearly 200 enjoyed perfect weather, food, and the special ambiance of Yaddo, while being treated to a program by award-winning author Rick Moody, who entertained with a story written entirely in “Tweets”. A selection of unique items were auctioned, contributing to the almost \$115,000 raised in support of Yaddo’s residency program.