

# Yaddo



S U M M E R N E W S 2 0 1 6

## The Natural: Honoring Martin Puryear

Yaddo's annual New York City Benefit took place on May 18 at Three Sixty° in lower Manhattan. The recipient of the Yaddo Artist Medal, which is given annually for career achievement and dedication to our community, was sculptor Martin Puryear. He served on Yaddo's Board from 1982 to 1991, and taught and mentored many other Yaddo artists, including the late Terry Adkins. Robert Storr, professor of art at the Yale School of Art, introduced the honoree.

Puryear had a two-month residency at Yaddo in the early fall of 1979, staying in Stone South. It was a critical juncture in his life and career, shortly after his Williamsburg studio was lost to a fire. He has said that "Yaddo was the place where [he] was really able to consolidate [his] thinking and [his] mind." At the Benefit, he recalled the "blizzard of ginko leaves" falling from the trees as summer turned to autumn, and a marathon reading by Paul Auster.

Puryear's sublimely refined sculptures show the complexity and breadth of which Minimalism is capable. He adheres rigorously to traditional methods drawn from the cabinetmaking, weaving, and shipbuilding trades and uses organic materials and metals. The natural world and history, especially the history of the African diaspora and the African American experience, are major themes of his work.



ABOVE: Martin Puryear accepts Yaddo Artist Medal from Robert Storr. Photo by Thatcher Keats.



Martin Puryear's Minimalist aesthetic is writ large – very large, at 40 feet – in his latest sculpture, *Big Blink*, which is currently on view in Madison Square Park and is the must-see public art project of the summer. The gold bit and latticework shimmer in the summer sun.

**We gratefully acknowledge** the many sponsors who made our New York City Benefit a success and whose support for Yaddo artists and creativity is so essential to fulfilling our mission.

### CATALYSTS

The Amazon Literary Partnership  
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Martin Puryear, *Big Blink*, 2016. Pressure-treated laminated timbers, plywood, fiberglass, gold leaf, 40 x 10 x 38 ft. Collection of the artist, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery. © Martin Puryear. Photo (above left): Yasunori Matsui. Photo (above right): Rashmi Gill.

## Yaddo's Second Century: Five New Live/Work Studios Open

**D**one. Complete. Up and running. At our May 2 board meeting in New York, Gail Gregg, chairperson of our facilities committee (and a Yaddo artist), formally announced the opening of our five new live/work studios.

When we started on this path in 2013, with the creation of a Facilities Master Plan, our goals were twofold. First, these purpose-built studios would reaffirm our commitment to serving the needs of twenty-first century artists. The arts are in a constant state of renewal, and the facilities that serve them should be renewed, too. Second, it would open up more of the estate for the scenic walks that encourage the creative process. Both of these goals have been fully realized.

The studios are welcoming and full of light — “modest, warm, and inviting,” in the words of our facilities manager Shane Cassidy. Four have a vista onto our restored ponds. One is set back in the woods. Climate controlled, and built to high standards of energy conservation, they are available for year-round use. While modern, the studios cite the materials and architectural elements of Yaddo's historic buildings.

We are proud that this was a local project, from design to completion. Phinney Design Group produced the architectural plans, while the LA Group provided expertise in engineering and landscape design and management.

Perhaps most importantly, we learned that we were able to maintain a retreat during a period of intense construction, with many encouraging words of support from artists along the way!

We received support from both institutional and individual donors, with significant contributions from the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, the Evelyn Toll Family Foundation and the Plumsock Fund. Many Yaddo artists and members of the extended Saratoga Springs community also made gifts to help fund the studios.

The successful completion of this project gives us confidence as we move ahead with the next ambitious undertaking at Yaddo — the stabilization and restoration of our 126 year-old Mansion.



SHANE CASSIDY



SHANE CASSIDY



ELIZABETH HAYNES

This studio, situated on the ridge above Lake Alan, is one of two new live/work studios for composers. Both are equipped with a piano. These photographs show the studio in various phases of construction, from the laying of foundation in April 2015, to framing in the fall, to completion. It was funded by donors in the Capital Region.

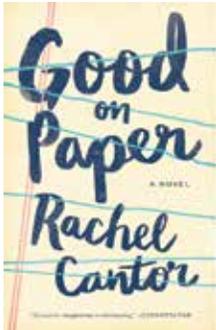


TRISTAN KIRVIN

## OUT AND ABOUT

Rachel Cantor in Washington, D.C.

“Can a ‘new’ life span an entire lifetime?” asks the narrator of Rachel Cantor’s second novel *Good on Paper* (Melville House). Shira Green is an erstwhile graduate student in medieval Italian lit raising a child with a friend and



BENNETT BECKENSTEIN

making a slender living in as a temp in New York. Unexpectedly, she gets a plum translation gig – one that turns out to be more cryptic than she bargained for and that threatens to tear her family apart. Cantor discussed new beginnings, friendship, and Dante with fellow Yaddo writer, Board Member and PEN/Faulkner president Richard McCann at NYU Washington, DC on April 13 this year.

### Liz Collins and Leslie Wayne in Saratoga Springs

New York-based fiber artist Liz Collins calls her installation *Energy Field*, on view at Skidmore College’s Tang Teaching Museum and Gallery through August 31, 2017, a “new age crystal cave.” Collins was a guest at Yaddo in 2014. She prompts questions about the division of labor and space by displaying products of feminized, often hidden processes, such as knitting and weaving, in public spaces. Collins made the red, black, and gold shields with draped thread at her back (*Hazardous Tether*, 2015). The cascading black thread is an element of her piece *Autonomy* (2015). The puppet to her left (*Sock*, 1992-2016) is by Nayland Blake.

The lavish room was a powerful mirror to the Tang’s spring exhibition *Alma Thomas*, organized in conjunction with the Studio Museum and Gallery in Harlem. Thomas (1891-1978) painted abstract, mosaic-like landscapes in strips of joyful rainbow colors.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Installation view, Liz Collins – *Energy Field*, 2015, Tang Teaching Museum. Photo by Jean Egger and Annelise Kelly; Yaddo artist Leslie Wayne (at right) and Lauren Haynes, associate curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem, on the opening night of *Alma Thomas*; Liz Collins standing in the installation. Photo by Tristan Kirvin.

Her mother was a dressmaker, and a textile artist’s sense of pattern and color shows through strongly in Thomas’s work. Puppetry was also a lifelong artistic interest, from the clay puppets she made as a child to the puppet theater she oversaw as a teacher at a settlement house. The puppet in *Energy Field* evokes this history.

Yaddo artist Leslie Wayne has contributed a new piece to the *Alma Thomas* exhibition catalogue in dialogue with the Washington Color School artist’s work. *Alma’s Garden* (2016) features screenprint, collage, and gouache on Japanese papers. The exhibition itself reopens at the Studio Museum on July 14.

### COMING UP

## Yaddo presents

It’s not too early to mark your calendars with our fall “Yaddo Presents” events! On Thursday, October 27, Meg Wolitzer comes to Saratoga Springs to discuss the adaptation of her novel *The Interestings* as an Amazon television drama.

On Thursday, November 3, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Sheri Fink discusses pandemics and disaster preparedness at NYU Washington, DC.

Please keep your eye on our Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/yaddocommunity>) and Twitter (@YaddoToday) accounts for more details. And if you’re a Yaddo artist, remember to tweet us with news and announcements!

## FRIDAY NIGHT, BROUGHT TO YOU BY YADDO

The summer is upon us, and for many people, that means travel. But for those who can't get away, internationally acclaimed Yaddo writer, Board Member, and PEN American Center president Andrew Solomon has some encouraging words: "We cannot view the whole world physically, but we can encounter it by reading." Re-live turning points in contemporary history from



someone who was there with his essay collection *Far and Away: Reporting from the Brink of Change: Seven Continents, Twenty-Five Years* (Simon & Schuster).

Newly released and upcoming fiction titles on our summer reading list also include Louise Erdrich's fifteenth novel, *LaRose* (HarperCollins), Adam Haslett's second novel *Imagine Me Gone* (Little, Brown & Company), and Flynn Berry's debut *Under the Harrow* (Penguin Random House).

Sheri Fink's *Five Days at Memorial: Life and Death in a Storm-Ravaged Hospital* (Penguin Random House), an exploration of decision-making in a specific disaster situation, is out in paperback. Tech types should check out Jonathon Keats's *You Belong to the Universe: Buckminster Fuller and the Future* (Oxford University Press). Chris Offutt's memoir *My Father, the*

*Pornographer* (Simon & Schuster) opens a time capsule of '60s and '70s pop/pulp/porn Americana.

It's the summer of Martin Puryear and his extraordinary career. While *Big Bling* rules Madison Square Park, his solo exhibition *Multiple Dimensions* is at the Smithsonian American Art Museum; you can see it there through September 5. Board Member Helen Frankenthaler, who visited Yaddo several times, and whose foundation underwrote one of our new live/work studios, is included in *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, a major new show at the Denver Art Museum. Hauser & Wirth

in New York has mounted a revelatory exhibition on an understudied period in Philip Guston's career.

Reviews of the new Broadway production of *The Color Purple*, based on Alice Walker's 1983 novel, have been thrilling. Paula Vogel retrieves lost theater history in her play *Indecent*, hailed by the *New York Times* as a "powerful new play" about community, loss, and theater itself.

Two films based on novels by Philip Roth will be released this year – *Indignation* on July 29 and *American Pastoral* on October 21. *Mad Men* creator Matthew Weiner directs episodes of the fourth season of *Orange Is the New Black*, starring Blair Brown. And if you know you'll be caught in holiday traffic at some point this summer, consider listening to the new literary podcast *TK with James Scott*.

## IN MEMORIAM:

### Aileen Ward and Michael Harper

We are saddened to announce that Yaddo lost two artists and board members recently. Aileen Ward passed away on May 31. Born in 1919, she earned her undergraduate degree from Smith College and her doctorate at Radcliffe. Ward was part of a remarkable generation of women critics and scholars who rose to prominence in the 1950s. Ward's field was Romantic poetry, and her book *John Keats: The Making of a Poet* won the National Book Award in 1964. She taught literature at many distinguished institutions, ending her career at New York University.

Ward's first visit to Yaddo was in 1954. She returned many times as a guest before being elected to Membership in 1981. In an essay she contributed to *A Century at Yaddo*, published in 2000, she drew a parallel between Yaddo and a sanctuary in Henry James's story "The Great Good Place." It encapsulated her style and her personality: spirited, astute, and erudite.



Michael Harper. Photo: Dorothy Alexander.

Michael Harper died on May 7, at the age of 78. His first book of poems, *Dear John, Dear Coltrane*, was published in 1970 with the support of Yaddo poet

Gwendolyn Brooks, and was nominated for a National Book Award. He came to Yaddo for the first time in 1975. *Images of Kin* (1977) earned him a second National Book Award nomination. Michael was elected to Membership in the Corporation in the fall of 1982. An emeritus professor of English at Brown University, Harper – though a New Yorker by birth – was Rhode Island's first poet laureate. Michael had two sons, Roland and Patrice, and a daughter, Rachel, who is

*continues on back cover*

## Well, Hello There: Meet Our Newest Members

**K**atherine Rosman, elected this past December, joined the *New York Times* staff as a writer in July 2014, after fourteen years with the *Wall Street Journal*. She writes for the Sunday Styles section, with a particular focus on how technology shapes our lives. She wrote much of her 2010 memoir *If You Knew Suzy: A Mother, a Daughter, a Reporter's Notebook* (HarperCollins) at Yaddo. She is a University of Michigan alumna.

Joseph Keckler, elected in May of this year, also graduated from the University of Michigan, where he was 2015/2016 Witt Artist-in-Residence. He is a singer, writer, and performance artist who transforms the experiences of everyday life into his own version of operatic aria. Reviewing a recent concert, the *Times* wrote that his "range shatters the conventional boundaries of classical singing." He has performed widely in the US and Europe and been awarded a Creative Capital Grant, a Franklin Furnace Grant, and a Fellowship in Interdisciplinary Work from New York Foundation for the Arts. He appeared in *Preludes* at Lincoln Center in 2015. He is currently developing *Let Me Die*, a durational performance of operatic deaths, and working as the summer artist-in-residence with Times Square Alliance. His first residency at Yaddo was in 2010.

Tamara Jenkins was nominated for an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay for *The Savages*, a drama starring Laura Linney and the late Philip Seymour Hoffman, which she also directed. Her short film *Family Remains* won Special Jury Recognition at the Sundance Film

Festival in 1994. She is a 1993 MFA graduate of the Tisch School of the Arts and a Guggenheim Fellowship recipient. She has had four residencies at Yaddo, most recently in 2014.

Huberta von Voss-Wittig is a German journalist and author with extensive international experience. Through the 1990s, she was spokesperson for Christian Democrat politician and Bundestag president Rita Süßmuth. Her book *Arme Kinder, Reiches Land* explores the harsh reality of child poverty in Germany; she has also written extensively

UN Security Council. Since 2014, their *Berliner Salon* in Washington has attracted leading authors like Mark Landler, David Rothkopf, Diane Rehm, Justice Breyer, George Packer, David Ignatius and Andrea Wulf. Huberta firmly believes that creative spaces like Yaddo are crucial for authors to focus on their work and engage in dialog with like-minded artists and thinkers. She will open their residence to several events for Yaddo to help raise our profile in the capital.

### And in Staff News ...

Here at Yaddo, we're always thinking about how to fine tune our definition of "good working conditions," making sure that we offer a 21st century iteration of the Trasks' fabled hospitality. Having a fantastic kitchen is, of course, essential to our success – excuse the pun, but it's

a crucial ingredient in making sure that our artists feel like personal guests in a well-run country house. We are therefore excited that the talented young chef Michael Blake has joined our team. His vision as head chef dovetails perfectly with our mission.

Michael says that he is inspired by a picture in his mind's-eye of the Yaddo kitchen as the Trasks would have known it, when it would have been "the center of activity on the estate." He is committed to purchasing as many ingredients as possible from Saratoga County

farms and to reinvigorating our own kitchen garden. A graduate of Johnson & Wales University's College of Culinary Arts, he moved with his wife Jessica and newborn, Jack, from Boston. In a lovely coincidence, Michael and Jessica were married in the Yaddo Gardens.



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Katherine Rosman, Joseph Keckler, Tamara Jenkins, Huberta von Voss-Wittig.



MALEEHA ELSADR



on the aftermath of the Armenian genocide and translated the acclaimed French-Lebanese poet Nadia Tuéni into German. She has been the US

correspondent of *Icon*, a leading German lifestyle magazine, for several years. Voss-Wittig lives in Washington, DC with her husband, German ambassador Peter Wittig. She founded a book salon during their previous posting in New York, where they represented Germany on the





# Yaddo

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## Celebrating the Best



The first half of 2016 has been rich in prestigious awards for Yaddo artists:

### **James Hannaham**

PEN/Faulkner Prize for Fiction  
(*Delicious Foods*; Little, Brown)

### **Anne Washburn**

Herb Alpert Award for Theater

### **Kyle deCamp**

Rome Prize for Design

### **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**

Windham-Campbell  
Literature Prize

### **William Finnegan**

Pulitzer Prize for Biography or  
Autobiography (*Barbarian Days*;  
*A Surfing Life*; Penguin)

### **Peter Balakian**

Pulitzer Prize for Poetry (*Ozone*;  
University of Chicago Press)

### **Bari Pearlman**

Peabody Award (Producer,  
Documentary Film, *How to  
Dance in Ohio*)

**IN MEMORIAM** continued from page 4

also a Yaddo author.

When we wrote to our Board, fellow Member and poet Jan Heller Levi responded with this tribute. We share it with you now with her permission:

Michael was an extraordinary poet and person. I met him during what I think was my first visit to Yaddo in the early 90s, and I was terrified of him; he was monumental to me, in both literary – and physical! – stature, and his (more often than not) silence at the table seemed to say so much more than the ridiculous chitchat I was spouting. Later in that stay, I got to know him a little – and I feel very fortunate to have received his warmth and generosity, as an accomplished poet to a younger one. Michael was also a great supporter of sustaining the work of poets important to me, to all of us, even if we don't always realize it, such as Muriel Rukeyser and June Jordan. He had the incredible capacity to see deeply into the past and to recognize what had to be carried forward, and he demonstrated that in his life, teaching and work. I was at Yaddo maybe one or two more times after that when Michael was there too, and even made the blunder of eating his dinner. (It had been left for him in the refrigerator one evening, and it was after twelve and I probably figured he wasn't going to want it. Wrong I was! But he forgave me.) Rest in peace, Michael, rest in beautiful protest ...