Holiday Reads from Yaddo Authors
Fiction, memoir, poetry, art: There’s something for everyone on your list this season

‘Tell your own story, and you will be interesting’
The celebrated life and ongoing legacy of Yaddo champion Louise Bourgeois

Our Artists in the Spotlight
New work and well-deserved honors in theater, film, exhibition, music, and more
Andrew O’Hagan (The Illuminations) explores the Internet era in The Secret Life: Three True Stories of the Digital Age (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), which includes absorbing essays about his stint as Julian Assange’s ghostwriter and an attempt to identify the inventor of Bitcoin.

Sealed national borders, mandatory birthing centers, and evolution-in-retrograde set the dystopian scene for National Book Award-winner Louise Erdrich’s new novel, Future Home of the Living God (Harper), in which pregnant Cedar Hawk Songmaker searches for her origins.

“I [am] an obscurity impersonator,” writes singer and performance artist Joseph Keckler in his literary debut, Dragon at the Edge of a Flat World: Portraits and Revelations (Turtle Point Press), which mines his odd jobs, ambiguous relationships, and mesmerizing chimeras.

The first story collection from Carmen Maria Machado, Her Body and Other Parties (Graywolf) – named a finalist for the 2017 National Book Award – blends elements of speculative fiction (sci-fi, horror, fantasy) with fables about women on the verge.

Over the course of one pivotal year, Bill Goldstein follows the daily lives of four writers – from their creative low-points to their greatest achievements – in The World Broke in Two: Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, and the Year that Changed Literature (Holt).

In Sisters (Text Publishing) by National Book Award-winner Lily Tuck, a woman fixates on her husband’s first wife, charting an obsessive course via inner musings that threaten to flood the narrator’s own carefully curated life.

Jeffrey Eugenides’ story collection Fresh Complaint (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) spans his career, including works published in the early ’90s as well as some that revisit characters from his novels. This first collection from the masterful author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Middlesex and The Virgin Suicides is eagerly awaited and long overdue.

High-Impact Art Books

In concert with an exhibition at DC Moore Gallery in Manhattan (Nov. 9 - Dec. 22), Pilgrimage: Photographs by Mary Frank (Eakins Press Foundation) collects the last decade of the artist’s work in photography, including images that combine elements of collage, painting, sculpture, and drawing as well as stone, charred wood, ice, and water. A book signing and conversation with Mary Frank and Yaddo board member Peter Kayafas will be held at the gallery on December 14.


Amy Sillman: The All-Over (Dancing Foxes Press/Portikus, Frankfurt) offers a compelling overview of the artist’s recent work – paintings, large-scale abstractions, diagrams, drawings, animations, and sculpture – which was also recently on view at Portikus, Frankfurt.

Last year, all 60 panels of Jacob Lawrence’s Migration Series were reunited for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, which co-published (along with The Phillips Collection) Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series (now out in paperback). Lawrence, who created these tempura paintings of the decades-long mass movement of black Americans to the North, visited Yaddo in the mid ’50s. Elizabeth Alexander edited the text, which includes newly commissioned poetry from her fellow Yaddo alum, Patricia Spears Jones.
From Ta-Nehisi Coates, the National Book Award-winning author of Between the World and Me, a new essay collection – We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy (One World) – that covers race, history, and politics as well as the trajectory of an important writer.

Jessica Bruder’s Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century (Norton) focuses on older, working-class Americans who travel across the country, sleeping in campers or cars, following seasonal employment. These “workampers” eke out a living with resiliency, hope and humor.

Nicole Krauss (Great House and The History of Love) weaves together the stories of two strangers set adrift in Forest Dark (Harper), a metafictive novel concerned with solitude, memory, and Jewish identity.

In October, playwright Annie Baker, whose latest work The Antipodes premiered off-Broadway earlier this year, was named a 2017 MacArthur Fellow. In residence at Yaddo in 2012, Baker won the Pulitzer Prize two years later for The Flick, a story that centers on a small-town movie theater. Lauded for her focus on everyday people, Baker mines charged silences as well as “the particular poetry of how [we] speak,” she told the MacArthur Foundation. In a recent piece for Interview magazine, she underscores the importance of support such as Yaddo provides: “There are some really groovy wonderful times, when I’m like, I have a new piece, I’m excited about it, I’m reading all these books about it, but there’s not a lot of time pressure, and I’m financially stable enough right now that I don’t have to be trying to get another job. But that’s so rare.”

YADDO POETS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

With A Doll for Throwing (Graywolf), Mary Jo Bang draws inspiration from the Bauhaus movement. Maureen N. McLane ruminates on the sun and other natural wonders in Some Say: Poems (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). An old story is made new for Love in the Last Days: After Tristan and Iseult (Knopf) by D. Nurkse. Expats in Paris seed a modern mythology in R. Zamora Linmark’s Pop Vérité (Hanging Loose). Both long-listed for the National Book Award, Sherod Santos observes the aftermath of a breakdown in Square Inch Hours (W.W. Norton) and Laura Kasischke subverts the “normal” in Where Now (Copper Canyon Press).

MORE HONORS & AWARDS

Congratulations to all the Yaddo artists who made 2017 a banner year!

• Journalist Philip Gourevitch received a Whiting Creative Nonfiction Grant for You Hide That You Hate Me and I Hide That I Know (forthcoming from Penguin Press), a book that revisits Rwanda 25 years after the genocide to explore how killers and survivors live side by side.

• The Man Booker Prize shortlist included Paul Auster’s 4 3 2 1 (Henry Holt) and Ali Smith’s Autumn (Anchor).

• Henri Cole, Amy Hempel, and Ann Patchett were inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which also presented Janice Caswell with the Arts and Letters Award, and Joe Fyfe with the Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Award.

• Jean Valentine received The Bollingen Prize for Poetry, and Maya Jasanoff received a Windham-Campbell Prize in Nonfiction – both awards facilitated by Yale University.

• Adam Haslett’s Imagine Me Gone (Little Brown) was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.

• For LaRose (Harper Collins), Louise Erdrich was a finalist for the Pen/Faulkner Award.

• Current Rome Prize Fellows of the American Academy in Rome include Rochelle Feinstein and Beverly McIver, both for Visual Arts.
The Steady Hand of Candace Wait

By Allan Gurganus

The morning after your arrival at Yaddo, you wake on clean sheets in a cube of spatial permission. Your keyboard or easel awaits you in a sunny woodland studio not too large, not too small, just right. You almost convince yourself, It's as if somebody knew exactly how my changing work requires that very studio ... As if somebody studied even my early archeaic efforts, even the recommendation letters ... As if this wizard even understood the lifelong trial of having a mother as crazy as mine.

That hidden person? Candace Wait. For decades, she has been the chess grandmaster. After sifting a thousand applications, she's placed artistic pawns and queens into positions of likeliest strategic strength. Candace will retire as Program Director this coming January. Only in imagining her absence can we start describing her hushed, completing presence.

When she came to Yaddo in 1981, she had worked as a news reporter, a theatre and dance critic. She'd graduated from Michigan State with a double major in Journalism and Drama. Her responsibilities at Yaddo grew as her depth and tact came clearer. Since then her essential roles have widened exponentially.

I recall my first sight of Candace. Like some schoolgirl heroine from Colette, she had a single honey-colored braid clear down her back. She moved with the posture of a born equestrienne. (I've since seen Candace on steeplechase horseback. Along with her steed, I respected her five-gaited sense of justice.) You knew at a glimpse this young woman was as averse to false sentiment as she was full of feeling. She has proved a true democrat, a brilliant judge of character, someone unusual in being as idealistic as she is practical. When one ancient Yaddo artist turned up for what would clearly be his last visit, he proved hardly able to walk; Candace commandeered a golf cart that got this veteran to meals in a manner not sad but sporting. Yaddo President Elaina Richardson says, “You learn with time that Candace is the one you always want on your raft. There’s nothing she won’t take on with aplomb. Together we’ve worked out new admissions protocols, we’ve reconfigured studios. We’ve also rolled up our sleeves and cleaned out a creepy number of Yaddo storage spaces (500 old hot water bottles, anyone?).

Candace is the backbone for tasks glamorous and not, mighty and mundane, acknowledged or unseen. She has thought about Yaddo with more dedication and love than almost anyone, ever. And for the record: She does know where Spencer Trask’s glass eye is kept!

Candace and her husband, Charles Wait, have commissioned works of art from many Yaddo artists, including a recent work by composer Michael Torke. Confronted with natural disasters or tantrums of artistic pique, Candace stays unflappable, on-mission. To a new member of the staff unfamiliar with the fauna of Yaddo’s 400 acres, Candace stated “Bats are not an emergency.” Translated into Latin, that reads: Vespertiliones non significant rem in discrimine esse. And it should be emblazoned upon all our shields.

Candace, we see you and we saw you. We loved you and we love you. We owe you. We thank you.

Allan Gurganus writes fiction and has been a member of the Yaddo board since 1985.
Meet the Members

Two accomplished artists, elected in September, have joined the Yaddo board. Writer, visual artist, performer, and teacher JAMES HANNAHAM is best known for his two acclaimed novels: Delicious Foods (Little Brown) won the PEN/Faulkner Award, the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, and was named a 2015 Notable Book by The New York Times and The Washington Post. God Says No (McSweeney’s) was included in the American Library Association’s Stonewall Honor Books. His journalism and criticism have appeared in Spin, Us, Out, Details, The New York Times Magazine, Slate, and Salon.com. Hannaham, who co-founded the experimental performance group Elevator Repair Service, has exhibited his text art at The Center for Emerging Visual Artists in Philadelphia. Among his favorite Yaddo memories: “Fleeing from and/or catching bats. Spending Christmas with, among others, Jonathan Lethem. Bringing the game ‘Werewolf’ to the drinks room and causing a fight. Many experiences of meeting someone and becoming both their friend and their fan.”

A tour de force in abstract painting, ODILI DONALD ODITA has been commissioned to paint large-scale wall installations in such locations as The United States Mission to the United Nations, New York Presbyterian Hospital, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Savannah College of Art. He has been featured in many solo exhibitions in institutions around the world. Born in Nigeria, raised in the Midwest, and now based in Philadelphia, Odita is the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painting and Sculpture, among other honors. Last year, his exhibition The Velocity of Change received rave reviews, meriting a profile in Forbes Magazine, which described the artist this way: “Though he is soft-spoken and deeply considerate, he presents absolute conviction in his work and his ideas. He can espouse critical and conceptual art theory and abstract politics in the same breath as expressing his love for John Coltrane, David Bowie, and comic books.”

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Since his arrival in May 2016, Chef Michael Blake has been quietly but radically transforming the Yaddo kitchen – and its philosophy. “How we think about food goes way beyond what we put on your plate,” he says. “Food relates to everything we care about: health, social justice, art and literature, agriculture, ecology.” Michael’s quest for fresh, local ingredients takes him from the region’s best organic producers to our own backyard, where he has revived the kitchen garden and even made use of a more unusual crop: the fruit from Yaddo’s two pawpaw trees. “Someone must have planted them in the garden years ago,” he says. “We puree the fruit and use it for a variety of desserts” – like this pawpaw pudding, a new guest favorite.

INGREDIENTS
- Serves 4 -

1 large egg + 1 egg yolk
1/4 cup white sugar
1.5 tablespoons flour
2 cups whole milk
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
3 tablespoons butter
1 cup pureed pawpaw fruit
Tiny pinch kosher salt, about 1/8 teaspoon
1 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon powdered sugar
Fresh mint leaves to garnish (optional)

METHOD
1. Using an electric mixer, beat the egg, egg yolk and sugar until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Gently fold in flour.
2. Heat the milk in a non-reactive saucepan over medium-low. When the milk is hot but not boiling, turn the heat to low. Gradually whisk in the egg and flour mixture. Cook until thickened, about 5 minutes, whisking constantly.
3. Remove from heat and continue whisking for 1-2 minutes to prevent clumping. Stir in the lemon juice, butter, pawpaw puree, and kosher salt.
4. Pour the pudding through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl or other container. Press plastic wrap onto the surface of the pudding and chill immediately in the refrigerator. The pudding will keep for at least a week.
5. To serve, whip the cream and powdered sugar until stiff peaks form. Spoon the pudding into four 1-cup ramekins, leaving at least 1/2 inch of space at top. Cover the pudding with whipped cream and smooth the top. Garnish with mint and additional powdered sugar.
Coming Attractions

Political drama, an alter ego, and hot-mess art: New and classic work from Yaddo artists in performance, film, exhibition, and music fills the fall season.

ON STAGE Yaddo board member and Tony Award-winner Blair Brown appears alongside Uma Thurman on Broadway in The Parisian Woman – a political drama set in Washington D.C. by House of Cards creator Beau Willimon, with previews beginning Nov. 9 at the Hudson Theatre.

David Cale’s world premiere of Harry Clarke stars Billy Crudup as a shy Midwesterner who creates an alter ego, with performances through Dec. 3 at Vineyard Theatre. Audible is releasing a recording of the play in early 2018. The New York premiere of 20th Century Blues, a funny, evocative account of friendship among women, by Susan Miller (My Left Breast) runs Nov. 26-Jan. 28 at The Alice Griffin Jewel Box Theatre at The Pershing Square Signature Center.

IN FINE FORM In the Tower: Anne Truitt (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Nov. 19-April 1) presents seminal paintings and works of sculpture, tracing the artist’s development over five decades. Martin Puryear (Parasol, London, U.K., through Dec. 6) spans 40 years of the artist’s practice with more than 30 sculptures on view. Sheila Pepe: Hot Mess Formalism (Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ, through Jan. 28) offers the first, mid-career survey of this acclaimed artist known for her large-scale installations.

LEGENDS OF YADDO Tributes are blooming all over the world as part of Leonard Bernstein at 100, an homage that continues until Aug. 2019. The New York Philharmonic is hosting performances of his complete symphonic works, through Nov. 14. The revival of The Mother of Us All – an opera by Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein – celebrates Susan B. Anthony and the Women’s Suffrage Movement and marks the reopening of New York State’s oldest surviving theater, Hudson Hall in Hudson, New York, Nov. 11-15.


WRITE TO REEL Jonathan Lethem appears in two documentaries. Hello Hello Hello: Lee Ranaldo: Electric Trim features the author’s collaboration with Ranaldo, a cofounder of the band Sonic Youth, while Fred Barney Taylor’s documentary Lethem is about the man himself. Andrew Solomon’s book Far From the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity is now a documentary, premiering Nov. 10 at the Doc NYC festival. Call Me by Your Name – a sultry adaption of Andre Aciman’s novel and a favorite of the film-festival circuit – arrives back in the U.S. in November.

SCREEN TIME Christened by Sundance, director and co-writer Dee Rees’ film Mudbound, with Mary J. Blige, centers on the tension between a black sharecropping family and white landowners in post-World War II Mississippi. It opens in theaters and on Netflix November 17.
The celebrated artist and “force of nature” (The New York Times) who died in 2010 at age 98 continues to capture the public imagination. For more than 40 years, Bourgeois was a friend and colleague to Yaddo, offering her wisdom as a member of the board and on the admissions panel. Dedicated to encouraging other artists, she established an endowed residency for young sculptors in 1995, ensuring that her support and influence live on.

Among the recent groundswell of interest: The Museum of Modern Art drew from its archive of printed compositions to curate Louise Bourgeois: An Unfolding Portrait (through Jan. 28), which includes some 300 works: primarily prints (engravings, etchings and silkscreens, some made to illustrate books Bourgeois herself wrote) but also paintings, drawings, and 23 sculptures. MoMA has also created an online archive — Louise Bourgeois: The Complete Prints & Books — documenting more than 4,600 prints as well as an exhibition catalogue.

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art constructed a new gallery to house Louise Bourgeois, an exhibition of her marble sculptures (on view through 2018). Some of the monumental works are new to the United States.

Other locations hosting Bourgeois solo exhibitions this fall included the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (Louise Bourgeois: Twosome, through Jan. 20, 2018), New York’s Marlborough Gallery (Louise Bourgeois: Prints) and Tel Aviv’s Gordon Gallery (Pink Days/Blue Days). Eight holograms by the artist appeared earlier this year at Cheim & Read Gallery in New York City.

The Easton Foundation, a nonprofit established by the artist, is conserving Bourgeois’s Chelsea townhouse and developing an archive, study center and residency for curators and scholars. The home and studio are expected to reopen for guided tours on a limited basis in 2018.


IN MEMORIAM

JOHN ASHBERY, who became a member of the Yaddo board in 1985, died September 3 at age 90. A prolific original, Ashbery published 28 poetry collections, including his seminal work, Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror (1975), which won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award. He went on to receive many accolades, including the National Humanities Medal in 2011. President Barack Obama said Ashbery’s work had “profoundly influenced generations of writers.” Here, a few lines from the final section of his 1994 collection And the Stars Were Shining:

I’ve told you before how afraid this makes me, but I think we can handle it together, and this is as good a place as any to unseal my last surprise: you, as you go, diffident, indifferent, but with the sky for an awning for as many days as it pleases it to cover you.

“Tell your own story, and you will be interesting.”
—Louise Bourgeois

JOHN A. NELSON, who served as Vice President of Finance and Operations at Yaddo (1991-2002), died August 30 at age 91. Nelson was a healthcare administrator prior to his role at Yaddo, where he helped to lead our community into the computer era and initiated improvements to the buildings and grounds. Upon his retirement, Nelson advocated for improving health insurance coverage for all Americans.
When I visited Yaddo . . . A Loving, Faithful Animal was a short story. Over the course of that first stay, it became a novella. Like so many things, organic and non, perhaps it simply grew to fill the space it was allowed. Those four weeks of uncluttered time were like a sudden rush of air and light. Residencies, for me, aren’t so much about locking down a predetermined number of words — [but] more about this allowance for clarity and unhindered drift. As with walking from a low-ceilinged room into a high-ceilinged room, one thinks more clearly, perhaps more ambitiously.”