“It’s all about the sentences. It’s about the way the sentences move in the paragraphs. It’s about rhythm. It’s about ambiguity. It’s about the way emotion, in difficult circumstances, gets captured in language. It’s about instances of consciousness. It’s about besieged consciousness. It’s about love trouble. It’s about death. It’s about suicide. It’s about the body. It’s about skepticism. It’s against sentimentality. It’s against cheap sentiment. It’s about regret. It’s about survival. It’s about the sentences used to enact and defend survival.” – Rick Moody
THE YEAR OF YADDO FIRSTS
From first-time guests to new initiatives and partnerships, we’re celebrating a banner year.

Fresh off the Yaddo Artist Reunion, where we found old (and new!) friends, danced to the Dog House Band, and ignited another Renaissance in Harlem, plus bestowed the 2018 Yaddo Artist Medal upon the incomparable Amy Hempel, we are entering into the spirit of the season and reflecting on gratitude. With your support (thank you!), we’ve reached major milestones in our efforts to expand our community, launch new initiatives, and continue the multimillion-dollar stabilization and restoration of our historic Mansion. Bolstered by our community, we’re ready to meet the challenges ahead. Our outstanding board leadership has inspired us to make like the Trasks and tinker with all the possibilities inherent in the way we bear Yaddo forward into its second century of service and “perpetual house parties,” to quote Katrina, where artists live for “creating, creating, creating!”

“This residency changed my life. Thank you!”
— Allie Tova Hirsch, writer from Ann Arbor, MI

Gates Open

Over the past 12 years, some 60 percent of guests who came to Yaddo did so for the first time (and we’ve long been trending at least half female!). We’ve also made strides in heterogeneity. As we anticipate the reopening of our Mansion, we’re continually engaged in conversations about capacity and the question, Who is Yaddo for? We live in a dynamic world; artists mirror that world. Yaddo celebrates community and artistic achievement, from the grass-roots level of those who labor in obscurity, to the strata of accomplished supernovas who’ve demonstrated a lifetime of mastery.

FIRST VISITS: 2007-2018

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<th>Year</th>
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68% of artists were first-time guests in 2018
Five years ago, we kicked off the largest capital campaign in our history to raise $10 million to stabilize and restore our historic Mansion. In 2018, we reached great heights in realizing that goal. With more than $8 million committed, we’ve taken the plunge to renew Yaddo for future generations.

This year, specially engineered scaffolding (foundation to roof!) enveloped our historic Mansion, which is undergoing unprecedented restoration and stabilization.

New Partners: In concert with The Maurice Sendak Foundation, we unveiled The Sendak/Glynn Narrative Illustration Residency—designated for artists whose primary media is work on paper through the use of non-digital tools.

Stewart’s Shops and The Dake Family, a fund of The Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region, signed on with a $5,000 grant to support “Access to Yaddo,” our cultural enrichment program for students: Yaddo Club facilitates research projects as part of Saratoga Springs High School’s humanities curriculum.

Contending with construction closures inspired experimentation: This summer, we held an outdoor feast on the patio at West House, with Yaddo Chef Michael Blake improvising a meal by firepit: grilled salmon, mussels in a wok, pita with smoked eggplant, whipped feta and zhug; and plancha-roasted peaches with homemade honey ice cream.

New tradition!

Re-opening of our Mansion, we anticipate future innovative initiatives to bring together our artists with the general public.

“...Our first board member to meet the Queen!”

“The Queen had sparkling eyes, a warm and kind attitude, a subtle humor and asked thoughtful and sensitive questions—all qualities that have become so rare among world leaders.”

– Huberta von Voss-Wittig

-5 YADDO FIRSTS

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4. This fall, in partnership with the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, we presented Cocktails & Conversation—a new series on the intersection of art, ideas and culture—made possible by a grant from The Maurer Family Foundation, which also sponsored our “Celebration of Yaddo Firsts” programming in the Yaddo Artist Reunion. With the re-opening of our Mansion, we anticipate future innovative initiatives to bring together our artists with the general public.

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SPOTLIGHT ON SCREEN

Tamara Jenkins’ Private Life charmed the film festival circuit, and now is on Netflix: Starring Kathryn Hahn, Paul Giamatti, Molly Shannon (and Yaddo!), the story centers on a couple’s attempt to form a family.

Novelist and Mad Men creator Matthew Weiner’s The Romanoffs, an anthology series on Amazon, follows contemporary characters who believe they are descendants of Russian royalty.

In Viper Club, the latest drama from Maryam Keshavarz, Susan Sarandon plays a working-class mom struggling to secure the release of her son, a war correspondent taken hostage by ISIS.

Jason Reitman’s The Front Runner follows the rise of Senator Gary Hart (Hugh Jackman)—the Democratic presidential candidate poised to succeed Ronald Regan—and the scandal that derailed his bid.

Inspired by Enemies: A History of the FBI—Pulitzer Prize-winner Tim Weiner’s book on our fraught system of checks and balances—a new documentary series premieres on Showtime, with the first of four installments on Nov. 18.

A prodigal son returns from rehab in Ben Is Back by Peter Hedges; Ben’s mother Holly (Julia Roberts) stops at nothing to unite her family in this moving drama (in theaters Dec. 7) that offers an intimate view of America’s opiate crisis.

On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker, A’Leila Bundles’ biography of her great-great grandmother—one of the first female African American millionaires of the early 20th century—is in development to become a Netflix series starring Oscar-winner Octavia Spencer (The Help).

GOTH, DANCE, DRAG

Strange Window: The Turn of the Screw—a new interpretation of Henry James’ gothic classic—has its New York debut as part of the 2018 Next Wave Festival at BAM, Dec. 12 – 15: Founded and directed by Marianne Weems, The Builders Association blends performance, text, video and sound to tell this story of a governess in a haunted estate.

Black Light—set to pop, rock, soul and disco—tours the darkness of personal and political upheaval in an immersive performance piece featuring the “very particular radiance” (The New Yorker) of Jomama Jones, alter ego of Daniel...

Choreographer Christopher Williams shares excerpts of his Bessie Award-winning work Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins and The Golden Legend on Dec. 2 as part of “Sundays on Broadway” at WeisAcres. Excerpts from his new ballet, Narcissus, will be on view at Douglas Dunn Studio, Dec. 3 – 8.

FEAST YOUR EYES

Rochelle Feinstein: Image of an Image (Bronx Museum, through March 3) is the first comprehensive survey of the artist’s work in the U.S. Louis Stettner: Traveling Light (SFMoMA, through May 27) presents a thematic retrospective of his street photography of New York and Paris—his “two loves.” Alfred Leslie: Pixel Scores (Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH, Jan. 13 – March 10) offers the acclaimed artist’s hand-crafted digital images that stretch the boundaries of both painting and photography, melding imaginative pathways into interpretive portraits.

Drawings, paintings, silkscreens, video animation and zines—Amy Sillman’s fun, offbeat work unfolds in Landline (Camden Arts Centre, London, through Jan. 6), her first international exhibition in the U.K.

HEAR WE ARE

Laura Elise Schwendinger’s Artemisia—an opera based upon the life of Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c.1656)—will be performed at Trinity Wall Street as part of the Time’s Arrow festival, March 7 & 9.

Reiterations, a three-concert series curated by Christopher Cerrone, explores how music evolves over time, giving composers a chance to develop work post-premiere with Metropolis Ensemble, Dec. 3 and Jan 7 - 8. His new opera will be excerpted at The Morgan Library & Museum on March 3.

YADDO WELCOMES NEW LEADERSHIP

Peter Kayafas and Janice Y.K. Lee have been elected to serve as new co-chairs of the board, succeeding A.M. Homes and Susan Unterberg, who have stepped down after five successful years. A member of Yaddo’s board since 2000, Peter Kayafas is a photographer, publisher, curator and teacher, as well as the Director of the Eakins Press Foundation. His photographs are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, The New York Public Library, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago, among others. He teaches photography at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Janice Y. K. Lee, who joined Yaddo’s board in 2013, is the author of the highly acclaimed novels The Piano Teacher (which spent 19 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list and was translated into 26 languages worldwide) and The Expatriates (which will be adapted as a television series for Amazon Studios by Nicole Kidman’s Blossom Films). Her writing has appeared in ELLE, Mirabella, Glamour, and Travel & Leisure, among other publications. Yaddo President Elaina Richardson said the change in leadership comes at a particularly crucial period in Yaddo’s history. “Yaddo has been remarkably fortunate in its board leadership, with dedicated and forward-thinking stewardship for almost a century,” she said. “Peter and Janice are the ideal addition to that line of leaders. They are perfectly poised to build on all that past chairs have accomplished, steering Yaddo into a second century with an appreciation of our past and a clear vision of where we go next.”

Meet Our New Member

Visual artist Laura Karetzky was elected to the Yaddo board at the Annual Meeting on September 12. A two-time Yaddo guest working in painting, video, and multimedia installation, the Brooklyn-based artist received her BFA from Carnegie-Mellon University and her MFA from The New York Academy of Art. Recent solo exhibitions include Embedded, at the Lora Schlesinger Gallery in Los Angeles, and In-Communication/In-Transit, at BRIC House in New York City. Group exhibitions include Tick-Tock, curated by Bartholomew Bland at the Lehman College Art Gallery; Unloaded, curated by Susanne Slavick at the Marcia Wood Gallery; Between Us, at The Lodge Gallery; and Piece by Piece curated by Eric Fischl (an upcoming traveling exhibition). Karetzky’s work, which examines discourse in the digital age and explores our attempts to stay connected over all kinds of distances, has been featured in artcritical, Hyperallergic, The New York Times, American Arts Quarterly and is in the private collection of Snapchat. Of her two Yaddo residencies, she says, “Yaddo is a place where time stands still long enough to allow focus and clarity to have a chance to emerge—a respite more vitally necessary today than even Katrina could have imagined.”
Winter Reads, Brought to You by Yaddo

From political noir to the natural world, and fresh work from both Jonathans—these new books from Yaddo authors will keep you turning pages till dawn.

Fleeing a tanking marriage, an SEC investigation and the responsibilities of fatherhood, a New York hedge-funder boards a Greyhound bus bound for a mid-life crisis in Lake Success, Gary Shteyngart’s fourth novel.

Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin revisits the lives of former presidents, contrasting their approaches to major challenges while illuminating the kind of resilience, grit and moral purpose it takes to become a true leader.

“The reader is a friend, not an adversary, not a spectator” reads No. 1 of Jonathan Franzen’s “Ten Rules of the Novelist,” included in this incisive essay collection, The End of the End of the Earth.

Jonathan Lethem is back in noir with The Feral Detective, which New York magazine called “the first great novel about the Trump era.” The story follows Phoebe, a consummate New Yorker, who travels to California after the 2016 election in search of a friend’s missing daughter, but ends up enmeshed in a tribal war signifying “the gulf between the privileged and the dispossessed,” per Kirkus Reviews.

Olivia Laing spins an alter ego from the life and work of punk provocateur Kathy Acker in Crudo, Laing’s first novel following three acclaimed books of nonfiction, including The Trip to Echo Spring and The Lonely City.

Post-rehab, an ex-NYPD detective has a second chance at stability as an in-house detective for a small law firm: She investigates the murder of an actress, balancing her return to sobriety with scandal in Sarah Schulman’s Maggie Terry, an inventive, electric novel.

In John Woman, a boy reinvents himself to escape his violent past. “John” finds refuge in universities, becoming an unconventional history professor at a liberal arts college in Arizona, where his past threatens to unravel his present. The author of more than 50 critically acclaimed books, Walter Mosley delivers another knockout “with the unexpected force of a left hook” (Kirkus Reviews).

Historian and Princeton University Professor Nell Painter (The History of White People) returned to school in her 60s to study art, pursuing a graduate degree from the Rhode Island School of Design. The oldest and only black student in a sea of dyed hair and piercings, Painter records her experiences in Old in Art School: A Memoir of Starting Over.

“In the library I could have anything I wanted,” Susan Orlean writes in The Library Book, her account of a catastrophic fire that swept the Los Angeles Central Public Library in 1986. While investigating the cause of the disaster that consumed more than 400 thousand books and took some seven hours and 3 million gallons of water to extinguish, Orlean ruminates on her mother’s dementia, the motivations of psychopaths, and how shared spaces matter now more than ever.

Just in time for the spring thaw, Amy Hempel’s Sing to It—a masterly collection of 15 breathtaking stories—comes out in March. In “Cloudland,” a home health aide grapples with a life-altering decision made decades ago. In “Greed,” infidelity spells disaster. In “A Full-Service Shelter,” a volunteer cares for doomed pit bulls. As always, the prose delivers balm for the weary and a few tips on how to solve being alive.

INTRODUCING...

The first passage from a terrific debut novel:
Three young people—a onetime evangelist, a piano prodigy, and a charismatic cult leader—test the fires of faith in R.O. Kwon’s The Incendiaries.

“They’d have gathered on a rooftop in Noxhurst to watch the explosion. Platt Hall, I think, eleven floors up: I know his ego, and he’d have picked the tallest point he could. So often, I’ve imagined how they felt, waiting… Three minutes to go, two, one.”

SMEETA MAHANTI
FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS

No news here, we just wanted to visit with Susan Brynteson, our favorite librarian.

Post-up cards and chocolate horses. Yellow roses for Katrina’s grave.

Newspapers from all over. The feeling that creative angst is worth it—given the way she holds a book. These are a few of the things Susan Brynteson leaves behind each summer after she visits Yaddo.

For decades, she has poured effort, resources and time into the Yaddo Authors Library—a private collection of books by Yaddo artists for the use of guests in residence (the library is closed to the public). She uses her vacation for this: “My family has done a lot of traveling, and I haven’t. I always spent my time at Yaddo—and it’s been wonderful.”

When she arrived here at the request of then-secretary (and poet) Pauline Hanson, who reported to Elizabeth Ames, the library’s organization was “literally in shoeboxes,” says Susan. “Yaddo had no money to buy expensive card catalogues.” She arranged with a library colleague who was disposing of one to have it come to Yaddo, and then set about organizing the books. Since then, Susan has come back every summer in the same manner as other guests, joining them for dinner each evening and working by day on the library.

In the meantime, she continued her extraordinary career: Susan was Vice Provost for Libraries and May Morris University Librarian at the University of Delaware, where she previously served as Director of Libraries. During her 35-year tenure there, she ushered the library into the age of technology, innovating new methods to expand and streamline access. She was instrumental in the University of Delaware Library’s being invited into membership in the exclusive Association of Research Libraries and acquiring former Vice President Joe Biden’s senatorial papers. Prior to this role, she worked for research libraries all over the country. Susan is active in national professional organizations, including a stint as president of a major division of the American Library Association (ALA), chairing several ALA committees, and testifying before congressional committees about federal library support. Susan is a member (as was Spencer Trask) of the Grolier Club in New York, the oldest and largest bibliophilic society in America.

As our volunteer librarian, Susan has paid out of pocket to have books restored, then placed back on the shelves, including *Strangers on a Train*, which includes the inscription: “To Yaddo – with profoundest gratitude for the summer of peace that let me write this book. Patricia Highsmith, March 1950.”

She has trolled antiquarian databases, pursued stolen books, and put the fear of Susan into rare book dealers. A good librarian is hard to find.

We have her, among others, to thank for the Yaddo archive, acquired by the New York Public Library (NYPL) with a grant from the Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund. After guarding the archival materials for years and quietly advocating for their placement, Susan and her fellow board members Margo Viscusi and Linda Collins supervised the transport to NYPL, including the Mansion dining room table on loan for a companion exhibit in 2008. Flipped on its face for loading by NYPL staff wearing white gloves, she says, “It was covered with chewing gum!”

Remember that exhibition? The tower of books! “I was worried, because they were the original books,” she says. “But they put a metal plate between [each]. It looked fragile, but it wasn’t fragile at all.”

Kind of like the legacy of Yaddo. This summer, we saw scaffolding envelope

“Susan Brynteson, archivist, savant, and savior of the Yaddo Library.” —Allan Gurganus

our historic Mansion to prepare it for stabilization and restoration. Change is hard and scary. As we preserve our past, we’re building a sustainable future, and with virtuosos like Susan Brynteson on tap, that future feels possible.

But on this August morning, Susan is concerned with the task at hand, sorting newly published books. “We’re running out of shelves,” she says, “I brought my ruler along to measure.”

And for those writers still struggling to finish a book, she offers, “This room is waiting for you.”
On my first or second visit, someone suggested Real People, which was on the shelf. It's set at a thinly disguised Yaddo residency, and it's wonderfully scurrilous. I read the first chapter, and then the whole book. She's an irresistibly readable novelist. I've been reading her ever since.

One of my obsessions with Lurie and some other post-war American writers is that they're so readable. They give so much pleasure so readily. They become overlooked for giving too much pleasure. I think of Thomas Berger also in that category.

In England, I think, they're better at valuing the virtue of charm in a novelist. But here we are with Lurie—we have one of our own!

She's also great in ways that an American novelist ought to be. She's intrigued by the problem and the promise of American idealism. Imaginary Friends explores the belief in psychic powers and utopian groups that affiliate around the idea that they're going to be contacted by a higher or an alien intelligence. While writing beautifully about the world we know, she also writes about the ideological dream that animates American life, the idea that there's a frontier or realm of transformation or utopia that's just around the corner.

For example, The Nowhere City is about a young couple coming to Los Angeles. They're easterners who go west. Obviously, that's something I identify with, since I've done it a couple of different times. They're engaged with, well, the discovery of themselves in this new environment. They look different to themselves, and their relationship looks dangerously different when they get to L.A., but they're following an American script: Go west and seek the frontier of self-invention. Like a lot of people, they get lost in that frontier. They don't know what to make of the infinite possibilities.

That's the problem of the American story—what to do with freedom. Where does it lead, what does it get you? Even The War Between the Tates, a novel of infidelity and divorce, is about the problem of freedom. What do you attain by breaking out of your script, or your appointed role in life?

In American literary culture, you're supposed to have broken the novel open, or have defied its form in some iconoclastic way. Lurie is devoted to the novel. She exemplifies what the traditional novel can do in all its intricate patterning and the embrace of pure story. I'm flipping over this early edition of one of her books, and here's praise from Christopher Isherwood. He wrote: “She is perhaps even more shocking than she knows, shocking like Jane Austen, not Genet.” There it is in a nutshell. When he was writing in the ’60s, literary people wanted to be shocked in the manner of Genet, but Isherwood suggests they were overlooking how the acute insight into human foibles that Jane Austen affords us cuts just as deeply as the flagrant boundary-smashing of Jean Genet. And it's that Austen-like incisiveness that Lurie offers.

One of the human values that's selling low right now, and it would be a good time to buy stock in it—it's not even exclusively a literary value—is ruefulness. Not enough people are rueful anymore. If people could discover the power of ruefulness it would bring 50 percent of the screaming and mockery and rage on Twitter or on cable television to a halt. Lurie has it in spades. She writes ruefully about what she discovers, like: I'm so sorry to have to tell you it's like this. It just is, and I can't help us right now, but I'm going to tell you what I know.

The world could use a whole lot more ruefulness.

— Jonathan Lethem in conversation with Kristy Davis

Jonathan Lethem on Alison Lurie

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— Jonathan Lethem in conversation with Kristy Davis

First a guest here in 1997, Lethem returned several times “to escape the holidays,” he says. “I wrote portions of Motherless Brooklyn and The Fortress of Solitude on those winter visits.” Though he stayed in various spaces, “West House feels like the home-field advantage for me,” he says. His father, Richard Brown Lethem, donated a painting that hangs in a hallway there. Jonathan’s new novel, The Feral Detective (see p. 6), comes out this month.

ABOVE: Alison Lurie introducing Philip Roth at the 2014 Yaddo Artist Reunion, where he received the Yaddo Artist Medal.
Heather Clark on Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath spent the fall of 1959 at Yaddo with her husband, Ted Hughes. Each day after breakfast the couple parted: Plath to her sunny third-floor studio, Room 8, in West House; Hughes to his small, one-room cottage, "Outlook," further in the woods. A five-minute walk separated the couple, but it was enough to make Plath feel a new independence. "I am so happy we can work apart, for that is what we've really needed," she wrote her mother. Plath, in her first trimester of pregnancy, would struggle with Yaddo's seclusion, but its monasticism allowed her to focus on her art. Uninterrupted, with a room of her own, she experienced a creative breakthrough that fall when she wrote the "Poem for a Birthday" sequence and "The Colossus." As I worked on my biography of Sylvia Plath at Yaddo, I was able to retrace her steps and experience the place that had given her the courage, as she wrote in her journal, "To be true to my own weirdnesses." I even interviewed the artist Howard Rogovin, who painted Plath's portrait at Yaddo, in the very study where Rogovin had stayed in 1959. Spending two weeks at Yaddo gave me a more visceral understanding of Plath's time there, and helped me paint a more accurate biographical portrait of this important phase of Plath's life.


Rick Moody on Amy Hempel

"That I got to spend a few weeks with Amy Hempel at Yaddo in the early oughts is a fine example of how thrilling the community is there, and a testament to how powerful friendships so often take root in Yaddo's fertile soil. It was an unforgettable experience for me, as so many Yaddo visits have been."

Amy Hempel photographed by Jill Krementz in New York City on January 19, 2008. © All rights reserved.
FOUR QUESTIONS for Tayari Jones

Tayari Jones, a guest here in 2004, is now a household name, with her fourth novel, *An American Marriage*, garnering acclaim such as inclusion in Oprah’s Book Club and former President Barack Obama’s Summer Reading List, among other honors. Here, she shares her thoughts on life, work, and this galvanizing time.

Of the many accolades you’ve earned since *An American Marriage* came out this year, do you have a favorite moment?

My favorite so far was returning to my alma mater, Spelman College, to discuss *An American Marriage* with the first-year students, all of whom had read the book. The moment was incredibly full-circle for me, as I became a writer at Spelman. After I spoke, the students gave me a standing ovation and tears just jumped out of my eyes! It was the most affirming moment of my career.

In 1991, more than 1,600 black women (including you!) purchased a full-page ad in *The New York Times* to support Anita Hill. How has the era of #MeToo influenced your life and work?

I understand #MeToo as an intersectional feminist movement, much in the way that Tarana Burke envisioned it when she started using the term over a decade ago to discuss the impact of sexual assault on black women. *An American Marriage* lives at the Venn diagram overlap of #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. What happens when a black man is wrongly accused of rape? I felt like I was walking a tightrope with this subject matter. How to write about a woman who makes a false rape allegation without seeming to undermine the credibility of survivors?

At the same time, I couldn’t ignore the long history of black men victimized by the justice system as a result of false claims. This, I believe, is an instance when fiction gives us more flexibility than non-fiction. Fictional characters are more candid than real people, allowing much more space for nuance.

But back to Anita Hill, I was honored to be offered the opportunity to sign the ad. I was 20 years old, and the crumpled bills I contributed represented a real sacrifice. I knew that I had little to give, but I wanted to give it. This is sometimes how I feel as a writer. My words can feel like a small contribution in the face of the world’s staggering challenges, but they are what I have to offer.

I recently revisited [the ad]… Our names are all so tiny that you can’t really tell who is who, but what you get is the combined impact of all of our effort. Writing is like that, too. My writing, joined with other voices, will be heard. We are all working together whether we know it or not.

How do you view the interplay between art and activism?

We are all activists in some way. Even people who are choosing inaction are influencing the outcome of events.

As a young writer, I understood the word “activism” to be an insult, suggesting that the writing was more workman-like than beautiful. I was given the idea that having a discernible point-of-view reduced your work to propaganda. I now see how this thinking silences writers of color. Art can transform an idea into feeling.

My hope with *An American Marriage* is that the challenges of my characters—a young couple separated by a wrongful conviction—will make readers feel as though they personally know someone facing this injustice. I hope that something that once seemed abstract, will feel concrete. I also hope that people for whom this issue is real—the people who have incarcerated loved ones—I hope they feel seen and heard.

Tell us about the impact of Yaddo.

Yaddo gives the gift of uninterrupted time. There is nothing like privacy and quiet to stimulate creativity.
WHERE ART LIVES

Sugar Vendil, a 35-year-old performance artist currently working on a piece about the legacy of colonization in the Philippines, made her first trip here this summer. “For me, it’s really necessary to be around artists of other disciplines,” she says. “I thought everyone was so talented, and I got something from everyone, whatever their medium.”

The connections she made with fellow artists at Yaddo have resulted in multiple collaborations since her residency ended, and also gave her a chance to step outside the sometimes-insular world of artists working in New York City. “When you’re with people who are only in your discipline, you end up talking shop,” she says. “But if you think big-picture, art isn’t narrowed down to how you can write notes, or how you can paint. It’s a bigger idea of contemplating and dissecting the human condition.”

During her residency, Vendil found herself with some much-needed time to interrogate those larger ideas—and to let her mind wander. “To actually walk through the woods was something I don’t get to do regularly,” she says about her daily strolls between the two studios she used at Yaddo, one for composing music and one for choreographing movement. “Walking in general, even here in the city, helps me come up with ideas. At Yaddo, you’re surrounded by nature. I think that having all those pockets of space in your brain opens up more possibilities.”

HONORS & AWARDS

Congratulations to all the Yaddo artists who made 2018 a stellar year!

Our 2016 Yaddo Artist Medal recipient Martin Puryear will represent the United States at the Venice Biennale, with new work in the U.S. Pavilion, May 11 through Nov. 24, 2019.

Succeeding Yaddo alum Andrew Solomon, Pulitzer Prize-winner Jennifer Egan became the president of PEN America. Joan Silber received the 2018 PEN/Faulkner Award in Fiction for Improvement, and Edmund White received the 2018 PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction.

Andrew Sean Greer received the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction for his novel Less. Whiting Award winners included Esmé Weijun Wang, author of the forthcoming essay collection, The Collected Schizophrenias, for Nonfiction, and Rickey Laurentiis (Boy with Thorn) for poetry. National Book Award finalists included Lauren Groff (Florida), Rebecca Makkai (The Great Believers), and Sigrid Nunez (The Friend) for Fiction.

Elizabeth Alexander was named president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the country’s largest humanities philanthropy.

The American Academy in Rome awarded Rome Prize Fellowships to Kirstin Valdez Quade and Bennett Sims, both for Literature, and Helen O’Leary for Visual Arts.

This year, Jeffrey Eugenides, Jayne Anne Phillips and Ben Johnston were elected members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which honored writers Mary Gaitskill, Rick Moody, Mary Robison, David Sedaris and Brenda Shaughnessy; composers Kathryn Alexander, Missy Mazzoli, Goddard Lieberson, Laurie San Martin, Andrew Rudin, Matthew Schrreibes and Scott Wheeler; and visual artists Carrie Moyer, Ruth Root and Robert Storr.
Yaddo is a retreat for artists located on a 400-acre estate in Saratoga Springs, New York. Its mission is to nurture the creative process by providing an opportunity for artists to work without interruption in a supportive environment. Yaddo offers residencies to artists from all nations and backgrounds working in the following disciplines: choreography, film, literature, musical composition, the visual arts, performance, and video. They are selected by panels of other professional artists without regard to financial means. Residencies last from two weeks to two months and include room, board, and a studio. Yaddo's extensive grounds and buildings were designated a National Historic Landmark in 2013.

“Overheard”

Writer T Kira Madden was a first-time Yaddo guest in 2017. She recently spoke about the “lifeline” Yaddo offers to emerging talents.

“I’m not an established artist. My first book [Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls] is forthcoming in the spring. This was the first time I felt a place believed in my work. Being an artist is such a crazy idea: It’s a practice of solitude, with only your own voice telling you, ‘You can!’ . . . To have the support of Yaddo, the surrounding of safety and a group of people who stand behind you . . . It allowed me to stand up inside of my work for the first time.”