YA lit from Yaddo authors, plus fiction, art books and more

GUESS WHAT– WE'RE “AT THE NERVE CENTER OF THE ART WORLD”

New Rules – a few things have changed since the early ’30s

Pulitzers, Grammys, and then some!

Shhhh… why silence truly matters
From monasticism to the military and the arts, Cathleen Medwick ruminates on silence, solitude, and the power of refuge

The Last Supper, summer residents (from left) Christine Lavin, Faith Shawer, Miguel Calderón, Jason Gisle, Asta Mirakchci, Dean Haspiel, Anne Korkotian, Adam Hurwitz, Margot Singer, Joy Baglio, Pola Rapaport, Vu Tran, Elizabeth Mosk. PHOTO DAE SHA HARRIS

Many-Roofed Building in Moonlight

I found myself suddenly voluminous, three-dimensional, a many-roofed building in moonlight.

Thought traversed me as simple as moths might Feelings traversed me as fish.

I heard myself thinking, It isn’t the piano, it isn’t the ears.

Then, heard too, the ordinary furnace, the usual footsteps above me. Washed my face again with hot water, as I did when I was a child.

—Jane Hirshfield

IN 1900, Yaddo began with a clear idea of why and for whom it mattered. The Trasks established a “permanent Home” for creatives engaged in a “brave fight to guard and augment the Sacred Fire within and meantime earn their bread by labors prosaic and oppressive.” They wrote. Some 120 years later, crucial resources like silence, time, nature, space and financial support are in even shorter supply.

World population has soared, from 1.6 billion in 1900 to 7.7 billion today. We are bombarded with noise and are losing access to nature. Of protected lands in the U.S., 63% are inundated with sounds from cars, etc. One football field of forest is lost every second. Sound-related health threats impact heart disease, high blood pressure and cognitive issues that arise from being too distracted to focus.

Financial support for artists is dwindling: The median salary for full-time writers is $20,500, reflecting a 42 percent drop since 2009. For visual artists, the average salary is about $20 to $30 thousand per year.

We are losing the tools to even think about ourselves. In 1900, there were some 30,000 newspapers. Now, about 1,200 carry on. “We are, for the first time in modern history, facing the prospect of how societies would exist without reliable journalism,” said Alan Rusbridger, former editor-in-chief of The Guardian.

Our busy wireless lives don’t leave room (literally) for deep thinking. MRI scans of individuals reveal that multitaskers had less brain density in the region responsible for empathy as well as cognitive and emotional control. On average, 253.6 billion emails are sent and we each spend 6.5 hours maintaining Internet every day, which makes Infinite Jest—David Foster Wallace’s novel on entertainment that kills us—prophetic.

Wallace wrote on that book at Yaddo.

How many others need Yaddo? More than 1,400 artists apply to come here each year, and only up to 270 receive invitations.

As a society, we are on the threshold of global catastrophe. The refuge Yaddo offers has never been more essential.

*This poem was written in 2010, when I was at Yaddo for the start of the small season, with a group that bonded especially strongly,”Jane Hirshfield said. “The building, of course, is the Mansion!”

**ART EN MASSE**


Also at the Whitney: Rachel Harrison’s Life Hack also at the Whitney: Forbes. “I like that energy [and] with roots in the Flint, Michigan water crisis is at the Whitney Museum through February.


**ON STAGE**

Following a sold-out run in London, My Name is Lucy Barton—hailed as “luminous” (The New York Times) and “genuinely phenomenal” (Time Out London)—comes to Broadway, with previews beginning Jan. 6. Laura Linney stars in this solo show based on Elizabeth Strout’s book.

Two revivals are back for an encore: West Side Story—which starred Leonard Bernstein into the limelight in 1957—will have a new interpretation, with Ivo van Hove directing; previews begin Dec. 10. And Paula Vogel’s Pulitzer Prize-winning How I Learned to Drive opens this spring and reunites the original stars, Mary-Louise Parker and David Morse.

A new original musical by James Lapine (Sunday in the Park with George) and Michael Korie (Grey Gardens) will premiere in March at the Lincoln Center. Flying Over Smeralda dives into the use of LSD in the 1960s; imagining Aldous Huxley, Clare Booth Luce and Cary Grant on an acid trip.

**ON SCREEN**

Noah Baumbach’s Marriage Story, in theaters Nov. 6 and on Netflix in December, premiered at the Venice Film Festival to rapturous acclaim. Dubbed an Oscar contender, the film stars Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver as a young couple whose marriage is falling apart. When asked about using autobiographical material, Baumbach told the Los Angeles Times, “Phil Roth described his process as taking two stones of reality and rubbing them together … Most of my writing has begun that way.”

The Apollo, a documentary on the NYC landmark theater produced by Lisa Cortés, opened the Tribeca Film Festival and includes a staging of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ Between the World and Me as well as interviews with Patři LaBelle, Smokey Robinson and Jamie Foxx; on HBO Nov. 6.

Frankie, In Sachs’ new film, centers on a famous French actress who brings her loved ones together in Sintra, Portugal, after she is diagnosed with a terminal illness. “Funny, touching and vital” (Rolling Stone), the drama stars Isabelle Huppert, Marisa Tomei and Greg Kinnear, among others.

**BOOKS TO FILM**

Several Yaddo authors had books adapted to film this year, including Jonathan Lethem, whose Motherless Brooklyn opened Nov. 1. Lewis Hyde’s defense of the value of creative labor—The Gift—is now a documentary, with screenings this fall all over the U.S. and Canada. John Seares’ Strange But True, a thriller starring Margaret Qualley—is now in theaters and on iTunes. Coming in 2020: Jessica Bruder’s Nomadland, directed by Chloé Zhao and starring Frances McDormand; and the Netflix series Madame C.J. Walker based on A’Leila Bundles’ biography of the first African-American self-made millionaire.

**NEW TUNES**

From CDs to streaming, Yaddo artists deliver new music:

The Best of Christine Lein: Under the Sun (full album).

Christopher Corrigan’s luminous orchestration, vocal cycles and musical poetry converge in The Pieces. That Fall to Earth (bandcamp). Sing along to the Gabriel Kahane songbook with Book of Traveler’s sheet music, or add the vinyl to your mix (bandcamp).

MEGA ART BOOKS

Martin Puryear: Liberty/Liberty—this volume of his landmark exhibition representing the United States at the Venice Biennale this year—includes extensive illustrations, a definitive chronology, and new critical essays on the powerful legacy of an artist at the height of his powers.

Liana Finck delivers a “brick of a gag collection” (Publishers Weekly) in Excuse Me: Cartoons, Complaints, and Notes to Self, casting her keen eye on gender politics, dating myth-making, and more with incisive observations of modern life.

A few years ago, Adam Frankfurt organized the New York Capitol Region with “Breathing Lights,” an exhibition that illuminated the windows— with a glow the rhythm of human breathing—in hundreds of vacant buildings, signifying decades of disinvestment. Archiving the project, the book issues a call to action for economic development. Visit TAP online (tapinc.org), to order the book.

FOR THE YOUNG (AT HEART)

YA & CHILDREN’S LIT FROM YADDO AUTHORS

Roar Like a Dandelion by the late Xuan Juliana Wang—this volume on the life and oeuvre of the towering intellectual. The Trouble with Gravity by Richard Panek explores the history of physics in The Trouble with Gravity, questioning all we think we know and proving that there’s much yet to learn.

The debut collection Home Remedies by Xuan Juliana Wang focuses on the lives of Chinese and Chinese-American millennials with prose that comes close to poetry, as in this passage on divers: “To the people in the stands, they looked like two wings of a single bird.”

The Long Ride by Marina Budhos explores how 1970s integration efforts affected NYC public schools, enlisting a “thoughtful depiction of families grappling daily with the inequities of a changing society” (Publishers Weekly).

The Importance of Being Wilde at Heart, a novel about the life and works of Oscar Wilde by R. Zamora Linmark’s Wilde at Heart offends “an unabashed love letter to Oscar Wilde” (Publishers Weekly).

5 HIT NOVELS

Tolstoy observed, “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” Such is often the subject of transformative fiction, including Ann Patchett’s The Dutch House—an exploration of obsession, greed, and forgiveness within a fractured family. On tour, David Sedaris recommends this book to his audiences, noting he found the brother-sister bond especially moving.

Teleportation figures literally in Divide Me by Zero by: A.L. Kennedy returns in Give Me back on the tiresome” (The Guardian). The debut collection Home Remedies by Xuan Juliana Wang focuses on the lives of Chinese and Chinese-American millennials with prose that comes close to poetry, as in this passage on divers: “To the people in the stands, they looked like two wings of a single bird.”

MIRA GAITSKILL renders a nuanced take on #MeToo in her novella, This is Pleasure: “All the heart of this extraordinary, daring, provocative, pitch perfect story lies the idea that, sometimes, we act on a truth, only to run from it” (The Guardian).

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WILLIAMS argues against America’s obsession with race in Self Portrait in Black and White: Unlearning Race, generating heated debate with the notion of blackness as an “invented category” (Publishers Weekly).

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**Out and About**

Picture this—a high-definition jumbotron flashes images of Yaddo over the gathering of 200-plus guests and onto the Chelsea streets below. Willem Dafoe, Rufus Collins, Kathryn Hahn and Lucy Liu take the stage to read excerpts of letters to Yaddo written by artists. The New Yorker writes all about it, tossing in ghost stories and bat anecdotes. The live auction begins, with Jay McInerney, Lynn Nottage, Còlom Toibin, and Gary Shinkyoga on tap. Plus an amazing dinner, and donated fine French wines.

Such was the scene at our Yaddo Gala on Oct. 3. Sold-out weeks in advance, the event raised more than $850 thousand and was the most successful fundraiser in our history. We are grateful to everyone involved, from Co-Chairs Janice Y.K. Lee and Peter Kayafas, to our Board, artists, supporters and Gala sponsors (see Yaddo.org). Thank you!

On Nov. 20, our community united again for the Yaddo Artist Reunion at the Brooklyn Historical Society, with Gierfriedt cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, friends old and new, and presentation of the Yaddo Artist Medal to acclaimed filmmaker, visual artist and “stop animation” maestro at age ninety-two, the incomparable Alfred Leslie, introduced by Jennifer Egan and Alexi Worth.

Locally, both in New York City, and Saratoga Springs, we’ve developed new partnerships that have led to cool events, many of them free and open to the public. In concert with the Center for Fiction, we co-presented “Gender, Bodies and Machines: Susan Steinberg and Heidi Kumer,” an exploration of form across disciplines. In Albany, we partnered with the New York State Writers Institute to bring Nick Flynn and John Searles to the Albany Book Festival for “Adapting Books to Film.” Yaddo President Elaina Richardson joined the Saratoga Arts Council, and took the stage at Revel Art Fair for a conversation with Ian Barry. Director of the Tang “Yaddo Presents” at Northshire Bookstore is in full swing, with upcoming appearances by Joseph Caldwell (Nov. 14), Adam Platt (Nov. 21), Meghan Daum (Dec. 6), and Jenny Offill in March.


Stay tuned!

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**HONORS & AWARDS**

The year 2018 has been extraordinary for Yaddo artists—congratulations!

Thrice previously nominated for a Grammy Award, Laurie Anderson won this year for Landfall (Best Chamber Music / Small Ensemble Performance), as did her fellow Yaddo alum, composer Aaron Jay Kernis for Kemia: Violin Concertos, named Best Contemporary Classical Composition.

Playwright, director and filmmaker Young Jean Lee received a Windham Campbell Prize, and playwright John Jusresun picked up a Rome Prize.

Vijay Seshadri became poetry editor of The Paris Review. Marilyn Chin, elected Chancellor of the American Academy of Poets, received an award in literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which also gave literature prizes to John McManus and Tommy Orange as well as elected into membership writers Grace Schulman and David Sedaris and composer Chen Yi.

Forest Gander accepted a Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for Be With, and Elizabeth Girardot also received a Pulitzer in General Nonfiction for Amity and Prosperity. One Family and the Fragmenting of America.

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences elected into membership: Elizabeth Alexander, Jane Hirshfield, Molly Haskell and Jonathan Franzen. The NYPL’s Culman Center Fellows included Ben Marcus, for research on architecture and the religious imagination; Bill Goldschein, who is writing about Larry Kramer; and Card Kino, whose book will cover World War II-era female photographers.

Crystal Wilkinson (The Birds of Opulence) was named a finalist for the John Dos Passos Prize. The National Book Award longlist included Kali Fajardo-Anstine (Sapinita & Conna), Leila Lalami (The Other Americans) and Julia Phillips (Disappearing Earth) in Fiction, and Jericho Brown (The Tradition), Toi Derricotte (10) and Mary Ruefle (Bum). Ruefle’s (Dunce) in Poetry. Ruefle also was named Vermont Poet Laureate.

Tanaya Siveralstam won a Webby Award for Unstoppable, her campaign for Planned Parenthood. Richard Hayes received the 2019 Arnold W. Brunner Award for Architectural Research for his project Build Now: Practical Training at the Architectural Association after World War II. Luíza Maritza Pérez received the PEN/Jean Stein Literary Oral History grant for her work in progress Beyond the Pale, a story of Dominican life. Louis Levit’s As One debuted on the Billboard Charts Classical Albums. And Jakobe-Khall Huffman was named an “L.A. artist to Watch” in ArtNews.

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**THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON LIVING**

The Trask Society secures Yaddo for future artists

Katrina and Spencer Trask’s extraordinary philanthropic vision founded Yaddo and has helped to keep its doors open for more than a century. The Trasks made a truly transformative gift and many others have joined them by becoming a member of the Trask Society, Yaddo’s planned giving program.

Becoming a Trask Society member is an easy way to make a legacy gift that will support our residency program for future generations. A planned gift is also a resonant way to memorialize relatives or friends, or perpetuate donor’s names by endowing artists’ residencies.

Yaddo works with donors and their representatives to develop individual planned gifts that can offer substantial and suitable benefits. A simple way to arrange a planned gift is through a bequest, in your will. Other planned giving options include a charitable remainder trust, a gift of real estate, or appreciated stock. You can also name Yaddo as a beneficiary in your retirement plan or insurance policy.

If you would like to consider Yaddo in your financial planning and want more information on becoming a Trask Society member, please contact Cheryl Martin, Development Manager, at 518-584-0745 or cmartin@yaddo.org.

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**SET IN STONE:** Sandblasted by a local craftsman in ten-ton black granite boulders, each of our five green-built, live-work studios now have new markers, recognizing those whose generous gifts made the new studios possible, including Madelyn Pulver Jennings, Stacie Arcey, Willis J. Goldsmith, Bruce Cohen, Michael J. Coleman, Doris Malesardi, John Forester and Elliott Masie for Saratoga Studio.

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**PHOTO:** DAVID FALK

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**PHOTO:** PHILIPPE LAMBERT

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**PHOTO:** FRANK WILSON

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**PHOTO:** JACOB FLEISCHER

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**PHOTO:** CHRISTOPHER DUGAN

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**PHOTO:** VICTOR SORGE

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**PHOTO:** CHRISTOPHER DUGAN

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**PHOTO:** PAOLA KUDACKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

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**PHOTO:** DAVID FALK

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**PHOTO:** VICTOR SORGE

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**PHOTO:** THE NEW YORK TIMES
This summer, artists returned to our Yaddo Mansion and almost immediately the question arose: Are the bats gone? Well, the mixed news is, no. Net-capturing super-SAPs fielded calls, as one bat, dubbed “Beelzebub,” flew about the Great Hall ever ready for cocktails.

The New Yorker covered our bats in a piece about our Yaddo Gala (see p. 8). Still, beneath the humor, some are not at all thrilled to have bats intrude. (Work without interruption?) Here’s the thing: Like artists, bats call Yaddo home. And, if we’re lucky, they always will. Bats get a bad rap. But in a peaceful coexistence, we can all get along.

Whether it’s an Atlantic Sturgeon swimming up the Hudson, or a Snowy Owl perched on a telephone wire over the Fort Edward Grasslands, our region is home to spectacular wildlife, including bats.

New York state has nine bat species, three of which are tree-dwellers who migrate south in the winter (Red Bat, Hoary Bat, Silver-Haired Bat). The remaining six are “cave bats,” who hibernate in regional mines and caves and spend summers in rock crevices, bridge ducts and, sometimes, buildings. Many cave bats, including the Indiana Bat, Northern Bat, Small-Footed Bat, Eastern Pipistrelle and Little Brown Bat (all likely contenders for Yaddo), are either on or about to be added to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation’s Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern species list. They were hit hard by White-Nose Syndrome, resulting in the loss of more than 5.7 million bats in the Northeast. The fact that they find refuge at Yaddo is good news.

But, obviously, we are not a bat sanctuary. Artists come first.

Yaddo Facilities Manager Shane Cassidy has researched bats in depth. He talked to experts, even initiated an estimate for removal. “Long story short, there’s no way to completely bat-proof the Mansion,” he said. “We can spend—and the quote was $66 thousand on somewhat bat-proofing the Mansion—but they will come back.” A limestone Mansion on the top of a hill in the middle of the woods, with five lakes around, spells bug-heaven for bats. And, endangered species are protected by law. That doesn’t mean we’re powerless.

Bat boxes, you say? Yes, we are on it. And hoping to recruit volunteers to help build them, and perhaps to imbue them with art. Our Master Plan of 2014 first raised the idea of placing bat boxes around the ponds and marshes to give a protective zone for our winged friends. Let’s do it!

In the meantime, a few parting thoughts: In dreams, bats signify rebirth and hard work. In the Celtic tradition, they symbolize transposition, or a walk between worlds. Native American bat stories nod to the notion of a higher self, or soul. In China, they are good luck. In Shamanism, a bat will fly into your life at the moment of transformation, sensing a journey you will take to achieve a higher goal. All told, bats belong here, with us, at Yaddo.

13 Reasons to ♥ Bats

➊ Blind as a bat? Nope—they see fine.
➋ Bats consume half their body weight in insects each night.
➌ Less than .5% of bats test positive for rabies.
➍ Without bats, kiss chocolate goodbye.
➎ Bats spread seeds for nuts, figs, cacao, and pollinate more than 300 fruits like bananas, avocados and mangos.
➏ Like cats, bats clean themselves. Some groom each other.
➐ Baby bats are called “pups.” Like other mammals, mother bats nurse their young and give birth to only one pup per year. Mommas also form nursery colonies.
➑ Bats use echolocation to navigate the dark; scientists studying this phenomena developed navigational aids for the blind.
➒ Medical marvels: About 80 medicines come from plants that rely on bats, and research on bats has led to advances in vaccines.
➓ Bats jam, seriously. A 2014 Science study found that when competing for food, some bats emit an ultrasonic signal that blocks sound waves from a rival, causing him to miss his target insect.
➑ Total myth: bats get tangled in long hair. Scholars trace the notion to an early Christian edict that women must cover their hair, because it attracts demons. Already associated with dark musings, bats were assumed to have a thing for hair.
➒ Bat droppings (guano) can be used as fertilizer, to preserve fossils and to make gunpowder and was considered a precious resource during the Civil War.

NEW RULES

We’ve made some changes since Elizabeth Ames wrote these rules in the early 1930s.
overheard

Meryl Meisler spent decades as a public school teacher in New York City, all the while photographing the neighborhoods, nightlife and people around her. "I could never do residencies because I had a full-time job," she told Street Photography magazine. "Then I came to Yaddo, God, it's such a great place. The expectations are to do your work. Spouses, dogs, they can come visit, but they can't stay. I had no idea. Good thing I didn't! I've never had so much personal space. The food alone! It was an incredible experience. Not getting your mail—what a beautiful thing!"

Meryl Meisler’s exhibition, title of work, is on view at 57 Orchard Street in NYC through Nov. 30. Her photographs will be featured in Studio 54: Night Magic at Brooklyn Museum this spring. She is also working on her third book, NYC EPIC Bushwick Era Disco.

*Bushwig 2019 © Meryl Meisler

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.