



Yaddo

NEWS | SPRING 2020

- Mentors and more in **Yaddo Connections**
- **Summer Reads:**
15 books on our must-read list
- Introducing...
the Yaddo Composer Playlist!

• **Virtual Reality**
join us in *the zone*

In case of emergency... ART

Recent events—namely the global pandemic and state-mandated closure of businesses deemed “non-essential”—beg some questions: Is Yaddo *essential*? Is art necessary? What happens to artists in a time of global crisis, and how can we help?

Funny Weather
Art in an Emergency



Olivia Laing

In her brilliant essay collection, *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency* (forthcoming in May), **Olivia Laing** profiles several writers and artists (many of them her fellow Yaddo alums), diving into how they handled trying times. She published the introductory essay in *The Guardian*, positing that creative work offers clarity, nourishment, solace, hope and “a restoration of faith,” she wrote. “It’s easy to give into despair. There’s so much

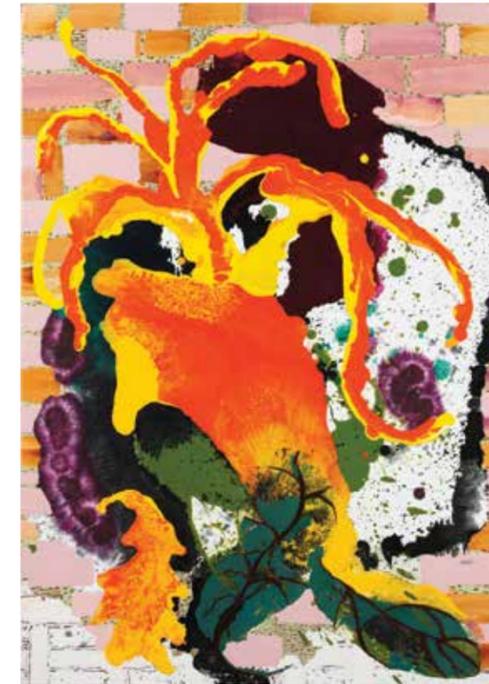


How This Will End, Josh Dorman

quarantine. Books are oxygen. Films are queued. Poetry is blooming, and the digital space is filled with impromptu interviews with artists. It’s enough to create art for its own sake, even when doing so seems impossible.

“In times when people are suffering, a constant everywhere on the globe, I question the importance of art,” painter **Josh Dorman** told *Koplin Del Rio*. “But it’s also in these moments when I’m reminded of the simple healing power of making things with one’s hands, and the capability of imagination to create an escape—an alternate world.”

Alternate worlds figure into Laing’s eloquent argument that emergencies require art. “That’s the thing about utopias, they keep you going,” she wrote. “Hope has a bad press in our cynical age, but it doesn’t necessarily mean being disengaged, a Pollyanna blind to the state things are in or uninterested in how they



Brick Wall, Elisabeth Condon. PHOTO: JASON MANDELLA

EMERGENCY = ART

On community, clarity, work, and how to (keep on!) coping



Luba Drozd in her Brooklyn apartment. PHOTO: MISHA FRIEDMAN/ GETTY IMAGES

Luba Drozd, an installation artist who came to Yaddo in February, has been in the news lately for using her 3D printer to make protective face shields for healthcare workers. She switched from engineering complex sound components to making life-saving medical gear in her Brooklyn apartment. Snap! In many arenas, large and small, our illustrious artists take on leadership roles that far exceed their creative callings.

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and President of PEN America **Jennifer Egan** announced recently that PEN won Round 1 in their lawsuit against President Trump for retaliating against journalists (media is considered an “essential business,” BTW). A federal court denied a motion to dismiss the case. “[We are] profoundly grateful for the court’s timely decision,” Egan said in a press statement. “Though we filed our lawsuit more than a year ago, the Trump administration’s punitive stance toward the press has continued unabated, with corrosive results for truth, fact, our democracy, and—most recently—public health.” Jenny for U.S. Prez, 2024?

Mentioned earlier, Olivia Laing came to her hard-won conclusions on art in emergencies by revisiting the AIDS epidemic, among other atrocities, with some of her Yaddo pals such as writer and activist **Sarah Schulman**. Laing also looked into the historical context of works like the Klan paintings of **Philip Guston** (see p. 8), who found respite at Yaddo in 1969 amid his shift from abstract expressionism to exploring the tumult of his era. Laing writes: “Guston wasn’t looking from afar. This time, he was inside the frame. Someone, some bozo, was underneath the hood, peering out at the world through the slits in cloth. You have to bear witness, Guston kept saying, but he meant more than merely watching events unfold.”

As galvanizing as the work of other artists can be, most of us are not out saving the world, rather we’re relishing solitude, sleep, books, maybe hoarding ice cream and watching Netflix. Oddly enough, in a time when so many are deemed “non-essential” workers, artists have become the go-to source for coping with



The Studio, 1969, Philip Guston © The Estate of Philip Guston

got that way. Hope is the precursor to change. Without it, no better world is possible.”

Deep down, we suspect, most artists believe that, as **Terry Adkins** (see p. 8) said, “Art can be a force for change.” In the meantime, lots of shelter dogs are

finding homes, small farms in upstate New York are more successful and the air is cleaner.

Plus, we still have what matters most: “People. Staying connected and staying open. Supporting when and where it’s possible,” **Elisabeth Condon** told *Art Spiel*. “When I remember to stay open it combats nihilism. It also firms my resolve to paint...with a free and open perspective, to create a space in which others can open as well.”

While the physical location of Yaddo is closed, our hearts are open. Let Yaddo be your bridge to a better world—we’ll see you on the other side.

Resources for Artists During the Covid-19 Crisis

Yaddo has compiled the following list of online resources for artists affected by the pandemic, and will continue to expand it in the coming weeks: [Yaddo.org/resources-for-artists-during-the-covid-19-crisis/](https://yaddo.org/resources-for-artists-during-the-covid-19-crisis/).

that’s frightening, so much wrong. But if this virus shows us anything, it’s that we’re interconnected... We have to keep each other afloat, even when we can’t touch. Art is a place where that can happen, where ideas and people are made welcome. It’s a zone of enchantment as well as resistance, and it’s open even now.”

In a word, yes. Yaddo is the zone! We are your community. Further, Yaddo is *you*, the artists who have long been at the forefront of creating work with global impact. And that’s especially true at this moment, with so many of you on the front line.

A Letter from Our Co-Chairs

As the world struggles to get ahead of the Covid-19 pandemic, we here at Yaddo are working to make decisions to put us on the best path going forward, one that will allow us to recover from this time and sustain our mission for decades to come. After much thoughtful discussion on the part of the Board, we decided the soundest course of action was to close Yaddo for the remainder of the year.

Why is this necessary? For Yaddo to reopen, we need a global all-clear. Epidemiologists agree that the apex of this pandemic will occur in rolling waves and may return in the fall after a dormant period. Sadly, we must reschedule all those who were on the calendar for a residency. We made this decision to avoid the harmful effects of rolling cancellations, which are disruptive and disheartening and can put artists on unsteady ground. We understand the many sacrifices artists make to come to Yaddo such as subletting housing, canceling work plans, childcare/caregiving, and lost income, to name a few. Notifying now hopefully brings clarity rather than making things worse by issuing late-cancellation notices.

At the same time, Yaddo’s endowment has suffered as the global economy fell, with a current loss of over 17% and no clear “bottom” for the markets. We have canceled fundraising events at least through the first six months of this year, suffering a loss of over \$600,000 in revenue. It costs about \$330,000 a month to run Yaddo, so the economic stress is real.

In light of economic concerns, we acted quickly to be both fiscally prudent and to protect our staff; Yaddo will cover health insurance costs, including the employee portion should someone be furloughed—an extraordinary measure for a non-profit, but one that the Executive Committee unanimously supported. Some senior staff are also taking pay cuts— 20% in the case of the President.

Nothing would please us more than to find that we have been unduly pessimistic. If so, we will reverse course and reopen. We’re doing all we can to secure emergency funding (including successfully applying for aid under the federal CARES Act) and to carefully manage resources. The plan is to come out the other side of this with resilience, to have Yaddo remain a leader in the field, and to return to “regular life” when it is safe to do so. We will stay in touch and let you know when the “return” decision is made.

We’ve appreciated hearing from many of you and know there’s a strong desire to help at this moment. Here are a few ideas for what you might do: If you’re able to offer financial support, please do so as generously as you can. Join us for Virtual Yaddo projects. Have patience as we adjust to reduced numbers and sometimes inadequate home technology.

We hope you and your circle of loved ones stay safe during this challenging time.

Janice Y.K. Lee
JANICE Y.K. LEE

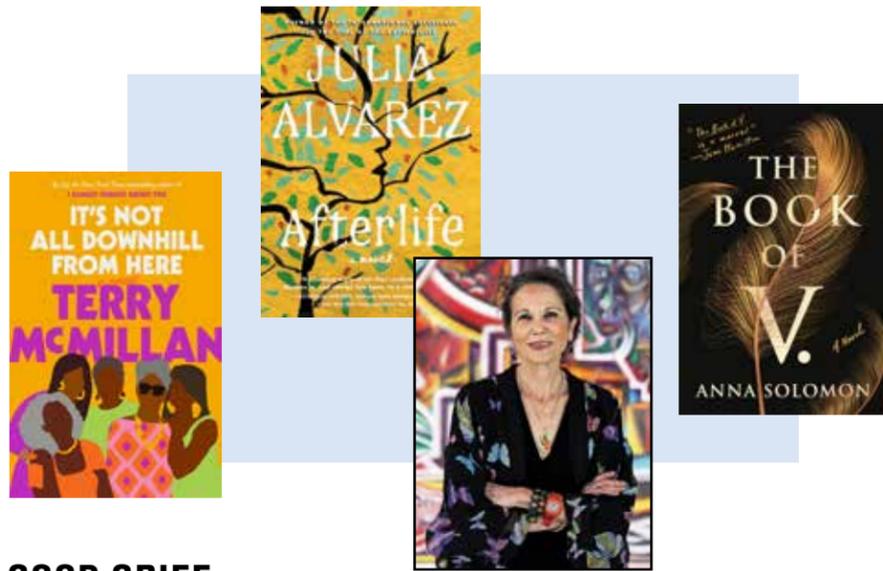
Peter Kayafas
PETER KAYAFAS



#CheersAtFive
JOIN US in our virtual Drinks Room via social media at 5 p.m. each day for a moment to enjoy a poem, story, piece of music or an image of surpassing beauty.

Summer Reads, Brought to You by Yaddo

Designer babies, smoking guns, Russian heroes and more in this season's new releases by Yaddo authors



GOOD GRIEF

Terry McMillan tackles aging in her latest novel, *It's Not All Downhill from Here*. Viagra jokes, BFFs and a dog named B.B. King come together in this story centered on a remarkable woman's attempt to "pump up the volume" at age 68. "Life can be a stroll," McMillan told NPR. "It can be a roller coaster ride. It can be uphill, downhill. But the bottom line is that you roll with it."

Antonia Vega's world is upended when an undocumented Mexican worker arrives on her doorstep in *Afterlife*, **Julia Alvarez's** new novel, a "gorgeously intimate portrait of an immigrant writer and recent widow carving out hope in the face of personal and political grief" (*O, The Oprah Magazine*).

The Book of V by **Anna Solomon** braids the stories of three women's lives: Esther from the Bible, 1970s Vee, and Lily, a contemporary mom in Brooklyn, in this "cerebral, interior novel devoted to the notion of womanhood as a composite construction made up of myriad stories and influences" (*Kirkus Reviews*).

► REASONS TO CLICK

While this is a challenging time for everyone—especially writers, publishers and bookstores coping with canceled tours, lost income and overall uncertainty—readers take heart: Many author events have popped up online. **Buy books, tune in!**

1 Northshire Live - Thursdays, 5 PM, Zoom

Northshire Bookstore is offering free shipping and a virtual events series with featured authors (such as Yaddo novelist **Stephen Kiernan** on May 21!) every Thursday at 5 PM via Zoom, Northshire.com.

2 NYPL Connect

The New York Public Library (NYPL.org) and public radio station WNYC are hosting a virtual book club. Patrons can borrow more than 300 thousand books for free through the library's e-reader app, and join the livestream conversations with authors.

NEW NOIR

Long Bright River, **Liz Moore's** instant bestseller, follows a policewoman in search of her estranged sister amid an opioid epidemic, "illuminating the rot, the shiny facades of gentrification and the sturdy endurance of small pockets of community life" (*The Washington Post*).

Trouble is What I Do by **Walter Mosley** revisits ex-boxer and NYC private eye Leonid McGill from *The Long Fall*, as he delivers a message from Philip "Catfish" Worry, a 94-year-old African American blues musician, to the daughter of a murderous billionaire plotting to hide his heritage.

Charles Finch's The Last Passenger, Volume 13 of the Charles Lenox series, finds detective Lenox in Victorian-era England solving a crime without clues as the American Civil War begins to boil.

MINING TRAGEDY

Anne Carson's play *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, which premiered last spring at The Shed in NYC, is a retelling of Euripides' *Helen*, with Marilyn Monroe, Arthur Miller and Truman Capote as characters. "Carson—legendary poet, classicist, heartbreaker—is known for her eviscerating ability to take myth and move it into a local hotel, without ever letting the divine implications of the story waver" (*Bookforum*).

Stay: Threads, Conversations, Collaborations by **Nick Flynn** is a mixed-media exploration of suicide and addiction as well as friendships and creative work. Of the latter, he said, "It's like in a dream where something bad is happening behind a door. You have the choice to either turn away or to open the door. And it seems for poets, or for any artist, or maybe for any human being, it just seems like maybe you should open the door. But you should only open it when you're able to."

KNOCKOUT NONFICTION

Designing Babies: How Technology is Changing the Ways We Create Children by **Robert Klitzman, MD**, takes a hard look at the ethical, moral and social dilemmas posed by advances in reproductive technologies, especially in the "Wild West" United States, where the industry is largely unregulated.

Cathy Park Hong's Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning is a "formidable new essay collection... that bled a dormant discomfort out of me with surgical precision," wrote Jia Tolentino, staff writer for *The New Yorker*. Hong, who has published three poetry collections, credits a Richard Pryor performance with giving her a wakeup call, egging her on to explore racial identity and her "dog cone of shame" with humor and honesty.

WRITERS TO WATCH

We've been hearing a lot about **Souvankham Thammavongsa**, whose debut fiction collection *How to Pronounce Knife* (which was placed at the top of *New York* magazine's "Approval Matrix") focuses on the struggles of Lao immigrants in stories that "pack a punch" (*Publishers Weekly*).

Shayla Lawson's *This is Major: Notes on Diana Ross, Dark Girls, and Being Dope*, an essay collection that mines Tinder, high-school theater, racist cartoons, and her time working for an ad agency selling "black cool," among other rich topics.

FAMILY QUEST

Louise Erdrich issues a call to arms with *The Night Watchman*, a novel based on the life of her grandfather who worked as a night watchman at a factory in the '50s and carried the fight against Native dispossession from rural North Dakota to Washington, D.C. "She delivers a magisterial epic that brings her power of witness to every page" (*The New York Times*).

In *Man of My Time* by **Dalia Sofer**, an Iranian interrogator comes to New York for a diplomatic mission and reconnects with his estranged mother and brother. Reflecting on the fallout from decades of cultural and political upheaval, this novel offers "a perceptive, humane inquiry into Iran's history and soul" (*Kirkus Reviews*).

Alex Halberstadt traces how trauma impacts generations of his family in *Young Heroes of the Soviet Union*, a "loving and mournful account that's also skeptical, surprising and often very funny" (*The New York Times*). He tracked down his grandfather, a former bodyguard to Joseph Stalin, traveled to Lithuania, where his Jewish mother barely survived the Holocaust, and returned to his birthplace in Moscow over the course of a decade while researching this memoir.

4 Politics & Prose

Take a virtual class with Politics and Prose, another godsend of a bookstore. P&P Live, a virtual event series, has a packed calendar with author events including some Yaddo artists such as **Tommy Orange** and **Amity Gaige** (Politics-prose.com).

5 Center for Fiction

BYO Book for a virtual happy hour, or tune into one of CFF's online events with Yaddo artists **Paul Lisicky**, **Julia Alvarez** and more—Centerforfiction.org.

6 Yaddo Authors Bookshop

Visit our online bookshop to support local bookstores; shop new releases as well as select highlights from Yaddo authors: https://bookshop.org/shop/yaddo_authors

A Taste of Yaddo: Virtual Variations

A stunningly candid memoirist.

A world-renowned photographer.

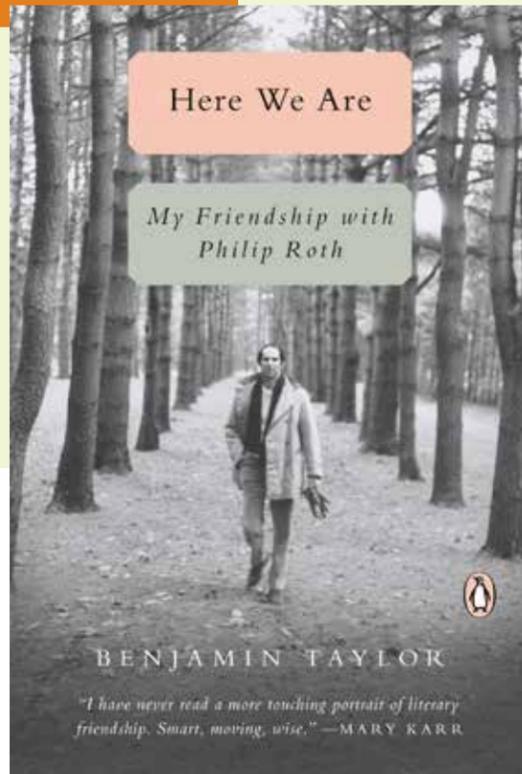
A MOMA superstar.

Discover them this spring, as our popular *Variations* series goes virtual.

We're finding new ways to bring extraordinary artists into conversation with our extended family of loyal supporters, book lovers and art collectors. *Virtual Variations* will showcase an array of exceptional talents like Broadway's **Michael Korie**, a Tony nominee...award-winning poet **Nick Flynn**...**Kevin Wilson**, author of the hit *The Family Fang*...leading journalists **Rania Abouzeid** and **Robert Worth**—and many more.

We look forward to inviting you to join our new digital community. As we turn to the arts for solace in these difficult days, here's a first look at a frank, funny conversation between two of Yaddo's most acclaimed memoirists, **Patricia Volk** and **Benjamin Taylor**.

Taylor's new book, *Here We Are*, probes his close friendship with Yaddo titan Philip Roth, and reveals the man behind the public persona.



Patricia Volk: Is there anything in the book Philip might feel betrayed by?

Benjamin Taylor: Yes, he felt himself to be omniscient. I challenge this.

PV: In these pages, which Louise Erdrich called “unsparing, yet loyal and kind,” you come across as intellectual peers. You’re not afraid to criticize Philip or tell him he’s gone too far. Could you address that?

BT: You know, he and I in nearly two decades of friendship never had a single falling out or even a cross word.... He was a kvetch, as all great writers are. Don't you imagine this was Thomas Mann's personality too? And I know it was Saul Bellow's.

PV: You were with him at the end, but so were many of his former lovers. I've always wondered, how did Philip maintain those relationships, having the women together in the same room and having it be harmonious?

BT: He was determined to have them all back in his later years....and that was the scene at the hospital as he lay dying. This I know: my hospital room will not be full of ex-lovers.

PV: (Laughs). You mention Claire (Roth's ex-wife, actress Claire Bloom), and I wonder if Philip's disdain for the theater...had anything to do with Claire.

BT: I don't know...He said to me once, “The most fundamental artists of all are actors and actresses....” Women don't like it when men they are married to have other lovers. It's just as simple as that. Philip was polyamorous in the extreme, just to use a nice word. One evening at dinner, I used the word “philanderer,” and he said: “We're all better off without that word.”

PV: (Laughs) Would he have preferred “lothario?”

BT: I think “philanderer” was his least favorite word in the language. The word he loved best was “away.”

PV: Yes – what is that, can you explain that? Is that a metaphor?

BT: I think he must have liked the word ‘away’ for these connotations: restlessness, waywardness, unaccountability.

Bing Wright is a New York-based photographer whose work has been shown at the New Museum, the Queens Museum of Art, and the Tang Museum in Saratoga Springs. His photographs are also in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, the Portland Art Museum, Goldman Sachs, and JP Morgan Chase Group. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University. His most recent solo exhibition “Blow Up,” his fifth at the James Harris Gallery in Seattle, was inspired by Michelangelo Antonioni's 1967 movie of the same name. Of his work, *The New Yorker* wrote in 2010, “Wright's . . . photographs flirt with chic minimalism but end up somewhere much quirkier and far more beautiful.”

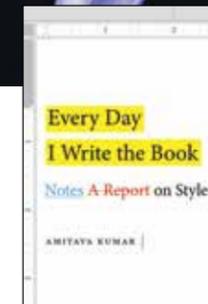
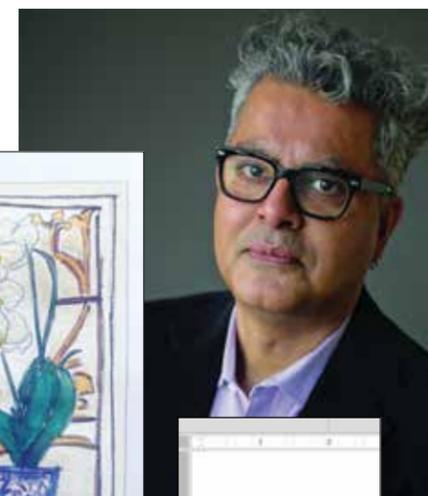


Actor and philanthropist **Rufus Collins** has appeared on and off-Broadway in *The Dead 1904*, *The Royal Family*, *To Be or Not To Be*, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, and *An Ideal Husband*, among other productions. He has also worked extensively in film and television. Collins is a Trustee of the Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund, a private foundation supporting the arts, education, and health organizations. He is a graduate of Columbia University and the Central School of Speech and Drama, London, and his connection to Yaddo runs in the family: His mother Linda Collins was a longtime Yaddo board member.

MEET THE MEMBERS

Yaddo welcomes three new Board members

Our new all-stars, from top: Bing Wright, Rufus Collins, Amitava Kumar and his “lunchtime painting.”

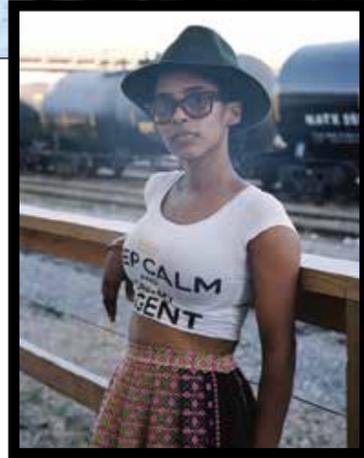


Writer and journalist **Amitava Kumar**, who first came to Yaddo in 2015, is the author of several books of nonfiction and two novels, including *Immigrant*, *Montana* (2018), named one of the best books of the year by *The New Yorker*. Kumar's prize-winning *A Foreigner Carrying in the Crook of His Arm a Tiny Bomb* (2010) was described by *The New York Times* as a “perceptive and soulful . . . meditation on the global war on terror and its cultural and human repercussions.” His most recent release, *Everyday I Write the Book: Notes on Style*, came out in March. Kumar's essays and reviews have appeared in *Harper's*, *Bookforum*, *Kenyon Review*, *The Nation*, *NPR*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Guardian*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Granta*. He is the Helen D. Lockwood Professor of English at Vassar College.



Terry Adkins in the Arctic, researching a piece on black explorers. PHOTO: TOM SNELGROVE

Below: T.J. Dedeaux-Norris and her "fur baby," Adkins.



THE FOUND (AND THE FURY)

Coming out of graduate school with an MFA in painting and printmaking from Yale, **T.J. Dedeaux-Norris** was used to a certain coda, especially with older, established artists. But when she deferentially approached **Terry Adkins** and he jovially read her the riot act, they clicked.

"Have you met Terry?" T.J. says. "He's *crazy*." (See YouTube clip of Adkins raving: "This [expletive] is out of his mind! But it takes out-of-mind people to do the right thing.") He became a strong, constant presence in her creative life, calling her up, asking her opinions on projects and inviting her to join his Lone Wolf Recital Corps.

But he wasn't warm, fuzzy or prone to sugar-coating. "He was brutally honest," T.J. says. "He inspired and challenged me, often through fury." As in the time he called to say her teaching syllabus sucked. Or the time he told her just before a performance that she couldn't use a microphone. He often pulled the rug from beneath her to show her the kind of power she holds. "I was legit *pissed*. But the anger was motivating. I had to do better."

Following his death in 2014, T.J. came to meet other young artists who were mentored by Terry Adkins. Many of them benefited from his contentious approach and had stories to tell. "That was part of his brilliance and the way he invoked passion," she says. "I wouldn't be the artist or teacher I am today without Terry—he was *that* generous."

Terry Adkins: Resounding, an exhibition highlighting the artist's extraordinary impact on sculpture and performance, is on view at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, MO, through August 2, 2020.

T.J. Dedeaux-Norris is a visual and performance artist. She recently received a Pollock-Krasner grant and is preparing for a solo exhibition this fall at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, IA.

AB-EX OUTSIDERS

Two Yaddo artists, contemporaries of Pollock, de Kooning, Motherwell and Rothko, skipped "the New York School." But if public interest is any measure, **Philip Guston** and **Clyfford Still** will have the last say.

"[His work] will forever continue to quiver with a raucous, soulful, and altogether uncanny vitality."
—**Robert Storr** on **Philip Guston**

Philip Guston Now— a major retrospective of his work—will tour internationally, opening in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., June 7 – Sept. 13, and then will move on to The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston this fall. Next year, the exhibition travels to the Tate Modern in London and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The exhibition catalogue, *Philip Guston: A Life Spent Painting* by **Robert Storr**, comes out in May.

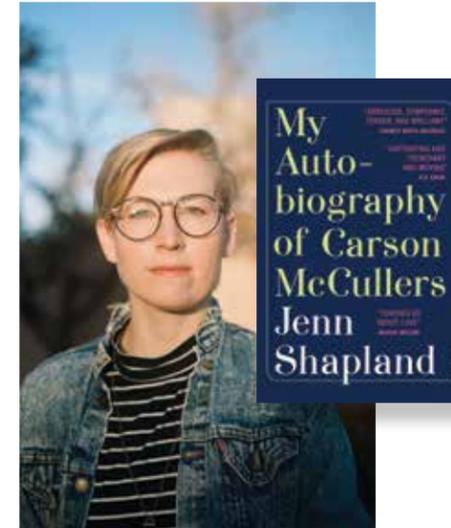
"He knew that at some point the world would come to him."
—**Dennis Scholl** on **Clyfford Still**

Following the premiere of *Lifeline: Clyfford Still*, a new film by Dennis Scholl, one of Still's paintings sold at auction for \$21.1 million. Ironic, given that the irascible artist walked away from the commercial art world at the height of his career. Merging archival material, found footage and audio recorded by Still, the film, which is streaming on Kino Now, sheds new light on his uncompromising creative journey and how integrity shaped his painting.



Clyfford Still, PH-645, 1935. Clyfford Still Museum, Denver, CO. © City and County of Denver/ ARS, NY

MESSAGE IN MYLAR



JENN SHAPLAND

From therapy transcripts and a stay in **Carson McCullers'** childhood home to visiting Yaddo, **Jenn Shapland** followed her avatar to a better understanding of her own true self, and one of our most enigmatic writers.

I wasn't expecting love letters. The paper was browned with age and wrinkled at the edges. Annemarie's handwriting filled the page, bearing hard to the right and often spilling back up the left-hand margin with last additions. I read through clear Mylar sleeves, too intern-nervous to remove the pages from their housings.

April 10th, at night
Carson, child, my beloved, you know that,
leaving the
Day after tomorrow, feeling half-afraid and proud,
Leaving behind me all I care for, once again,
and a
Wave of love—

I looked up at the rows of manuscript boxes that surrounded me, mind humming, face flushed. Did that mean what I thought it meant? I read on...

I found the letters at the tail end of the major, slow-burning catastrophe of my twenties: never quite breaking up with my first love, a woman from Texas I'd met our freshman year of college in Vermont, after six closeted years together. In my second year of a six-year PhD program, I was already bored sick of academia. I didn't want to be a literary critic, couldn't stand the institutional hoops as I was jumping through

them, and only six months into my internship I could tell I wasn't cut out to be an archivist. I didn't have the patience, and I spent too much time trying to solve mysteries of my own creation. I got an email out of the blue from one of my professors admiring my writing, and I jumped at what felt like validation. The praise continued, along with a barrage of poems and pressure to sleep with him, which I did, unsure exactly how I got there. My six-year relationship dissolved, and I moved out of our apartment. I was twenty-five and, when I wasn't drunk on a porch smoking angry cigarettes with my friends, I was exquisitely alone for the first time in my life in a new, overpriced studio apartment I couldn't afford. The dishwasher was full of roaches. The roaches were judging me. I was perplexed by my own behavior. I didn't know if I wanted to date women—I never really had; my first love and I publicly remained "roommates" for all those years—but, on the heels of manipulation, dating men seemed pretty dismal. Like most twenty-five-year-olds, I couldn't figure out what came next.

What came next was Carson.

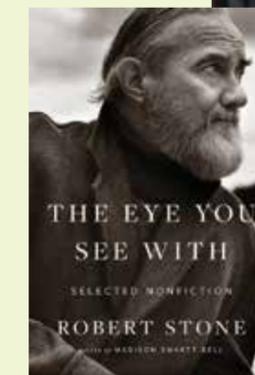
Adapted from *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers: A Memoir* by **Jenn Shapland**

STONE'S THROW

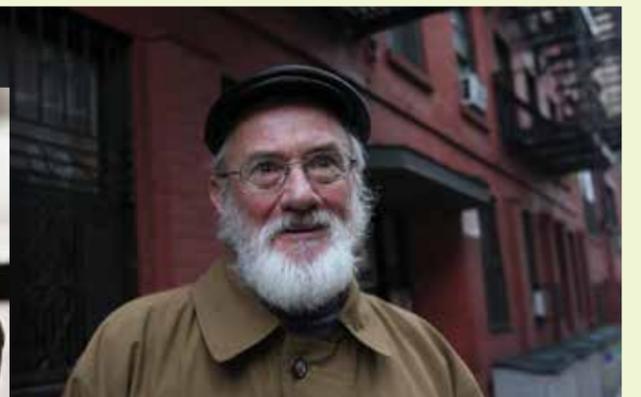
First a guest at Yaddo in 1967, the late **Robert Stone** was a literary wild man, raconteur, and friend and contemporary of Ken Kesey. He drank oceanically, smoked three packs a day, consumed copious drugs and, despite his decades-long marriage, had "a woman in every port and two more at Yaddo" (*The New York Times*). Here's a brief excerpt of **Thomas Beller's** review on the new biography of his fellow Yaddo alum, the legendary Bob Stone:

In 1986, speaking at a literary conference in Sicily sponsored by PEN American Center, Stone remarked: "Life in collision with language produces the necessity of interpretation. We cannot take things whole all at once; we would be swept away."

Collisions play an important role in the novels of Robert Stone. He tended to develop plots in which several discrete characters move through time like figures lost in a maze. A reader can see each one of them, but much of the narrative tension involves anticipating, and slowly



Robert Stone, 2006, NYC. PHOTO: SARA KRULWICH/ THE NEW YORK TIMES



perceiving, the ways these different characters will crash into one another. Once, at a reading, I heard an audience member posit that Stone's first three novels, *A Hall of Mirrors* (1967), *Dog Soldiers*, and *A Flag for Sunrise* (1981), were as strong an opening trio of novels as any written by an American. I would agree with that assessment.

The second half of the quote, about not being able to "take things whole all at once," feels

ironic in a biography as sweeping and meticulous as this. [Madison Smartt] Bell gives us all the many pieces of Stone's life and the composition of his writings, and some analysis, as well. It's an illuminating appendix to a master's body of work.

Excerpted from *Thomas Beller's* review of *Child of Light: A Biography of Robert Stone* by *Madison Smartt Bell* in *4Columns.org*. *Robert Stone's The Eye You See With: Selected Nonfiction* came out in *March*.

COMPOSERS ARE COOL

Especially when they're weird.
Kristy Davis checks in with **Robert Paterson**



A "prepared upright, very rare!" by composer Ailís Ní Ríain

I'd never met a composer until I came to Yaddo. Given my decades spent mainlining lit with book blinders on, music hadn't occurred to me. That winter, **Steven Sametz** blasted West House with choral cocaine, and I was blown away. *Do you hear notes all at once? Do you use a pencil or pen... Only a piano? How do you find what comes next... What do you listen to? How does it first occur to you?*

Astonishing, really.

Now that I work in the Yaddo Office, I meet lots of composers. Last week, one dropped his lucky pencil in the piano, and we called the tuner to fish it out. Another came in with something the size of a hat box full of music he'd written, more than a novel's worth. (Elaina said, "Need a safe?") And this photo, above, along with

an image of feral sheep, arrived recently from a composer who'd returned home. Here's where I tell you: I know next to nothing. So, I talked to **Robert Paterson** for a primer on Yaddo composers. "Yeah, we're kinda weird," he says. "**Tarik O'Regan** called me once to ask about my chair. Pencils, music-notation software and chairs, I hear a lot about."

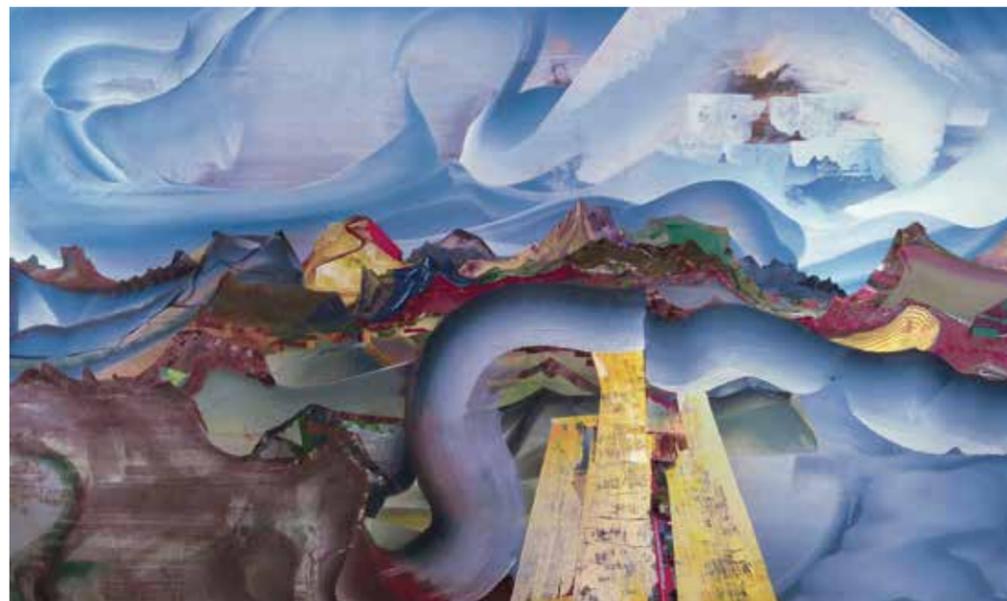
Scrolling through the online list of Yaddo composers, Rob says, "Wow, so many great artists here." I beg anecdotes. He tells me that he was in residence with **Alvin Singleton**, who would gather with the other composers at lunch and boast about his coffee machine. He invited them over, and they joined him. And? "It was really good coffee," Rob says.

Composers are obsessive, bless them, and like writers, they share work with each other

(who knew?). "**Ned Rorem** and I were composer pen pals for a while" Rob says. "I sent him some work, and he replied, said glowing things – he really loved my work, all except for one piece... but he didn't tell me *which* piece."

All in all, Rob said wonderful things about Yaddo composers, including **David Del Tredici, Steven Burke, Sebastian Currier, Daron Hagen** and **George Tsontakis**. We decided to create an online Yaddo Composer Playlist. Here's the link: Yaddo.org/composers-are-cool/. Stay tuned (teaser alert: a lot of David del Tredici's music is *about sex*), and send us your recommendations!

Robert Paterson is a composer and the co-founder of the Mostly Modern Festival, an annual celebration of music by living composers from around the world. It's held in Saratoga Springs, NY, every summer, Mostlymodernfestival.org.



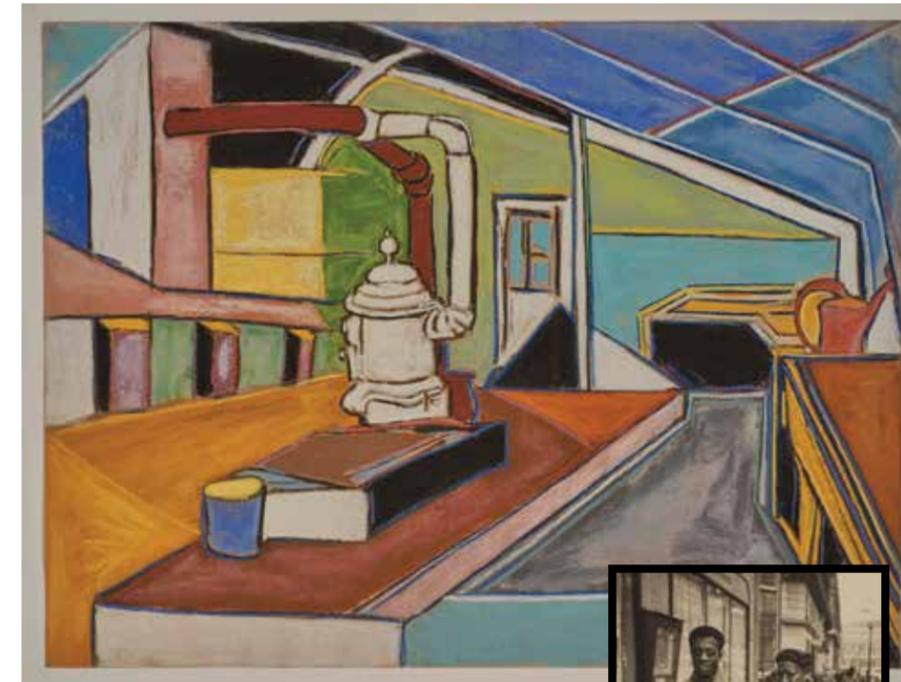
HUNGER FOR FORM

"The threadbare opposition of nature and art—often miscast in aesthetic terms as authenticity versus theatricality—is beautifully scrambled on Green's canvases. And to appreciate nature's formality of purpose is to arrive at a fresh vision of our fundamentally human hunger for form."

—**Jana Prikryl** on **Elliott Green**

Jana Prikryl is the author of two poetry collections, *No Matter* and *The After Party*. Elliott Green's *Far Edge of the Known World*, a lustrous volume of paintings paired with essays, came out in January.

Left, *The Photon Skirt*, Elliott Green



A new exhibition at the Knoxville Museum of Art celebrates the 38-year relationship between two Yaddo luminaries. *Beauford Delaney and James Baldwin: Through the Unusual Door*, on view through May 10, includes paintings, works on paper, and unpublished archival material exploring how the duo's friendship shaped one another's work and life. Yaddo was pivotal in "moving [Delaney's] painting toward the more abstract form of expressionism that interested him," according to his biographer David Leeming. And in 1953, Delaney left New York to join Baldwin in Paris. ABOVE: *Yaddo*, 1950, Beauford Delaney. RIGHT: James Baldwin and Beauford Delaney in Paris, circa 1960.



My soul looks back and wonders how I got over—indeed: but I find it unexpectedly difficult to remember, in detail, how I got started...

I do remember how my life in Greenwich Village began—which is, essentially, how my career began—for it began when I was fifteen.

One day, [a friend] played hookey without me and went down to Greenwich Village and made the acquaintance of Beauford Delaney. The next day, he told me about this wonderful man he had met, a black—then, Negro, or Colored—painter and said that I must meet him: and he gave me Beauford Delaney's address.

I had a Dickensian job, after school, in a sweat shop on Canal Street, and was getting on so badly at home that I dreaded going home: and, so, sometime later, I went to 181 Greene Street, where Beauford lived then, and introduced myself.

I was terrified, once I had climbed those stairs and knocked on that door. A short, round brown man came to the door and looked at me. He had the most extraordinary eyes I'd ever seen. When he had completed his instant X-ray of my brain, lungs, liver, heart, bowels, and spinal column... he smiled and said, "Come in," and opened the door.

He opened the door all right. *Lord*, I was to hear Beauford sing, later, and for many years, *open the unusual door*... Beauford was the first walking, living proof, for me, that a black man could be an artist.

Excerpted from *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985* by James Baldwin

Playing Ping Pong with Claude Brown at Yaddo

Manchild was long done and behind him; he'd revisited Harlem and seen its change. The streets he'd known—more dangerous now, the stakes higher, Summer at Yaddo in the pool house at the ping pong table. I'd been taught by boys. I put a mean spin on the acetate ball and sent it through the air, but it slammed back at me faster than my eye could take it in. My opponent was kind but quick, full of good advice. Hold it this way, he said that day, and pointed the wooden paddle down. Hold it, he said, like a gun.

—MYRA SKLAREW

Myra Sklarew is the former President of Yaddo and the author of many books, including her latest, *A Survivor Named Trauma: Holocaust Memory in Lithuania*. "Playing Ping Pong with Claude Brown at Yaddo" was published in *Poet Lore* in 2018.

The late Claude Brown is the author of *Manchild in the Promised Land*, a critically acclaimed account of growing up in 1940s Harlem.

IMAGES ABOVE, LEFT: KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART, 2017 PURCHASE WITH FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE RACHAEL PATTERSON YOUNG ART ACQUISITION RESERVE © ESTATE OF BEAUFORD DELANEY BY PERMISSION OF DEREK L. SPRATLEY, ESQUIRE

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

When **Amy Sillman**—a visual artist who redefined contemporary painting, pushing the medium into installations, prints, zines, animation and architecture—curated *The Shape of a Shape* for the Artist's Choice series at MoMA, she “wanted a room that teemed obscenely” (*Artforum*). The resulting “joyous cacophony... is not only preternaturally brilliant” (*Texte Zur Kunst*), but breaks the museum mold of movement-dependent chronologies and other stale organizational hierarchies. Her “aha!” moment? Shadow as muse: “They’re illusory, uncertain,” Sillman told *Artforum*. “They represent both presence and absence. Finessing shape to shadow, I arrived at a list of nervous works with more specificity, ambivalence, flesh *and* psychology, a kind of trouble in them. I wanted the installation to involve the whole body [from] the ground up.”

Background: Installation view of *Artist's Choice: Amy Sillman—The Shape of Shape*, © 2019 The Museum of Modern Art. PHOTO: HEIDI BOHNENKAMP

Amy Sillman, who first came to Yaddo in 1984, is working on new paintings and drawings for an exhibition of her work, which will soon be on view at the Gladstone Gallery in New York City. A new book covering two decades of her work just came out.

Yaddo

Saratoga Springs

The Corporation of Yaddo
312 Union Avenue
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518.584.0746

New York City

The Corporation of Yaddo
308 West 46th Street, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10036
212.307.7685

www.yaddo.org

yaddo@yaddo.org

 @yaddocommunity

 @yaddotoday

 @yaddotoday

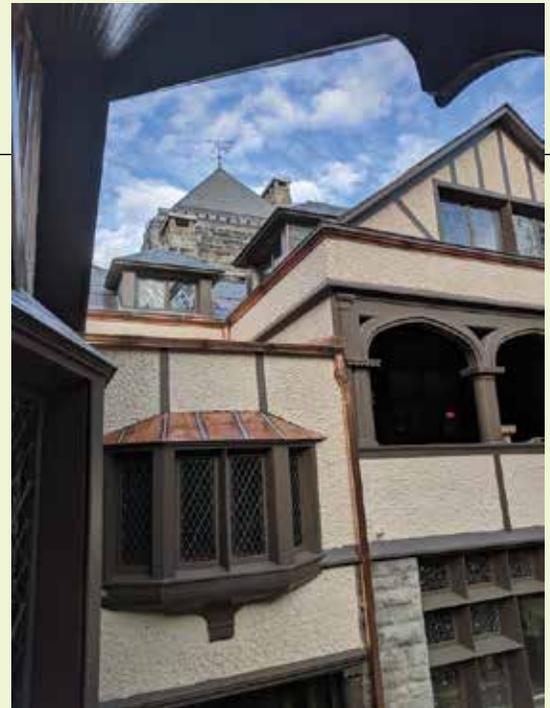
Design: Elizabeth Laub Graphic Design

© 2020 The Corporation of Yaddo

overheard

In January, *Architectural Digest* published a piece by Yaddo artist **Anne Korkeakivi** on the restoration of our historic Mansion:

“The story of Yaddo is one of turning the worst sort of loss into beauty, not only for its artist residents but also for the public, who enjoy the fruit of their labors. ‘One sonnet would justify the whole experiment and render it immortal,’ the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote of the fledgling retreat nearly a century ago. Done! But Yaddo is not resting on its laurels.”



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.