

Yaddo

13 March 2007

Dear Member of Congress,

As a proud National Co-sponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2007, the Corporation of Yaddo looks forward to a year in which the importance of art is further recognized in the legislative agenda, both nationally and across our 50 states.


Founded in Saratoga Springs, New York, in 1900 by the financier Spencer Trask and his wife, the poet Katrina Trask, Yaddo is the oldest artists' retreat in the United States. It was the Trasks' aim to create an institution that would provide artists with refuge, sustenance, time, space, and the freedom to work. This Yaddo has famously done for generations of America's most important writers, visual and performance artists, composers, and filmmakers, including Noah Baumbach, Leonard Bernstein, John Cheever, Aaron Copland, Paula Josa-Jones, Stanley Kunitz, Jacob Lawrence, Jonathan Lethem, Carson McCullers, Rick Moody, Sylvia Plath, Katherine Anne Porter, Martin Puryear, Philip Roth, Clyfford Still, Robert Stone, Amy Tan, Michael Tilson Thomas, Alice Walker, William Carlos Williams, and Jessica Yu.

Because it has such a long and storied tradition as an institution dedicated to supporting living artists in the creation of new work, Yaddo is particularly concerned with the ways in which government can help contemporary artists by providing direct revenues to them and to those organizations whose missions, like Yaddo's, are focused on artist's needs in the production of new work. As measured against government's strong support for bringing existing artistic works to larger and more diverse public audiences, which is certainly a worthy aim, the commitment of public resources to individual artists has declined steeply over the last fifteen years. Yaddo believes it is urgent that we work together to reverse that trend.

In a representative democracy, it is important that public monies be applied where they benefit the most people. But the production of new works of art does, in fact, benefit the nation as a whole. The vibrancy of the national spirit and the level of public discourse depend on it. Our schools, our communities, our churches and other places of worship: all benefit from the work of artists whose vision touches on those aspects of public life. So Yaddo joins those other national co-sponsors of Arts Advocacy Day 2007 whose mission is directed toward the support of individual artists and their work in urging you to keep these issues in mind as you craft legislative policy in the arts this coming year. Yaddo has justly been called the Bell laboratory for the creative arts—imagine the state of our scientific community if individual scientists were deprived of the resources needed for them to try, to stretch, to fail and try again. That opportunity for early experimentation is why Yaddo is proud to be a seed bed for 21st century artists, and why it will advocate on every level for resources to assist those artists in their work.

Thank you for your attention and all you do to support the arts in the United States.

Sincerely,



Elaina Richardson
President
The Corporation of Yaddo