

Holiday Reads, Brought to You by Yaddo



ART BOOKS FOR VISIONARIES

Doug Nufer's multi-lingual poetry palindrome, *Rotalever Revelator*, is split into mirroring halves, making two different books from an identical sequence of letters broken into two distinct sets of words and punctuation. Nufer pairs this technical mastery with the artwork of renowned painter **James Siena**, whose sleek, stylish images bathe the poems in greater color.

The *Low Low Woods*, a limited-run comic series by **Carmen Maria Machado**, follows two teenagers in Shudder-To-Think, PA, a town terrorized by rabbits with human eyes, a deer woman who stalks hungry girls, and skinless men. Machado's signature eye for the macabre alongside brooding illustrations by Dani inspire this collection of issues #1-6.

In *Big Throat: Photographs*, **Nat Ward** processes the forthcoming birth of his child in images and poems that circle the myriad shadows of the Rio Grande Gorge bridge in northern New Mexico. Ward's acute perspective catches darkness falling in and out of the bridge's crannies, and praises the stillness in the depths of the surrounding canyon.

Liz Collins — *Energy Field*, a commemoration of the artist's eye-popping show at The Tang Museum, documents a transformation of space amid warmly chaotic vibrations of colors, fabrics, and textiles. A visual and intellectual treat for the senses.

NONFICTION FOR TRUTHSEEKERS

1 Life and Times

Poet and performer **Pamela Sneed**'s *Funeral Diva* is a Black, queer Bildungsroman collected in poems and essays that traverse both the author's early life in an AIDS-ravaged New York City and an adulthood marred by state violence, invoking Hannah Arendt and Beyoncé with equally effortless verve.

The Best of Me, the new collection from **David Sedaris**, undercuts the malevolence of petty cruelty by underscoring the hilarious, self-serious failures of those very judgements. Sedaris' ability to lighten any darkness with humor is on full display, as well as his refinement and nurturing of that ability into the hallmark of a much-adored body of work.

2 20th Century Legends

In *Max Jacob: A Life in Arts and Letters*, **Rosanna Warren** tenderly covers a poet often neglected historically for his homosexuality and ethnic Judaism who she argues constituted "a larger force in the creation of modern French literature than has been recognized." Jacob's friendship with a young Picasso defined his life, from the champagne toasts among literati to the mystic silence of a Benedictine community, until his tragic death in a Nazi transit camp.

New releases by Yaddo authors offer something for everyone on your gift list

Heather Clark's *Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath* is a comprehensive study of the singular poet's enduring and complex legacy, tracing Plath's youth, ambition, and marriage as a means to understand the context and intent behind poems that have dazzled generations of readers.

FICTION FOR STORY-SEEKERS

1 Contemporary Responses

In **Danielle Evans'** sensational collection of stories, *The Office of Historical Corrections*, seven discrete excavations of longstanding social ties pulse with acerbic precision. Anchored by an eponymous mystery novella that follows a Black scholar on assignment to a lynching site, *Kirkus* calls this follow-up to Evans' exciting debut "gripping on every level" and "brilliantly crafted."

Homeland, Ayad Akhtar's brilliant new novel (which was named one of the top 10 *Publishers Weekly* Best Books of 2020) features a narrator sharing the author's name whose father becomes infatuated with Donald Trump's bravado after treating him for heart palpitations. As things progress, our narrator encounters a Pakistani-American, Gatsby-esque hedge fund founder of great wealth and intellect harboring a revenge scheme. Intrigue ensues!

2 Frayed Threads

An endless Arctic night frames a couple's weary search for an orphanage to approve their adoption in *What Happens at Night* by **Peter Cameron**. A taut and surreal account of desires lost in pursuit of connection, this new novel unflinchingly maps the space between healing and moving forward.

Maryse Meijer's debut novel *The Seventh Mansion* follows Xie, a fifteen year old expelled from his Southern California high school for nascent environmental activism. Via Xie's ensuing creeping alienation, Meijer investigates the divergences between ethics and selfhood, and the balancing act they demand.

BOOKS FOR IMAGINATIVE TECHIES

1 Digital Revolutions

In *The Arrest, Jonathan Lethem's* latest timely trawl of the American psyche, Sandy Duplessis (aka The Journeyman) receives a visit from his extravagant college roommate after a major disaster wipes out both television and the internet. As the two former Hollywood writers jaunt through a bleak, analog landscape in a nuclear "supercar," Sandy realizes there may be ulterior motives to their journey.

Brian Christian's erudite *The Alignment Problem: Machine Learning and Human Values* spells out the challenges of safely governing the vast artificial intelligence industry, noting instances in which such technology has been widely adopted without proper civic reckoning. Christian examines the history and potential future of AI with appropriate urgency, but does not disguise his reasons for optimism.

2 American Dreaming

Acclaimed novelist and essayist **Porochista Khakpour** returns with *Brown Album: Essays on Exile and Identity*, a meditation on her family's immigration to Los Angeles after fleeing the Iranian Revolution. Khakpour investigates the presence and absence of Americanization within her own adolescence, as well as across the Iranian diaspora at large, tracing the reverberating effects of 9/11 and the election of Donald Trump.

Maxim Loskutoff sets his debut novel, *Ruthie Fear*, in a rural Montana town epitomizing the classic American West. As a child, the protagonist sees a headless creature and is bound by that vision across decades that warp her town and the industrial identity of its residents. Merging the bizarre and uncanny with a gritty, violent realism, Loskutoff offers a richly textured and empathic portrait of yearning.

► POEMS FOR ALL

Dazzled by the whimsical chance at existence and doused with a faith that the world honors and fulfills the love we give it, **Vincent Katz's** *Broadway for Paul* finds comforts as unheralded as zipping up a winter coat scattered among its love letters to city dwellers. Poems that build and multiply like storefronts on street corners become as private as memories in his telling.

Fiona Sze-Lorrain's *Rain in Plural* is a lush and intimate study of the porous boundaries of personal life. Inflected with quietude and hardened by rigorous examination, Sze-Lorrain's careful eye ranges over landscapes both within and outside the self, mining language for new entry points.

If Men, Then, the second poetry collection from **Eliza Griswold**, submits a searing eye to the twenty-first century's self-inflicted ills and answers them by relinquishing the ego. Griswold balances an unflinching spotlight on the passage of violence across continents and cultures with a persistent inquiry of what it means to coexist.

Steeped in phenomenological pondering encompassing both a cosmic and deeply individual scale, *A Treatise on Stars* by National Book Award Finalist **Mei-mei Berssenbrugge** covers vast distances with gentle ease. Poems flush with expansive lines wind from the natural world to the viewpoints of thoughts, leaving trails of connective tissue that manifest a communal ethereality.

Desiree Alvarez's *Raft of Flame* merges the historical with the personal and familial. Tracing the lineage of colonial power's rampage through Central America, Alvarez writes from her own perspective as easily as she gives voice to indigenous works of art. Knocking on the door to history with a warrant for its grave sins in hand, this collection is an insistently alive elegy.

Jane Hirshfield returns her singular voice to the present moment in her latest collection, *Ledger*. Its anthemic opening poem announces a defiant witness standing guard over tenderness. Still filled with gratitude praising the details of intimacy, she laments its growing absence in a deeply felt record of our time.