

Voices and Visions

The Rockefeller Foundation invited former Bellagio conference participants and residents—from scientists, economists, and leaders of non-governmental organizations to composers, painters, and authors—to share their memories of and perspectives on their time at the Center, including its impact on their work. Each of these essays begins with biographical details about the contributor, the year(s) of his or her Bellagio visit(s), and the project(s) the contributor was working on there. Some are illustrated with artwork created at Bellagio.

Introduction

I have often wondered how I could explain what makes Bellagio such a special place. I could say it is the visiting residents and conference participants themselves, the people I have met during my time here, and their remarkable, diverse projects. The Center hosts people from all over the world who are seriously trying to make a difference, who fight for equity and justice, who are passionate about their creativity, whose actions are examples to others. Dedicated artists, policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and scientists all come together at Bellagio, creating an exhilarating atmosphere. I could also talk about the warm and committed staff, who work tirelessly to ensure that our guests can concentrate on their work, their art, their engagement with one another.

Or I could try to express my pride in being part of the Rockefeller Foundation, an institution that transformed a gift into a distinguished center devoted to creativity, scholarship, social activism, and philanthropy. It was 1959 when Ella Walker, the Principessa della Torre e Tasso, gave this 53-acre property to the Foundation, requesting only that it be used to promote international understanding. As you will read in one of the essays that follow, this seemingly simple act of generosity brought some challenges for Dean Rusk, then the president of the Foundation.

I could speak of his vision and that of the Foundation administrators who followed him, including current president Judith Rodin, all of whom brought groundbreaking ideas, wisdom, and commitment to the development of the Bellagio Center, making it the institution it is today: an unparalleled resource for community development and the appreciation of diverse cultures; an international center for innovative thinking and problem-solving; and a supportive environment for outstanding artistic and intellectual achievement.

Pilar Palaciá
Managing Director, the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center

Or perhaps I should focus on the historical treasures of the property: the main Villa, built in 1540, providing a dignified scenario for special dinners; the Sfondrata, constructed at the end of the 16th century, offering a place for quiet contemplation by the lake and, with its tranquil beauty, motivating guests to move beyond their own expectations and limitations in their work; the Frati, originally built as a Capuchin monastery in 1610, its austere and intimate nature conveying an unmatched sense of connectedness and shared responsibility that informs and enriches the conferences held here.

Or should I try to explain the mesmerizing effect of Bellagio’s natural beauty? No, others in these pages have written better than I could about the power of the Center’s vistas and vantage points to astonish and inspire. Let me just mention that, somehow, the abundance of natural wonders promotes generosity and understanding, enriches creative processes, and generates openness, acceptance, and peace. I am convinced that it is the combination of all these characteristics that makes the Bellagio Center so distinctive.

To learn more about what it has meant to be here, please turn these pages to listen to the varied voices of former visitors and see some of the artwork born at this lakeside setting.

It is said that the world is growing smaller. For the past 50 years, the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center, a small world unto itself, has provided a unique example of the ways in which intellectual engagement and focus can bring global communities closer together. The Center’s next 50 years promise to be even more productive than the first.

Alice Adams

I have always been intrigued by buildings and how they relate to the terrain on which they are built. Encountering the Villa Serbelloni and its structure as a virtual wall continuing and reflecting the steeply terraced mountainside it stands on had a strong effect on me. Part of my work as a Bellagio resident was to make studies of this building in drawing and model form. In doing so, I drew the mountains surrounding and viewed from the building. I was a resident in the spring, when the woods behind the Villa were full of wildflowers. The ability to wander, observe, and draw made the sociability of the mealtimes and the evening gatherings after dinner all the more welcome.

Villa Serbelloni and the Marinese building below on the slope form walls in themselves that in turn fit into terraced slopes of the gardens around them. It seems like this long rectangular wall-like building is common along the lakes, probably to take best advantage of the views and of merging the interior with the exterior. On one side you are looking across the lake on the other up the slope of the hill behind. The building does feel attached to its surroundings. What you do inside is what you do outside in the gardens and that is - walk along terraces moving from one to the other.

The building  and the terraces.

The roads wind their way in a serpentine fashion across and up these inclines and terraces.



Alice Adams, (top) sketchbook page with observations about the siting of the Villa Serbelloni, 11" x 14", 2002; and (bottom) "Mountains from the Villa Serbelloni," 11" x 14", drawing, black ink on paper, 2002.



1996: creating a jazz piece about Louis Armstrong’s wife called “Lil” and an opera, “The Visit of the Old Lady,” for City Opera, New York

JoAnne Akalaitis

I was a bit intimidated by Bellagio at first—the grandeur, the lake, the residents, unknown to me, and all the maids looked like Catherine Deneuve. I got over that soon enough, determined to work on several projects at once. I spent a lot of time writing lyrics and listening to a CD, looking at the score with headphones. But more important than my work (and I confess I’m pretty lazy) was making new friends whom I never would have gotten to know in *any* other place, since they travel in circles I don’t.

For instance, Lucy and Harley, both scientists from Stanford, Margaret, a social scientist, and Russell, a political theorist. We became the “children’s table”—noisy and boisterous each evening, talking about everything late into the night. We played inept bocce before dinner in the hot sun and laughed at our clumsiness, then the climb up the hill, a drink, a Billie Holiday or Maria Callas CD, and a delicious dinner.

Poet, writer, civil rights
activist, performer, teacher,
director; author of *I Know
Why the Caged Bird Sings*

1975: writing the third volume
of her multi-part autobiography

From *Hallelujah! The
Welcome Table: A Lifetime of
Memories with Recipes*

Voices and Visions

Maya Angelou

The Rockefeller Foundation's Study and Conference Center was a large mansion snuggled into the hills above Bellagio, Italy. Fifteen artists at a time from around the world were invited to the enclave. Selected artists with companions had to make their way to Milan airport, and then magically they were swept up by tender arms and placed in a lap of luxury that few popular movie stars or rich corporate chiefs even dreamed existed. A chauffeured car picked up the invitees and drove them carefully fifty miles north to Bellagio. There they were deposited at the Center, which stood atop a high hill. Its buildings were low-slung and meandered over carefully tended acres only a few miles from the Swiss border. Within those elegant walls, forty-eight employees cared for thirty guests and the retreat center's director and wife. Each artist had a commodious suite.

Once ensconced in this graciousness, the artists were informed of the regimen. Breakfast was ordered nightly and served each morning by footmen. Lunch was served informally at midday. Artists could sit at will in a casual dining room and choose food from an elaborate buffet. The time could have been passed off as an ordinary lunch save that each table sported a handwritten menu of foods offered and the company was served at the buffet table by the uniformed head waiter and the tailored butler.

The artists were addressed as *dottore*, which meant that their scholarship was respected. They were told that dinner was formal, and that was an understatement. Dinner was an event of meticulous structure. Guests were expected to dress each night and were directed where to sit by a placement, which lay on a hall table at the door of the drawing room. There must have been an exemplary social statistician in the Center's employ because in the four weeks when I was a resident, no one ever sat twice between the same two people.

Jessica Mitford and I were invited and found ourselves to be the only female artists. We had brought along our husbands, Robert Treuhart and Paul du Feu, but the staff, so unused to female scholars, could not bring themselves to address us as they addressed the thirteen male scholars. So they called us *signora* and our husbands *dottore*.

One evening during a lull in the ten or twelve conversations plying the table, the director reminded the guests that Thanksgiving was approaching. He then asked if anyone had a good recipe for roast turkey and corn bread dressing. I waited, but no one moved. I said, "I do. I have a recipe." I spoke it before I thought.

Everyone beamed at me except my husband, Jessica, and Robert. In a second, their faces told me I had done the wrong thing. Company never volunteers, never offers. Nonetheless,



the director said the butler would come to my suite mid-morning to collect the recipe.

I broke my writing schedule to recall and write the recipe. I handed the missive to the butler. Within minutes he returned and said the chef wanted to see the *dottore* who had sent him the recipe. I followed him down a flight of dark stairs and, without a hint of change to come, stepped suddenly into a vast noisy, hot, brightly lit kitchen, where a fleet of white uniformed cooks were stirring steaming pots and sizzling pans. The butler guided me over to meet the head chef, who wore a starched white toque. His surprise at seeing me let me know that he had expected Dottore Angelou to be a white male, and, instead, a six-foot-tall daughter of Africa stood before him ready to answer his questions. He did shake my hand, but he then turned his back rather rudely and shouted to another cook, “Come and talk to this woman. I don’t have the time.”

The second cook tried his English, but I told him we could speak Italian. He said, “Signora, we want to follow your recipe, but we have never made corn bread or corn bread dressing. We need your help.”

I asked for cornmeal, only to be offered polenta. I asked for baking powder and was told they didn’t even know what that was. When I described the work of baking powder, I was shown a large slab of moist yeast. The polenta was

an orange powdery meal many times brighter than American yellow cornmeal.

During the Easter seasons, my mother always used yeast to make hot cross buns. I figured I could use it as the riser for my corn bread.

I gave my jacket to the butler and listed the other ingredients I needed. He put men to work, and in seconds I was able to put a pan of polenta corn bread into a hot oven and the turkey’s neck, gizzard, liver, and wingtips to boil. I added celery, onions, a stick of cinnamon, and garlic to the pot.

When the bread came from the oven, hot and smoking, the head chef was standing near me. We both looked at the orange brown crust. His eyes widened. He said, “*Bella.*”

I said, “This is the bread my people eat.”

The chef asked, “Who are your people?”

I answered, “African Americans. My ancestors came from Africa to America.”

The chef said, “Every person in America except the Indians had ancestors who came from some other place.”

I couldn’t argue that.

He asked, “What makes you different from other Americans?”

I said, “My skin is black. That tells me and everyone who sees me who I am.”

He raised his voice. “Roberto, Roberto, come.”

A small dark-skinned cook came from the rear of the kitchen.

The chef said, “Here is Roberto. He is from Sicily, but because of his color should I call him an Afro-Italian?”

There was a burst of loud laughter. We had been speaking in Italian and everyone had heard our conversation and enjoyed the fact that the chef was putting me on.

I decided to stop the razzing and get on with the cooking. I quickly diced an onion and sautéed it in a large pan. I drained the stock and mixed some with the onion and crumbled corn bread in a large bowl. No one offered to help me, so I took the raw turkey and stuffed it with dressing. I laced the turkey’s cavity and placed it into a roasting pan. I cut the oven down and set the turkey to roast.

I finely diced another onion and sautéed it and made gravy using the cut-up meat and the rest of the stock. I put a drop of the gravy on my thumb and tasted it for seasoning.

When I looked up, I realized the chef had been watching me for the past twenty minutes. His face told me he had been watching with approval. He asked, “Would you like a smoke?”

I said, “Yes.”

His nod told me to follow him. He shouted to the cooking staff, “Watch her sauce, and keep an eye on the turkey in the oven.”

We walked out into an alley. He gave me a strong French cigarette and lighted his own and mine. He breathed in deeply and exhaled loudly, and although he never said a mumbling word I knew his invitation to me to join him in a smoke was his way to show his approval.

That night when the exclusive intellectual assemblage had gathered around the dining table, the chef entered followed by his sous-chef, who carried a fine brown turkey.

The sous-chef lifted the platter and bowed to the chef, who gave a small bow, then reached out his right hand to me and asked me to stand. All the scholars and their mates and the director applauded the turkey, the chef, and me.

I learned that day that a respect for food and its preparation could obliterate distances between sexes, languages, oceans, and continents.



D. James Baker
Director, Global Carbon
Measurement Program,
the William J. Clinton
Foundation

Gary Richards
Principal Scientist, Department
of Climate Change,
Government of Australia

2008: attending a workshop
on measurement and monitor-
ing of global forest carbon

D. James Baker and Gary Richards

With global warming and other climate changes driven by carbon emissions now accelerating, it is more important than ever to curb emissions and put a price on carbon. Since trees in tropical countries are among the best ways to take up and store carbon, planting new trees and slowing the deforestation of major forests is an immediate way to deal with the problem. Such projects, when linked to carbon markets, will also be an important source of income for poor communities.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that up to 20 percent of emissions could be avoided with afforestation and avoiding deforestation. This cannot be done without national systems to monitor and measure forest carbon and carbon emissions. The establishment of national systems will provide the necessary information and framework for local and regional projects. In turn, there must be global standards within which national systems operate.

Our group used the Bellagio Center to reach important new agreements about how global forest carbon could be measured and monitored for both national carbon emissions accounting and markets for use in poverty reduction projects. It was there that we decided to establish the international Carbon Measurement Collaborative and an associated Non-Governmental Organizations Roundtable on Carbon and Poverty Reduction. Because of the focus on national systems and cooperative input from non-governmental organizations, the Bellagio meeting was a turning point in the development of forest carbon measurements.



Composer, writer, UCLA
Professor Emerita of Music,
co-editor (with Lydia
Hammesley) of *Audible Traces:
Gender, Identity and Music*,
and co-producer of the OPEN
SPACE series of CDs, books,
and scores

1980: composing a chamber
opera and writing a review
of John Rockwell’s book,
All American Music

Elaine R. Barkin

“De Amore,” a 50-minute work for four male and four female singer-speakers, encompasses a wide vocal range, four instrumentalists (guitar, viola, harp, double bass), medieval costuming, and slides. The multilingual (Latin, English, Provençal French) libretto derives from a 12th-century treatise by Andreas Capellanus, interpolations of my own devising, as well as love letters and love texts from the 12th to the 20th century.

My intent was to compose music arising from non-synchronous yet simultaneous spoken-sung-instrumental sonorities. Stylized enactments of and responses to love, to being in love—its presence, its absence, its joys or woes—replace a plot-driven tale. There are solos, duos, quartets, octets, and expressive text declamations. The harmonic-melodic style is highly eclectic. Although it is difficult to recall my day-to-day work process at Bellagio, I do remember being energized and stimulated. Composing and text-writing didn’t flow smoothly all the time; even so, there was always a fundamental sense of being supported and of not being pressured to produce, as if time hardly mattered.



Composer, performer,
audio producer

1994: attending a conference
on electronic music

1995: working on music for
twisted tutu, her ensemble

2006: working on an opera
based on “The Man in the Black
Suit,” a story by Stephen King

Eve Beglarian

Bellagio is special because artists and agricultural scientists and public health specialists and classics professors and economists and political philosophers all sit down at the table together. Playing tennis with historian Rashid Khalidi in 1995 and philosopher Robert Fogelin in 2006, visiting the site of Mussolini’s assassination (right across the lake) with art critic Debra Balken and classics professor James Tatum, discussing the changing nature of composers’ sketches in the computer age with psychiatrist William Beardslee, learning about the wildly varied religious life of America from Diana Eck, about Sri Lankan history from K. M. de Silva, about refugee adaptation from public health expert Morton Beiser, about the law in post-9/11 America from Rick Abel, about contemporary Italian literature from Ann Goldstein, and about famine relief in North Korea from Marcus Noland—these are just the beginning of examples of conversations, insights, and experiences that I continue to draw on when I do my work.

If we artists only engage with other artists in our work and in our intellectual and social lives, we are not able to fully do our jobs, which are, after all, to give voice to the deepest yearnings of humanity, to speak to and for our common life. Artists working outside the realm of mass culture are already nearly invisible, given the machinations of hyper-capitalism, whose only way of discerning excellence is to assign monetary value. It is vitally important for practitioners in *all* fields to engage one another as fully and deeply as possible. I believe the shared goal for all of us is to enrich the quality of life in this world, in these times: Bellagio at its best creates an environment in which we all can work toward that goal.

Professor Emeritus of Russian and Director of the University Seminars, Columbia University; teaches and writes about fiction, literary theory, and interdisciplinary studies

1979: attending a conference on Russian literature

1988: finishing a book about the genesis of *The Brothers Karamazov*

Robert L. Belknap

My father was counsel for the Rockefeller Foundation when Dean Rusk, its president, told him the Princess Torre e Tasso wanted to give her villa on Lake Como to the Foundation, to be used for the scholarly, cultural, and social good. She was dying, and her family had all the castles they needed. He said the estate was really old, but that the first owner he knew about was said to be Pliny the Younger. The two of them flew over, with some puritanical doubts about using Foundation resources on anything that pleasant. The Princess reassured them by offering a \$2 million endowment to maintain the establishment, and Rusk flew back to report to his trustees, leaving my father to set up an Italian tax-exempt foundation to own the Villa. The Italian lawyers were learned and helpful, but not completely understanding: “A foundation entails huge complexities. Why not do it our way? Just don’t pay the taxes.” But the Foundation was stodgy, and once the complexities had all been complied with, my father reported the results to the Princess, who had been waiting anxiously and died a week after the agreement with the Foundation was signed.

My first scholarly encounter with Bellagio was in 1979, when a former student of mine arranged a conference on Russian prose fiction. Many of the participants were old friends of mine, Americans and Europeans whom I had been seeing over the years at other conferences or in passage through their universities or in New York, where Slavists, like other experts, show up more often than in most cities. Half a dozen were new faces for me, writers of articles I knew, or total strangers.

In literary studies, ideas frequently collide more profitably face-to-face than through books and journals. A scientist can often offer a large array of evidence in a single graph, but I may need a long or a short quotation to prove each point, and only learn which I need by watching my colleague’s face. The papers at a conference are valuable, but the walks, the drinks, the dinner-table conversations make the real exchange of ideas happen, and the Villa provided the best milieu for those exchanges that I have ever seen. As one scholar said when Guido escorted her down the magnificent corridor to her enormous room looking down the lake, “At last I felt that people have realized my true worth.”

Voices and Visions



Remembering this brief and treasured visit, I applied for a longer stay almost a decade later, and in the spring of 1988 spent six weeks there. I had been using the Library of Congress to finish a book I had been working on for far too long, and arrived with all my materials in a few folders and a draft on a floppy disk or two. The routine worked well for me. A comfortable bedroom and a working office in the Maranese, with a laptop and an elegant lamp on the desk drew me to complete the final text of my book, and to begin planning a study that has shaped much of my writing ever since, a broad exploration of literary plots. The group of scholars whose

stay overlapped with mine included two experts on Russia, but a wonderful array of other fields—theology, church history, child psychiatry, allergies, political science, two painters whose works still hang on my walls, and a playwright who remains one of my closest friends. It was a moment in my career when I could concentrate on a project and then turn to the company of serious intellectuals about whose specialty I had everything to learn.



Seth Berkley

In early 1993, despite the global spread of HIV, the effort to develop an AIDS vaccine was in trouble. An AIDS vaccine could be the best way to end the global pandemic, yet very little was being invested by the public or private sector in its development. The Rockefeller Foundation was encouraged to become engaged—but how? The problem seemed too massive and complex for a foundation. But that was exactly where the Bellagio Center could make a difference. After all, among the hundreds of important conferences that had been held here, one in 1984 had had the audacious goal of making childhood immunization universal. This meeting had established the Task Force for Child Survival and pulled together the worldwide effort that led to the successful declaration of universal childhood immunization in 1990.

Then, as the wine flowed and walks through the gardens took place, on breaks as people gazed across the lake, they became inspired to move beyond their normal limits. By the second day, big, daring ideas were surfacing at the meeting and by day three, participants had concluded that a new and bold initiative was necessary.

This new initiative would have as its primary mandate accelerating the development of preventive AIDS vaccines for global use. It would focus on the deep needs of the developing world and would use the world’s best science. It would also combine the rigor of industry with the public-good mandate of the public sector.

Today the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative is working in 24 countries. It has developed six novel human vaccines and tested them in 11 countries. It has raised more than \$750 million. Furthermore, the model has spread; there are more than half a dozen Product Development Public Private Partnerships and their influence is being felt around the world. There are now a few billion dollars being invested in research for interventions in diseases of poverty, and the pipeline of drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics for these diseases has grown exponentially.

Jon Cohen, a writer for *Science* magazine, described the 1994 Bellagio meeting in *Shots in the Dark*, his definitive book on AIDS vaccines, as “the single most diverse, intense AIDS vaccine think tank ever held.” For small ideas, you can go to any retreat, but to think expansive, fearless ideas and then design something innovative and courageous to put them into practice, there is no place like Bellagio.



Executive Director, Harvard
University Committee on
Human Rights Studies

2007: attending a seminar on
African innovations in economic
and social rights

2008: attending a conference on
child migration research

Jacqueline Bhabha

At my first Bellagio seminar, I was the only non-Africanist present, invited—I assume—because of my legal work on refugee protection, child migration, and problems of citizenship, all of which centrally affect African economic and social rights, the topic of the conference. The weeklong discussion of strategies for translating the often lofty, even pious aspirations of human rights articles into effective social policies and political realities was riveting for me, all the more so as the formal daytime sessions spilled over into long evening explorations and arguments. I learned new vocabularies and was exposed to new literatures and histories. I began to reframe some of my thinking on the reintegration of child soldiers into post-conflict societies and on the balance between victimhood and agency as mobilization strategies. By challenging previously unfamiliar positions, I found myself entering into them more fully. I am not sure that without the exchanges over meals, walks, and drinks in the café at night I would have had those opportunities for such irreverent exploration.

Roy Blount, Jr.

At Bellagio, the exclusive retreat for writers, scholars, and artists on Italy's Lake Como, I learned something memorable about kangaroo legs. Joan and I hobnobbed there with a Mexican artist named Lourdes who painted bits of English roadside terrain. I don't mean she painted pictures of hedges and hillocks, I mean she painted vivid Latin colors on the hedges and hillocks themselves, and took photographs of the result. Also in our group was a wonderful fellow named Habib who staged plays of Shakespeare and Molière, back home in Bhopal, with local actors who were illiterate. He would read out their parts to them, and they would take it from there improvisationally.

When it came time for Habib to give his presentation to the assembled residents at Bellagio, he gave a talk entirely in Urdu. Joan and I and our new friends Harold (avant-garde composer), Don and Doris (authorities on Gambia), and Teresa (Italian scholar) had plotted with Habib. As he spoke we nodded and looked thoughtful as if we were following his every word. Then we asked him complicated questions—Joan delivered hers in Japanese. The assembly listened gravely, until finally Habib confessed, in English, that what he had just been saying at length was that he hadn't gotten any work done on his autobiography because he couldn't stop looking out his window at the ferryboats going back and forth across Lake Como. The vista from that villa! Whenever anyone bids me behold anything through any window in

the world for the rest of my life, I will be able to say, "You call that a vista?"

Habib's petite round wife, Moneeka, would sing, when urged, "All of Me" very much like Ella Fitzgerald. Habib was eighty-something and tended to mutter and cough through his pipe, but we got to know him during an excursion to the town where Mussolini was arrested. (Il Duce tried to sink down into his greatcoat, but then someone cried, in Italian, "melon head!") As we got into a cab at the end of our stay, Habib held the door for Joan and murmured, "You should get those legs insured."

But that's not the leg item I had in mind. A retired British seaman named Robert Brewster was at Bellagio with his wife, an American who studied Swedish immigration policy. In the course of seeing the world with the Royal Merchant Marine, Brewster told me, he took time off to live among Australian aborigines and study their ways.

And did he learn to play the didjeridoo? Indeed he didjeridid. But it was kangaroo-hunting that he found most interesting. The bushmen set out on the hunt barefooted, he said, and armed only with boomerangs and knives.

"Can you run a kangaroo down?" Brewster asked them.

Of course not, they indicated with a look. But see, that was all right. That was not like how the computer experts reacted when I reached out for help. They reacted by hanging up (both Anouks) or giving



me misery-prolonging advice that they did not expect either me or themselves to understand. The Aborigines knew what they were doing. And they were willing to educate Brewster. All in good time.

"Can you knock a kangaroo out with a boomerang?" he asked. Get serious, said the look they gave him.

A kangaroo hopped into sight.

Whoosh! The best marksman of the group flung his boomerang. It hit the kangaroo in the left leg. The kangaroo sped away more or less rightwardly. And what did the bushmen do, but speed off in the opposite direction.

"Well," said Brewster, "I was young and quite fit then, and the Aborigines were small. I kept up, to be there when their curious strategy paid off. Obvious, really, when you think about it."

I thought about it.

He gave me a look no doubt not unlike those the bushmen had given him. But that was all right, that was part of his narrative strategy, it was not a way of making me give up and go away, which is

the hope of every "tech support" voice.

"A kangaroo hit in one leg," Brewster went on, "will hop around in a circle. As he came around, they met him head-on, and dispatched him with the knives."

So what did I do with that information, you may ask. The next day at Bellagio, I learned that the universe is now believed to be in the shape of a donut. In a twinkling of info-synthesis, I wrote the following:

The universe is a donut, run
By a one-legged kangaroo.
Either counter- or clockwise, one
Or the other of the two.

So let's go rolling right along
Around with the kangaroo.
Don't be afraid of stepping wrong,
He is stumbling too.

He knows that he can never stop.
His wound helps him to steer.
He learns anew with every hop
That everything's a sphere.



Artistic Director of SITI Company and professor at Columbia University, where she runs the graduate theater directing program

2004: writing a book of essays, a follow-up to her first book, *A Director Prepares*

Anne Bogart

The only negative aspect of my four-week residency at the Bellagio Center was every morning upon waking, I felt in my bones the wretched knowledge that one less day remained. I was completely in love with the atmosphere and surroundings of the hilltop estate with Lake Como spread out below that inspired both happiness and work. But the significant and long-term effects on my work and on me surpassed both the beauty and the tranquility of the environs. When I arrived at Bellagio I was in the beginning stages of a book of theoretical essays on the art of theater. I already had outlined ideas and stories and I had begun some of the writing, but the book so far felt unfocused and a little forced. My arrival coincided with the revelations of the atrocities at Abu Graib. My Bellagio Center colleagues were a remarkable group of artists and scholars and our discussions during and around meals tempted the difficult subjects provoked by the current events: the issues of responsibility, historical sensitivity, and retribution for such torture and inhumanity. It became crystal clear that my book should really be about the role of the artist post-9/11.

Suddenly with this new understanding, words, sentences and paragraphs shot out of me with a passion fueled by the wisdom, discussions, and encouragement of my fellow residents. The book became *And Then You Act*, which directly addresses the issues of art and action in difficult times.

A particularly unforgettable and decisive encounter with the South African poet and writer Antjie Krog would never have happened had we not found one another in the context of Bellagio. Many know Antjie, who is loved in her home country for her political convictions and poetic sensibilities, as the “Pablo Neruda of Afrikaans.” In discussions with her about the new direction my work was taking, I specified the subjects that I was considering, each representing a chapter of the book: Context, Articulation, Intention, Attention, Magnetism, Time, and Content. The final subject, Content, I admitted to her, was the one that I worried about the most and thought that I might leave out. Antjie literally got on her knees and begged me to include that chapter. She insisted that this would be the most important of the chapters. And so, with her as muse, I worked the hardest on this difficult but key chapter. The struggle with the issue of Content for theater artists is critical in our times.



Poet, filmmaker, lyricist,
stage director, member of the
Actors Studio

1989: working on a section of his
trilogy, *La Divina Caricatura*

Lee Breuer

Most of life is connecting the dots, because most of life floats on memory like an inner tube on an ocean. This is November. Last November Leslie died. Leslie was the mother of my fifth child and my partner for a period of 15 years. This is the Leslie who almost didn't go to Bellagio with me 20 years ago.

Leslie almost didn't go because she was my partner, not my wife, and Bellagio then had some quaint scruples about invitees' emotional arrangements. But all was solved thanks to a generous letter from my first partner and, technically, my wife—herself a Bellagio invitee—who advocated for Leslie. And the retro rules of the day were changed for us by the powers that be, and I will be eternally grateful.

Bellagio was paradise. I never ate better, slept better, worked harder, and thought more deeply anywhere else in the world. I wrote something that signaled the whole change of style that my work is undergoing now. We ran up the mountain for the sunset and down the mountain to swim at daybreak.

And Bellagio was sexy. We would wander through town, passing that house where Liszt misbehaved. I don't remember the details—did he live there with a mistress? Conceive a child?

I do remember we took Italian lessons from a little man who lived next door in an ancient farmhouse whose family had not worked for four hundred years. They would just sell off slivers of what I held to be the most beautiful landscape in the world.

And Leslie became fecund—at one with all plants and animals from the Bellagio grapes to the lizards. We were old but we wanted to have a baby. And, lo, the following year we did. We loved to think that we conceived our son in Bellagio, but science and the calendar pretty much pointed to a small campus in middle Illinois, where we did a project immediately after. In our hearts, though, he *was* conceived in Bellagio. And at very least the foreplay of conception took place there. What more could any artist dream of for a two-week fellowship?



Country Director for Brazil,
the World Bank, Brasilia

2000: examining the causes of
the improvement in the quality
of life in a Bangladeshi village
from 1977 to 1997

John Briscoe

I grew up in a Karroo (with no water)
I lived in Bangladesh (under meters of water)
I went to Bellagio to write (about water)
And was assigned the pumphouse (sans water)
But looked out at the Alps (covered with frozen water)
And the lake so blue and full (of pure water)
And sipped wine (and not much water)



Darius Brubeck

What direct impact did Bellagio have on my work? The prosaic answer is simply that *I got it done*, no small thing. A situation that allows uninterrupted work is rare and my composition was driven by a sense of emotional urgency. The suite, *Lulama*, was dedicated to a jazz drummer and bandmate, Lulu Gontsana. One declared project motivation was to involve jazz musicians in the continuing AIDS-awareness campaign in South Africa. Sadly, as things turned out, the music became a tribute to Lulu, who died before it was performed. The music does not of course directly reflect the splendid view of alpine lakes and mountains from my forest studio, but the stillness helped me summon the semi-desert landscapes of the Eastern Cape, where Lulu was born. And the energizing prose and intimate poetry readings certainly affected the lyrics composed by my wife, Cathy, which recall the drama of Johannesburg, where Lulu died.

So, an ideal balance prevailed. One worked in isolation and developed ideas in company. Changing for cocktails and dinner established a tone of both formal and natural conviviality. Discussions on evolutionary biology, dance in film, international tribunals, the histories of Odessa and Bolivia, “American Indian” contributions to U.S. law, revelatory poetry, slavery, scrapping the U.S. Constitution, the Episcopal Church, Arabic poetry, human trafficking in Nepal, being gay in Iowa, and the sociology of Airstream Trailers changed our lives forever. Three years later, we still connect with the accomplished individuals who introduced these themes.

Mary Ellen Carroll

Bellagio is literally a place between opposite sites (the real and the fantastic, Lecco and Como) and the point from which all significant creative work begins. One becomes immersed in this dialectic, and the study of sides is in fact what brought me there. It is not simply the grace and overwhelming beauty of the gardens and the surrounding lakes and the mountains but a certain sense of absence, a removal far from the daily that conjures Walter Benjamin's over-quoted remark, "Boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation and the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience." There is an absence of religion, race, politics, and culture at the Center—although all of these topics are present, as ideas and subjects to be examined and discussed. But, like the ghost that inhabits the Villa, they appear only when a dialectic platform exists to call them into existence.

When people ask me what characterized my experience as a fellow at Bellagio, I respond with one word: boredom. I should underscore that my use of this word is not meant in the pejorative, or to be provocative, as there are very few places and very few moments at which one can truly be bored. An exegesis on the philosophical works of Heidegger, Schopenhauer, Agamben, and, as I have already noted, Benjamin on this topic is unnecessary, although they would all support my position. I carried their collected works to this site—where, as legend has it, Pliny the Younger laid his foundation for the Villa Tragedia across the lake from his Villa

Commedia—to continue research for a feature-length doppelgänger film to be shot in Poland in 2010. This research was not the proposed work plan that got me there. Collectively the pages in those books amounted to 50 kilos in excess baggage, and nary a spine was cracked during the month I lived in the shadow of the Tragedia's replacement, the Villa Serbelloni. There was no time, although at moments it seemed as if time were the only thing that was there.

There were no boring people at the Villa, of that sort that Lydia Davis, who was not present, might have written about in one of her short stories if it had been penned there—or that Lorrie Moore, who was there, did. The fellows and their spouses or partners came from a variety of disciplines and were all fascinating and intelligent people. The weekly international conferences introduced new groups that would be seated with us at dinner. These individuals were in some manner all theorizing or taking direct action on subjects that ranged from gender-based violence and health to product development and diseases of poverty, from China and the media to crop fertility and volunteerism. In effect, they were all working toward making this world another, if not a better, place.

Bellagio is necessary to our collective existence. This necessity is not only shared by our peers—fellow artists, scientists, writers, politicians, etc.—but also bleeds into the rest of the world and is a model for the possible.



Mary Ellen Carroll, "Between Garibaldi's Toes," stationery with embossing and nail polish, 8.25" x 6", 2004.

Petah Coyne

Every three days a new resident brought fresh energy into our group. This helped soothe the loss of the one who had left that morning for home. This continual revolving door is one of the many brilliant trademarks of the Bellagio residency. Because of it, there is an ever-changing dynamic, with new ideas continually being inserted, dovetailing with the old.

Right after dinner the “fireside chats” took place and each resident would talk about his or her project. They never disappointed. I would always position myself so I could look out, past the Italian chandeliers, through the open doorways to the slowly darkening night sky. Watching the birds fly by, in ones and twos against the midnight blue skies, against the slowly darkening vegetation was like watching a sculpture slowly being assembled. I would listen intently and concentrate, thinking along with the group, considering. These topics that had nothing to do with my chosen profession completely expanded my own thought process, making me consider things outside my own world. And my own fireside chat—forcing me to grapple with new images, ideas, and concepts I was just beginning to grasp—made me realize what I cherished most within my own work.



Petah Coyne, “La Notte,” 65” x 47” x 59”, metal chandelier, silk flowers, candles, specially formulated wax, pigment, chicken wire fencing, steel understructure, wire, black metal paint, duchesse silk satin, chain, cable, cable bolts, quick-link shackles, jaw-to-jaw swivels, 2003–08. © Petah Coyne. Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, New York.

Professor of Psychology and
Management at Claremont
Graduate University, where he
co-founded the world's first

doctoral program in
Positive Psychology;
former Chair of Psychology,
University of Chicago

1993: writing a book
on creativity

Voices and Visions

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

For me Bellagio will always be a place of very complex connotations. As a 10-year-old child, in 1944–45, I spent almost a year there. My father was then a counselor to the Hungarian Embassy in Italy. The diplomatic corps of the few remaining nations still accredited with the Axis powers were lodged in the Hotel Grand'Italia (called Gran Bretagna before and after World War II), in a park on the lakeshore. The Villa Serbelloni, where the Bellagio Center is now located, was then used as a branch of the Foreign Ministry of Mussolini's government, which was located at Saló, on Lake Garda. When my father had business involving that office, he had to trudge up the hill to Villa Serbelloni.

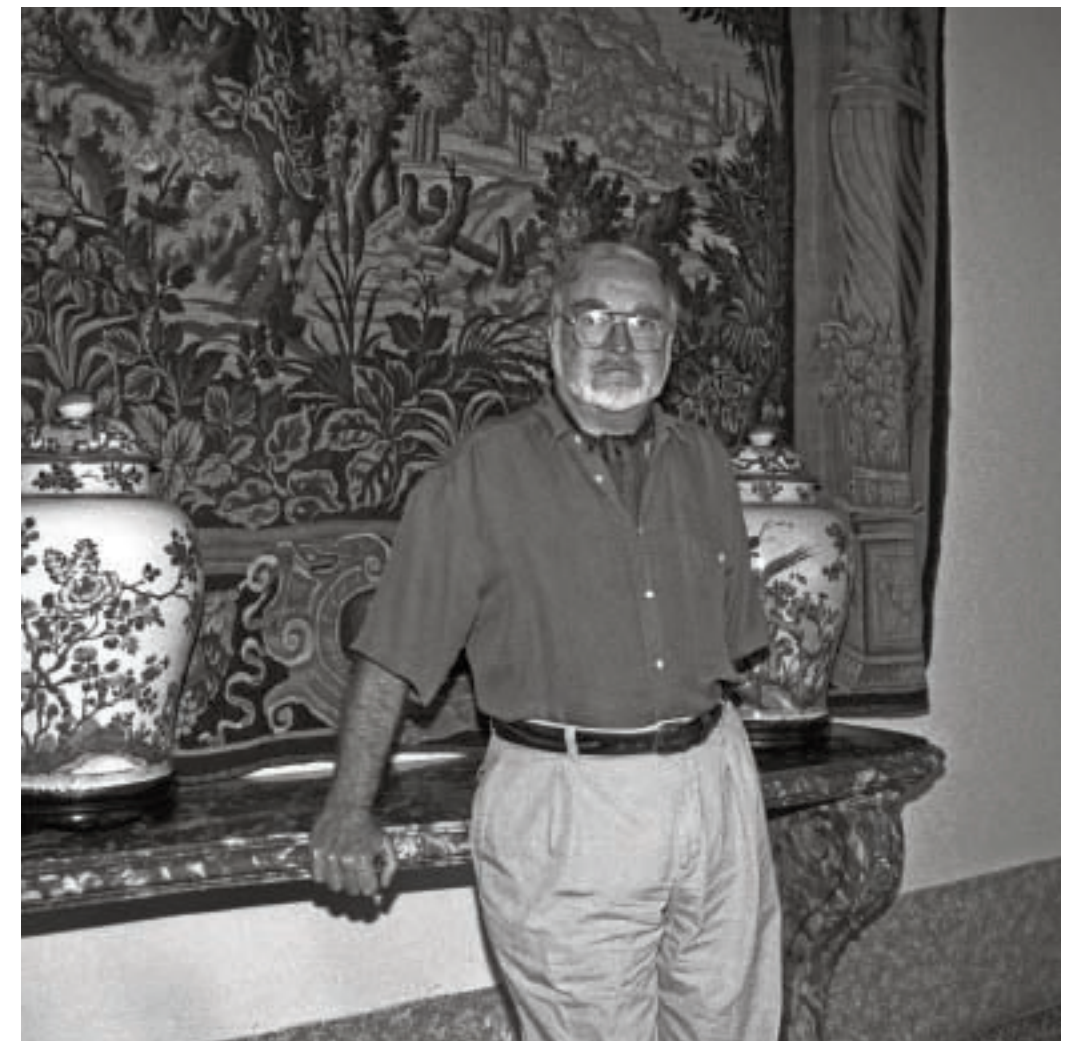
One of my clearest memories is hearing, with my parents, a speech by Winston Churchill on Radio Free Europe (a forbidden station, but everyone listened to it anyway), when the British prime minister said, in effect, "We know that the diplomats accredited to the Italian government are living in luxury on the shores of Lake Como. We'll make sure that they won't do so for long." Sure enough, a few days later a squadron of RAF fighter-bombers appeared from behind the mountains on the western shores of the lake and, barely skimming the surface of the waters, headed for the Grand'Italia. It was an early autumn afternoon, and I happened to be looking out the window facing the lake. I stood there

mesmerized, like the proverbial deer in the headlights, watching the blazing machine guns at eye level coming rapidly closer and closer.

The next iconic memory is from a few months later, when on another afternoon several long bursts of machine gun fire came from across the lake. Were these the partisans attacking in full daylight? Or the advancing Allied troops who were supposed to be fighting their way up the Italian peninsula? Or was it the Wehrmacht shooting at partisans? Or ... Then the volleys stopped. But still the passenger boats coming from Menaggio across the lake were missing their scheduled stops, and the wondering continued.

Finally a boat did slide into the tiny harbor of Bellagio, with news more fantastic than any speculation had been: The day before, Mussolini and his entourage had tried to escape to Switzerland in a convoy along the western shore. They were captured by the partisans and the very next day he, his lover Claretta Petacci, and his closest henchmen were executed in the backyard of a villa where they had spent the night.

Many years later, while I was in college, I wrote about this and other experiences from wartime Bellagio, and *The New Yorker* published them! It was my first royalty check, and it earned me an automatic "A" in the English as a Second Language course I was taking at the community college in Chicago.





Writer and journalist specializing in Russia and the Caucasus

2005: researching a book about the different cultures of the Black Sea region

Thomas de Waal

Through my study window I looked southeast steeply down the hill to the undulating bays of the lake framed by distant mountains. In the middle of my view stood red-tiled stone towers and a cluster of boats in the old harbor. Just beyond the window frame, almost near enough to touch, were the vertical plume of a poplar, a group of silvery olive trees, and another tree that may have been a maple, which turned redder each day. Every day the view reassembled itself. Mist erased the mountains; the olives sparkled with sunlight; one day snow flecked the poplar tree. Watching the ferries come and go, with their slowly unfurling wake, set a rhythm for the working day and after a while I set my own work routine to their timetable.

One cold Sunday afternoon, Honor Moore gave us a small impromptu poetry reading upstairs at the Villa. There were probably 10 people there. We listened and enjoyed, asked questions, and requested more poems. Most of us had spent three weeks together. Twilight came and we were still there, caught in a spell of listening. Honor, who has given readings all over the world, remarked that she couldn't remember such a rapt and receptive audience. It was the Villa life that had made it so. I did some good work at Bellagio, but it was the shared intellectual experience that I look back on most fondly.



Anita Desai

I had begun with the idea of writing about characters who are living in an ashram in India and are involved in sorting out the differences—and similarities—between sacred and profane love. The other theme is the chameleon quality of lives spent in travel, different settings drawing forth different aspects of a single personality. The novel is to weave in and out of different time sequences as well as different settings.... I used my time [at Bellagio] chiefly for thought and reflection: for dreaming the dreams that precede work and are essential to it yet so difficult to achieve in the “real world.”

Institute Professor at MIT; former MIT Chairman of the Chemistry Department, Dean of Science, and Provost; served as Director of Energy Research, Acting Assistant Secretary of Energy Technology, and Undersecretary in the

Department of Energy during President Carter’s administration; in the first Clinton administration, served as Undersecretary for Acquisition and Technology, Deputy Secretary in the Department of Defense, and Director of Central Intelligence

1990: writing a paper on issues American universities face in admitting foreign science and engineering students

John Deutch

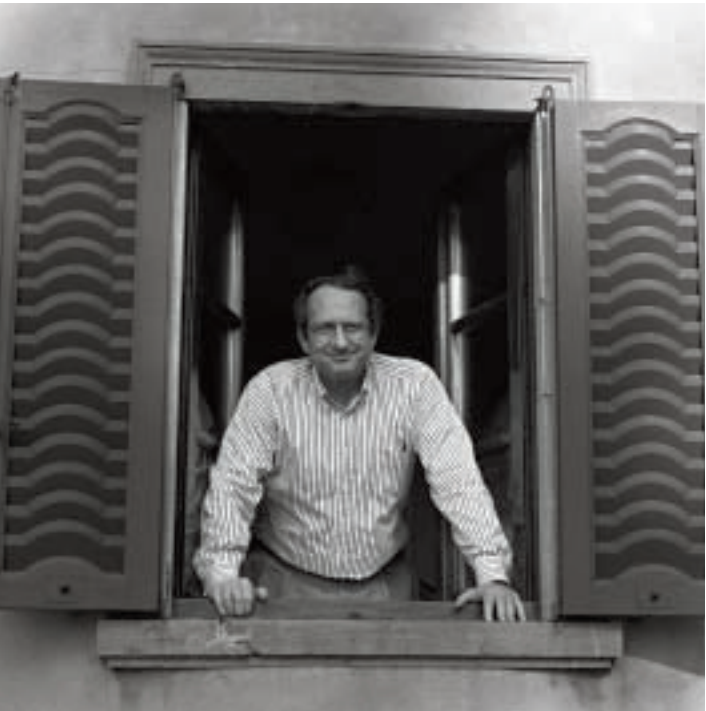
In 1990, I stepped down as provost of MIT after six years in office. My close friend, Harvard professor Joe Nye, advised me that decompression from the mostly petty pressures of academic administration and the need for intellectual rejuvenation would be greatly facilitated by a change in venue and applying myself to critical thinking (not recently practiced) on a topic of some public significance. His implication was, I believe, that I needed to demonstrate that I was still capable of serious scholarly work, after many years as an academic administrator. He suggested that residency at the Bellagio Center would be perfect for this purpose. My application was accepted, and my wife, Pat, and I spent from mid-October to mid-November at the Center, leaving Cambridge right after my last day as provost.

I decided to write a paper on issues universities faced when deciding to expand the number of foreign students admitted to study science and engineering in this country. The importance of globalization was just beginning to be appreciated and it seemed to me that U.S. universities were proceeding with the best of intentions but without

acknowledging some of the underlying difficulties. For example, foreign graduates in science and technology did add welcome diversity and broaden intellectual life on campus. But the practice was also financially profitable for U.S. universities, since the federal government paid for tuition through a research grant and many students remained to work in the United States instead of returning to their homes. The purpose and intended results were not convincingly explained. Consequently, and not surprisingly, the practice drew criticism from many countries in Latin America and Asia as effectively a U.S. policy of exploiting their scarce intellectual capital, while members of Congress asked why U.S. taxpayers should subsidize foreign students learning basic technology here for use in other countries.

The paper was not a success; no one liked what I had written. Perhaps my analysis was flawed (unlikely), perhaps my writing was not effective (plausible), and perhaps some academics did not like hearing criticism of their globalization initiative. The best I could do was publish a much-shortened version of the piece as an editorial in *Science*.

Voices and Visions



Despite the evidence, I was convinced that I could do policy analysis that was both brilliant and incisive. More important, I enjoyed the activity and my Bellagio residency convinced me that I should devote the rest of my career to public policy research at a university, with a focus on energy, technology, and national security. I have continued to do so, with the exception of a tour of government service in the first Clinton administration, to my great personal satisfaction. I trust that students and colleagues would agree that I have made a contribution to MIT’s intellectual life, but they might suggest that I add some caveats, which I choose not to include.

This description does not convey the near-mystical effect that my residency at Bellagio had on me. I became completely immersed in the Center’s life. I admired and learned from my fellow residents—artists, philosophers,

historians—who shared a love of learning but did not have a clue about either technology or public policy. Bellagio became my life —pasta and learning; the perfect combination. Indeed, after three weeks, when the Bellagio office told me that I had a call from the United States and gave me the name of the caller, I did not recognize the name of the new MIT president. Clearly, I had been away long enough to be revitalized in this intellectual Shangri-la.

Veduta, Veduta. No one will ever know how much I loved my office retreat. Alone with the smells and the silence, I could think about anything I wanted and write whatever I wished. It was the perfect place for me. If you remember Rosebud in *Citizen Kane*, you will understand what Veduta means to me.



Poet and author; Poet Laureate of the United States, 1993 to 1995

1988: working on *Dürer’s Beauty*, a sequence of poems contrasting medieval and contemporary concepts of artistic inquiry

Rita Dove

I arrived at the Villa Serbelloni with a classic case of burn-out. The sabbatical year immediately preceding my residency had been spent avoiding reporters, answering fan letters and requests from high school students, giving poetry readings—all as a result of the publicity from being awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1987—and fulfilling obligations for book reviews and articles. The poems written during that beleaguered year (mostly isolated lyrics) had been few and far between.

The first two weeks of my residency were spent reading material for the project; I also worked on transforming an original full-length play into a verse drama. In the last three weeks, I was able to write two passages in the poetic sequence, one dealing with Dürer’s fear of death and the other with his inability to accept faith blindly—how, for example, he eschewed his mother’s simple belief in the rational argument of his contemporary, Erasmus of Rotterdam. I sketched a rough draft of yet another section, subtitled *Dürer’s Hands*, and made notes on the portions dealing with modern times.

Although I did not make as much progress on *Dürer’s Beauty* as I would have liked, the residency proved ideal for the kind of eleventh-hour concentration needed to polish the poetry manuscript I had intended to finish before coming to Bellagio. To that end I wrote four new poems, ordered and titled the manuscript, and fine-tuned several older poems.

The magnificence of the Villa was actually inspiring; I felt as if all those long hours bent over my desk had been rewarded with a golden crown. I absolutely *loved* my study (Veduta), which was perfect for a poet; I’ve decided that my next study has to be round, even if I have to build it myself in the backyard!

President, the Children’s
Defense Fund

1989: outlining three books
that became *The Measure of
Our Success: A Letter to My
Children and Yours*; *Guide My
Feet: Meditations and Prayers
on Loving and Working
for Children*; and *Lanterns:
A Memoir of Mentors*

1990, 1992, 2005, 2007:
hosting conferences
1999: outlining two more books

Voices and Visions

Marian Wright Edelman

In 1990, the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), Dr. John Hope Franklin, and Dr. Dorothy Height convened 23 black lead-ers for five days at Bellagio to discuss the crisis facing black families and chil-dren. We concluded that we faced the worst crisis since slavery and committed to launching a Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC) to Leave No Child Behind. (It began at Bellagio!) Its mis-sion was and is to raise public awareness about the plight of black and all children; rebuild the bridge between the black poor and the middle class; develop a new gen-eration of servant leaders; reweave the fabric of family and community; rekindle the strong black tradition of self-help; and create new models for advocacy and service to benefit *all* children, especially minority and poor children.

A follow-up 1992 Bellagio meeting jump-started the Crusade’s action phase, which continues to this day, generating ongoing CDF and partner action. Fruits include Geoff Canada’s Harlem Children’s Zone; more than 12,000 young servant leaders trained at the former Alex Haley Farm (our center for interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and interracial dis-course, spiritual renewal, and leadership development); 138 summer and after-school CDF Freedom Schools in 2008, which provide reading enrichment, parent engagement, community service, and citizenship-building skills (and have engaged more than 70,000 children ages 5 to 15 and thousands of college teacher-

mentors since 1994); annual celebrations of high school students beating the odds in a number of cities (to date, more than 600 are now lawyers, doctors, teachers, and productive citizens); and annual child gun-violence reports that have contributed to a decrease in child and teen firearm deaths from 16 a day in 1994 to 8 a day in 2005.

Two Bellagio meetings of women leaders from around the globe, in 2005 and 2007, laid the foundation for the Global Women’s Action Network for Children launched at the Dead Sea Conference Center in Jordan under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah. A major public education, mobilization, and advocacy campaign, Viva Mama!, will give voice to the more than seven million mothers and newborns who die each year from pregnancy- and childbirth-related causes (the largest preventable cause of death in the world today, three times that of HIV/AIDS). And an Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Liberian Graduate Fellowship Program is under-way to strengthen the capacity of women government leaders in Liberia.

Developing solutions to complex problems affecting people of color, the poor, and vulnerable women and chil-dren across the world requires a haven for safe debate, incubation of ideas, planning of strategic actions, and accountability for monitoring agreed-upon benchmarks. This is what the Bellagio Center has pro-vided, and I am profoundly grateful.



Antonio Frasconi

In the late 1990s I was reading something about how the culture in this country related to the catastrophe of the Great Depression and was inspired to return to the work of Langston Hughes, a writer I have long admired. Always interested in how an artist should react to difficult problems of peace and war, I was drawn to his poem entitled “Let America Be America Again.” This seemed to be a perfect poem on which to base a new portfolio of work.

I then received an invitation from the Rockefeller Foundation to go to the Bellagio Center, a uniquely peaceful place to spend some time just reading, sketching, and letting my mind and legs wander. Later I realized that I had made more drawings there than at any other place I had ever been. I made a little book that I believe I left in the Bellagio library.

I came back from this time refreshed and ready to resume the responsibilities of my life and work. Right away I began working on a new portfolio based on the Langston Hughes poem. As we now face an economic mess not unlike the Great Depression, I think of how those hard times spurred Hughes to write the words that were shaping my own work.



Antonio Frasconi, “Three Views of Bellagio from Villa Serbelloni #207,” 1997.



Playwright and historian;
artist-in-residence, Loyola
Marymount University and
York Theatre Royal

1999: writing a play

From a play inspired by the
Bellagio Center visit

Donald Freed

Since the first century after Christ, wonderers have stared, trancelike, at the silver and black of the Lake of Como.... Here, in the first century of the modern era, Pliny the Younger built one of his villas, Villa Tragedia, from where he sat brooding on the loss of his republic and staring out at the old Lake and the Little Alps. There, some 1900 years later, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Villa Serbelloni would tower over the town and the world, as Robert S. McNamara sat in conference on Pliny’s very point of Iron Age vantage, trying in vain to take the long view of Vietnam, beyond the plain and simple horror of utter disgrace and defeat.

A progression of Great Men have all stood here in Pliny’s place—from Dante to Leonardo to Stendhal, Mark Twain, and Albert Einstein—and they had to have known that the illusion sparkling before them was, in truth, what Einstein would later designate as a New Stone Age clock.



Richard Fuller

Creating change is difficult. Especially global change. Inspiration is one thing, but, as we have heard so often, 99 percent of work is really perspiration.

When we decided to tackle pollution at a global level, we knew we had an idea that was extremely important, that would save lives. But the problem is new to most people. The problem of pollution in developing countries has no think tanks, no networked conferences, no guest appearance presentations at Davos. But it kills millions, most of them children, and is inherently solvable.

To tackle this problem help is needed on all fronts. One organization cannot solve this on its own. Instead, we need to convince others that they can make a difference, and show them how. This has been Blacksmith’s strategy from the beginning, reaching out to decision-makers, showing them the problem and the solution, and coaxing them into action. Starting from zero, it’s a daunting process.

The Bellagio Center has been the most welcome partner in that process! We were fortunate to host the inaugural conference for the Health and Pollution Fund at the Center, which kicked off the process for dealing with global pollution. And because we had the resources of the Bellagio Center, we were able to attract the top people from many international agencies and governments to the conference, and gain their concurrence that this problem needs to be addressed. Our participants came from 12 countries, all at a senior level, and it was partly the thrill of visiting this beautiful and renowned place that brought them all together.

We are now well on the way to implementing a global strategy for dealing with pollution around the world. We could not have begun this process without Bellagio.



The Alphonse Fletcher
University Professor, Harvard
University; author (including
In Search of Our Roots and
Lincoln on Race and Slavery);

the host and executive producer
of the PBS series “African
American Lives” and “Looking
for Lincoln”

1992: writing the first draft
of *Colored People*—a memoir
about his childhood and
adolescence in Piedmont,
West Virginia, during the
1950s and '60s

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Bellagio is where great artists and scholars go when they die—
if they have been good.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

In the summer of 1977, I had the good fortune to spend a month at the Bellagio Center. I was, at the time, a member of the Columbia University Law School faculty, a general counsel to the American Civil Liberties Union, and supervisor of the ACLU’s Women’s Rights Project.

Superintending and participating in a series of cases designed to advance the equal citizenship stature of men and women occupied all my waking hours, other than those needed to prepare for and teach classes at Columbia. I planned, during my weeks at Bellagio, to reflect on my litigation endeavors and to write about the cases, explaining their genesis, the principles at stake, strategic judgments concerning the content and organization of briefs, and the eventual Supreme Court decisions. At the Villa, I enjoyed the quiet time needed to compose my commentary, which was published some months after my stay.

The Villa, so beautifully situated and elegantly yet comfortably designed and furnished, remains vivid in my memory. I recall the delicious pasta at lunch, different each day, and watching the chef one morning as he demonstrated his art. Late mornings, I would swim in the lake, then climb the many steps up to the Villa feeling virtuous and refreshed. Occasionally, at the end of an afternoon, I would walk down to town, less developed then than it is now, and return in good time before dinner.

I experienced such good company, complementing the setting and the amenities. The others sojourning at the Villa were knowledgeable in diverse fields and genuinely interested in each other’s projects. We had sessions about twice a week at which one or another of us would describe our summer project and invite conversation, comments, and suggestions. Conversation was also lively at lunch, dinner, and outside during the cocktail hour. A few times during my stay, we arranged group excursions; I particularly remember a lovely day in Bergamo. The conferences that convened each weekend brought new people to the dinner table, and new ideas to consider and discuss.

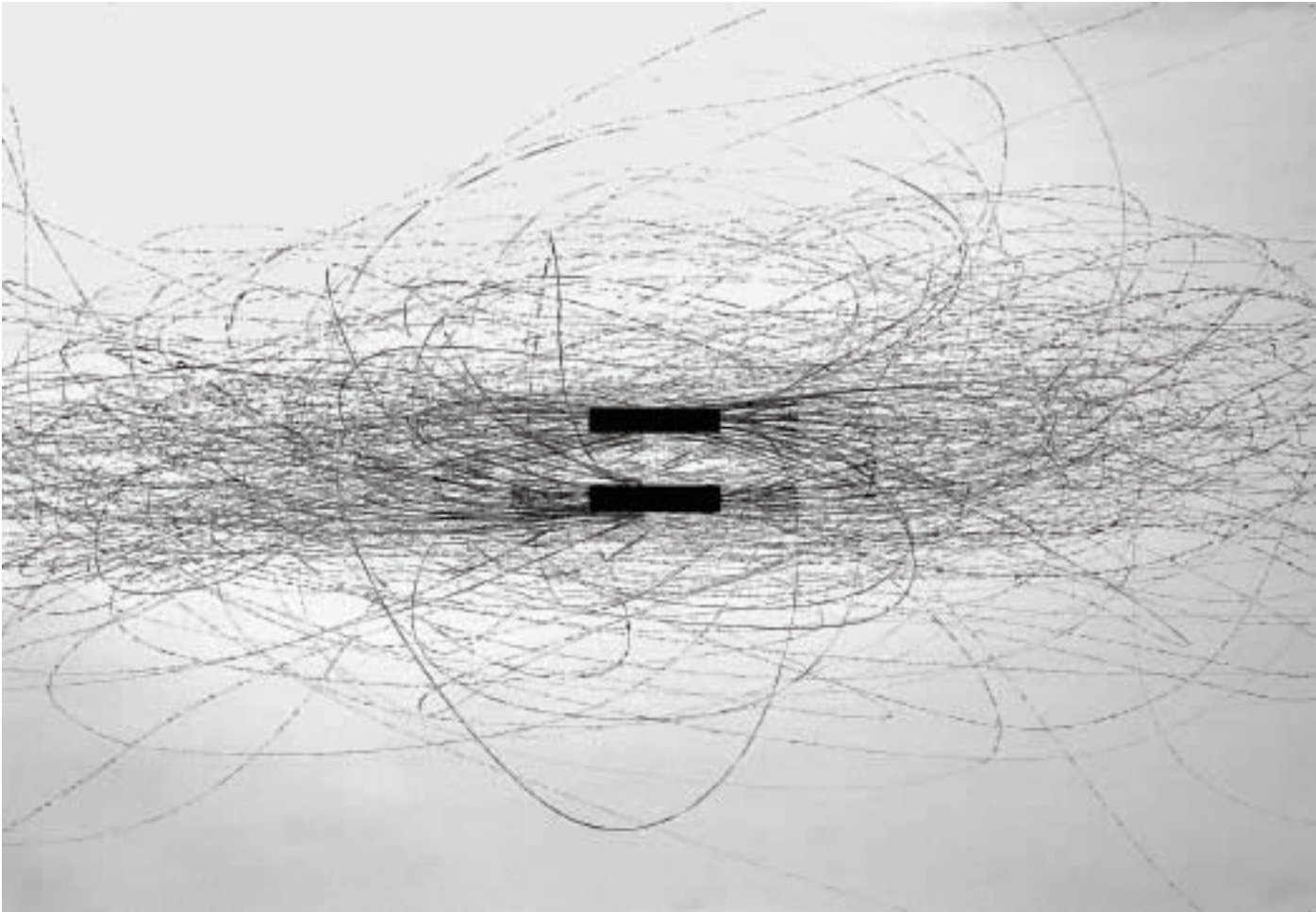
All good things must come to an end, however. I left the Villa wishing I could have prolonged my stay two weeks more. But work was waiting at home, and I approached it with renewed energy.



Andrew Ginzel and Kristin Jones

The cross-disciplinary dialogue among the international community of scholars and peers at the Villa Serbelloni was challenging, stimulating, and inspiring for our work, giving our energies great focus. We found the extraordinary natural beauty of the place, high above the glistening waters of Lake Como, particularly compelling, and it has left an indelible mark on our imaginations. With its surrounding water and air, the vitality of the site itself suggested a new body of work that was the basis for a conversation about dialogue, about the two of us, and about the very nature of our own 20-year collaboration. The resulting drawings, responding to the moving surface of the lake, were experiments in line and form. Our series explored the limits of intent and control.

The diverse community of minds, the atmosphere of mutual respect, and the surreal beauty of the place formed a potent catalyst for work that we feel could not have been created anywhere else.



Andrew Ginzel and Kristin Jones, “Bellagio Dialectic 16,” 27.5” x 39.5”, ink on paper.



Professor, Journalism and Sociology, and Chair, Ph.D. Program in Communications, Columbia University

2000: writing a book about the media

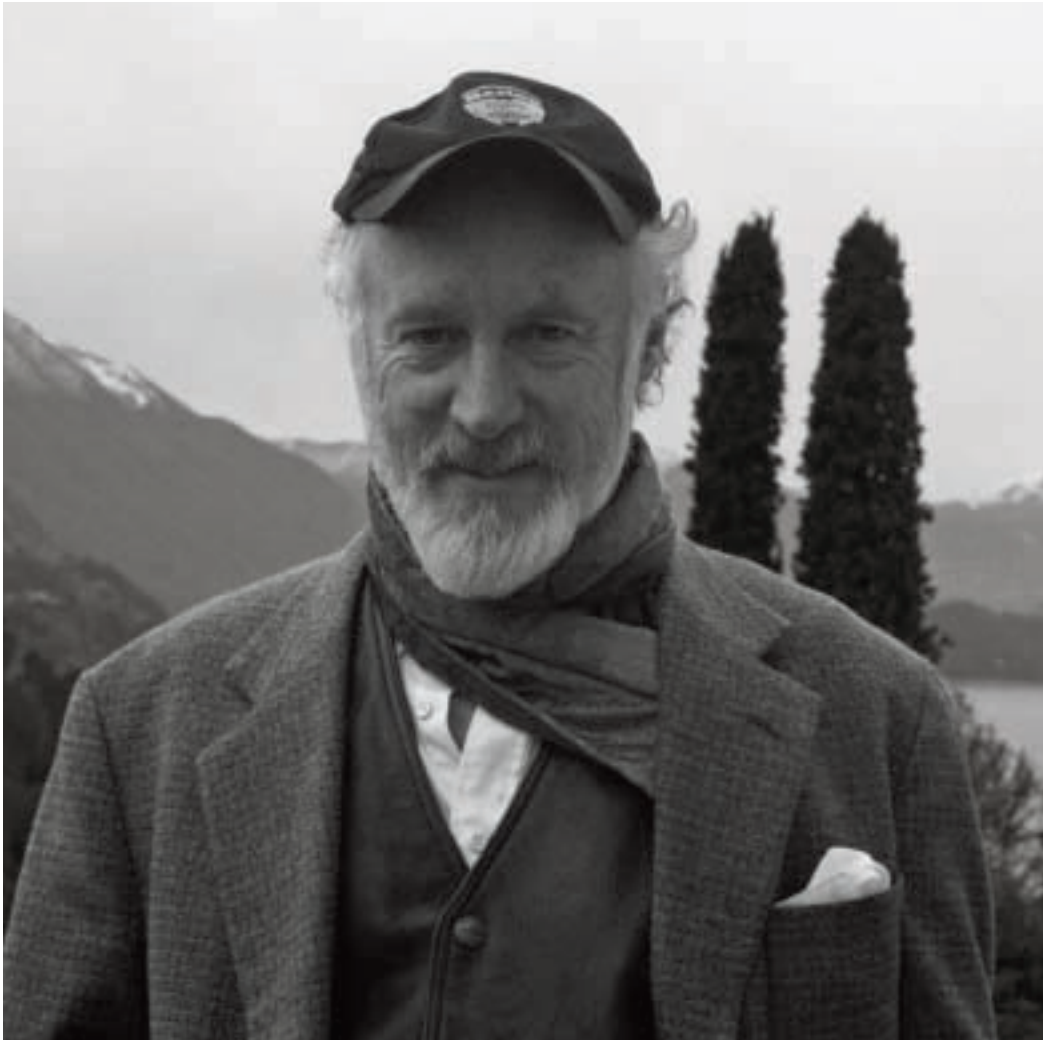
Todd Gitlin

Leave aside the thunderstorms over Lake Como, the lightning slashing down on both sides of the peninsula. Leave aside the cypresses cascading down the hills, the stone stairways, caves, and tunnels, the garden paths and sudden lake overlooks, the tangle of trails where it’s possible, delightful, to lose orientation—which is probably a stimulus to intellectual work. Leave aside the tapestries and archways of the Villa itself, and the sense that you are called to surpass yourself. Leave aside, even, the splendid food and lubricated daily happy hours on the terrace—stimuli all. The Bellagio Center felt to me the way a campus ought to feel and sometimes does, only with everyone getting to be a student. Pathways for intellectual voltage intersect.

You’re in a retreat but not exactly retreating. It might not sound as though an ongoing debate about the Germanness of the Holocaust is exactly a portal to intellectual sociability, but in my experience it was precisely that. It happened that several scholars and artists shared that passionate interest during the month I was there. You might not want the history of anti-Semitism with breakfast—not every breakfast, anyway—but, when conducted with *gemütlichkeit*, such running conversations can mark a traverse in one’s intellectual life. That did happen for me. My encounter with the chief protagonist in these conversations, Susan Neiman of Berlin, who was working on the book that became *Evil in Modern Thought*, has led to an enduring friendship.

I was just beginning a book about media saturation, collaborating with Daniel Dayan of Paris in a series of conversations that wound in and around that subject. All the better that we were in an oasis apart from media, which is hard to arrange these days. To be in easy proximity to an intellectual partner was a boon. To continue that conversation in the midst of the buzz of other conversations, as part of a sort of salon without walls, was a double boon.

To write in the morning, read in the afternoon, and critique at night—what bliss it was to be middle-aged in Bellagio!



Novelist (*Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*, *White People*, and *The Practical Heart*)

2004: writing short stories, including “My Heart Is a Snakefarm,” completed at Bellagio and published that year in *The New Yorker*

Allan Gurganus

Two decades before I ever saw Bellagio, an older woman friend, a gifted novelist, flew home from there. She had a dreamy look about her. She kept staring through Manhattan windows as if seeking some lost lake. My mentor explained how much she’d worked and eaten there. She said she loved the place but, oddly, as you’d fall for another *person*.

Since I considered her one of the great talkers, I asked for a description of Bellagio’s house and grounds. She smiled, prepared, opened her mouth. Then closed it.

“Someday you’ll go,” she stated simply. “And when you do, you should come upon it as I did: no expectations. It should happen to you all at once. Less as some kept promise, more—like love—as a surprise.”

I arrived by plane with all the wrong clothes but the right carry-on luggage: three unfinished short stories and a lumpy novella. The printed travel tips suggested that I take a train to a ferry to a taxi. That seemed an Olympic endurance test beyond my then infantile Italian. And so I splurged on a car and driver. The Mercedes was waxed as black as the driver was tanned terra cotta. I figured that, after growing fluent in my one month here, I could easily hitchhike back to the airport.

From my coddled backseat vantage, I found our route ascending. I caught sight of the lake’s color only in triangles over roofs, jagged samples spied through trees. As we entered the village of Bellagio, Lake Como’s blue-slate-jade asserted its supernal pull. And only as the car wound its way up a cobbled path toward the Villa itself did I recall my wise friend’s refusal to even *try* describing this.

I soon confronted the best view this side of paradise. It might’ve been painted by Giorgioni (at dawn) or, come eventide, maybe Klimt could do it justice or Frederick Church or, during its most pastel sunsets, merely Maxfield Parrish. I saw again that, both in a physical sense and on the spiritual plane, so much of life pivots on location, location, location.

New residents with even minor curiosity soon ask about the pretty American-born princess. Her big-as-life portraits, featuring her plattered feathered hats, still flirt across the library. Heiress to the fortune Johnnie Walker Red and Black built, Lizzie Walker

married crowned heads she housed in ever-finer homes. By the end, she'd peaked right here. And when the Rockefeller Foundation took this place as theirs—just hours, it seems, before her death—some tradition of private hospitality was transferred with the deed.

The view from my second-floor desk seemed a sky-blue dispensation, a guarantee of afterlife. Sonically, the vista sent up its ancient mosaic: pointillist playground voices from village children, the plashing of oars, the hiss of mild water, a recorded voice announcing ferry departures, wild cries of bird life. I'd arrived exhausted from the ordeal of a beloved parent's death. And yet I found that I set to work at once. True, I felt uneasy about meeting for dinner a group of people utterly unknown.

Thus far I had only encountered the tart and beguiling director, Gianna Celli. My arrival coincided with the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq. I feared being held accountable. I *felt* accountable. Talking generally, Gianna and I seemed of one mind politically. Then she referred to “*your* president.” I grew very still. Even jet-lagged I found a way to explain how hard I'd worked and written against my nation's worst-ever chief executive. “Tell you what,” I said. “I won't call Berlusconi *your* president, if you never again refer to Bush as *mine*. Deal? Deal.” Our eyes met. We both laughed. It was the beginning of an understanding, a friendship.

Patrolling the library, nervous before my first dinner, I felt soothed finding hand-inscribed works clearly written in this house. I opened books by Philip Roth, Michael Ondaatje, Gregory von Rizzori, V. S. Pritchett, and other Olympians worthy of desks on a mountain overlooking the bluest lake imaginable.

At dinner, I somehow relaxed beside scientists from Sweden who'd pioneered identifying primate origins of AIDS in Africa. I met a U.S. Supreme Court scholar from Harvard Law School; I was introduced to an American composer whose work I knew, and his wife whose pianism I'd long admired. I grew tongue-tied when, talking about Lincoln's sense of honor to the man on my right, I quoted the best book I knew on the subject—to the very guy who'd written it. I felt as embarrassed as he seemed pleased. He swore I'd at least cited him accurately, with the added merit of conceding these ideas were

someone else's. That night, we ate a homemade pumpkin ravioli as tender as any infant angel's ear.

When I think of the vigorous Swedish couple in their seventies lowering each other off the edge of a 300-foot cliff to recover someone's wind-sacrificed jacket, I smile. At dinner that night this article was offered in a charming accent: “Anyone has lost a yumper? A Tommy Hilfiger yumper?” After dinner our group sometimes sang Cole Porter or John Lennon around the grand sala's grand piano.

I soon found that what happened *inside* this cliff-side castle nearly matched its exterior's mountains and winds. The Supreme Court scholar proved a great believer in daily meditation. A natural enthusiast, he offered us classes before breakfast in the library. That first morning, seven puffy scholars appeared, come to “sit.” Three days later we were down to two. From within a meditative state surprisingly easily achieved, the sound of cutlery entered one's outer border; in came the all-too-earthly sound of breakfast prep by others, stray Italian words flew up to us wrapped within the shrill songs of flying waterbirds. But such details occurred safely at the furthestmost edges of my wish to concentrate, purify, transcend.

One month here. There is something deeply correct in Bellagio's guests staying for exactly thirty days. This accounts for just part of the place's potent numerology. Another involved tallying the many stone stairsteps that took me, late each afternoon, steeply headlong toward the toy-box village below. I seem to recall that there were exactly 365 steps. Down. Then, especially, *up*. Another pagan allegory.

Freud delineates our two great freestanding human consolations: love and work. At Bellagio, I found both.



Specialist in medical informatics (electronic patient records, systems, and standards); Professor Emeritus, Duke University

2008: attending a conference on eHealth in developing countries

W. Ed Hammond

From the moment you enter the gates of Bellagio, you get the feeling that something important is going to happen. And it does. However, even in this delightful setting, old habits die hard.

Those from developed countries may make a real effort, but we often find it difficult to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes. After dinner one night, I found myself in a discussion among several of my colleagues from developing communities. As I listened, I realized that we had been seeing the Global South through the eyes of IT-rich countries. We never thought about the problems of ink and paper for the printers, the lack of reliable power sources, or the differences in customs. After I shared these thoughts with an audience the next day, I was pleased to see that the Global South participants became more talkative and involved in our meetings.

My Bellagio experience has remained with me, influencing my thinking and continually reminding me of the importance of considering the perspectives of others.



Assistant Director of International Programs in Agriculture, Purdue University; Ford Foundation’s program officer for Agriculture, Office of the Vice President, 1965–81	1969, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1985: attending agricultural conferences	“Bellagio 1969: The Green Revolution” from the September 2008 issue of <i>Nature</i>
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Lowell S. Hardin

In late April 1969, I took a taxi up a narrow, winding road outside Bellagio on Italy’s Lake Como, to a meeting called by the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, George Harrar.... The conference had just one aim: to help solve the world food crisis.... Harrar [wanted] to help agricultural aid organizations understand why and how science—and not food shipments—was a more sustainable way to deal with world hunger. Our thinking was that if the aid groups could grasp more fully the progress being made, they could mobilize the resources needed from governments and other donor organizations. Together, a sustained assault on world hunger could be made.

No time to waste

Thus, 24 of us met to thrash out a strategy for feeding the world’s hungry. There were 16 leaders from the world’s major foreign assistance agencies concerned with agricultural development—such as Adekke Boerma, director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, John Hannah, director of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Robert McNamara, president of the World Bank and former defense secretary to President John Kennedy—plus eight of us consultants from the science of food production. There were no women, even though women produce much of the developing world’s food.

My colleague and mentor from the Ford Foundation, Forrest “Frosty” Hill, set the scene. In an ideal world, he said, developing countries would invest in education, research and infrastructure, building stronger public institutions and private businesses. These, in partnership with the better-educated farmers, would tackle the food crisis using science and technology, as had happened in industrialized countries during the agricultural revolution of the mid-20th century. “But,” he said, “we are in a crisis. We cannot wait.”...

Gathering momentum

At one point, someone asked Hill if traditional farmers would adopt new technologies. It was the moment that the conference really began to gel. “Sure, if they are profitable enough,” replied Frosty, in his homespun and persuasive tones. “In India, the new wheat varieties are in such demand that they have to guard their seed

multiplication plots around the clock to prevent theft.” Later the same day, when we described how investment in rice research had resulted in financial rates of return of more than 50%, McNamara stood up and said: “If you with your centers can generate returns like that I will help you raise the money you need.” Hannah nodded, even suggesting that the U.S. government might contribute a dollar for every three provided by other donors.

As this played out, I began to think: “Yes, we are getting to a meeting of minds.” By the second day, it was clear the conference was going well. People from the aid side who had just met were on first-name terms. Equally important, aid people were talking to scientists. Serious conversations continued at tea breaks on the patio, during evening cocktails and at meals. By the closing session on the third day, our thinking was converging.

What did we agree on? First, that the key to increasing agricultural productivity in developing countries was to apply modern scientific techniques and technologies. Second, that setting up international centers of expertise in research and education was a proven shortcut to achieving this. Third, that the existing four centers should be fully funded and that another six to twelve centers should be created.

But there were concerns, too. We worried that a widespread green revolution could have unintended consequences, such as aggravating the inequalities between small farmers and large landowners. Furthermore, without careful management, intensified cropping could deplete soil and water resources and become unsustainable—which in some instances has happened. However, we concluded that world food needs outweighed such potential difficulties. Making advances in productivity sustainable remains a high-priority research goal today.

Bellagio was the catalyst. It mobilized the world’s agricultural-development organizations to set in motion plans for rapidly increasing food production. It took the right mix of open-minded aid officials and dedicated scientists to achieve this, and it succeeded beyond any of our imaginings. After two follow-up conferences at Bellagio in the spring of 1970, it was agreed to set up a Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, and in 1971 the

organization that carries its acronym (CGIAR) was formed, under the leadership of the World Bank.

McGeorge Bundy, president of the Ford Foundation, called the CGIAR’s creation “a remarkable chapter in the diplomacy of international assistance.” Robert McNamara kept his pledge to help mobilize the necessary funding. By 1975, the year the Paddock brothers had forecast famine would strike India, the green revolution in Asia was under way. India, instead of starving, had achieved food independence. More than half the wheat and rice crops planted across Asia were high-yielding varieties.

Funding for the international centers rose substantially in the years after the Bellagio meeting. In 1969 the Rockefeller and Ford foundations provided \$2.3 million for four centers. Today, the CGIAR has 64 donors providing more than \$450 million a year in support of 15 centers and their 850 research scientists. Regretfully, some of the centers are critically underfunded, along with most of the agricultural research programs with which they work.

As we confront today’s food crisis, it is imperative that the green revolution in Asia is revitalized and a new one launched in Africa, which missed out almost entirely the first time round. As well as the research centers’ ongoing work, promising new initiatives are under way, such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, spearheaded by the Rockefeller and Bill & Melinda Gates foundations. Science and technology, including the exciting opportunities offered by genetically modified plants, have a lot more to offer the world’s poor and hungry. As Norman Borlaug put it, “Responsible biotechnology is not the enemy; starvation is.”



Poet; Poet Laureate Consultant
in Poetry to the Library of
Congress (1982 to 1984)

1993: working on new poems
and the introduction for the
New Cambridge Shakespeare
edition of the Sonnets

From *Collected Later Poems*

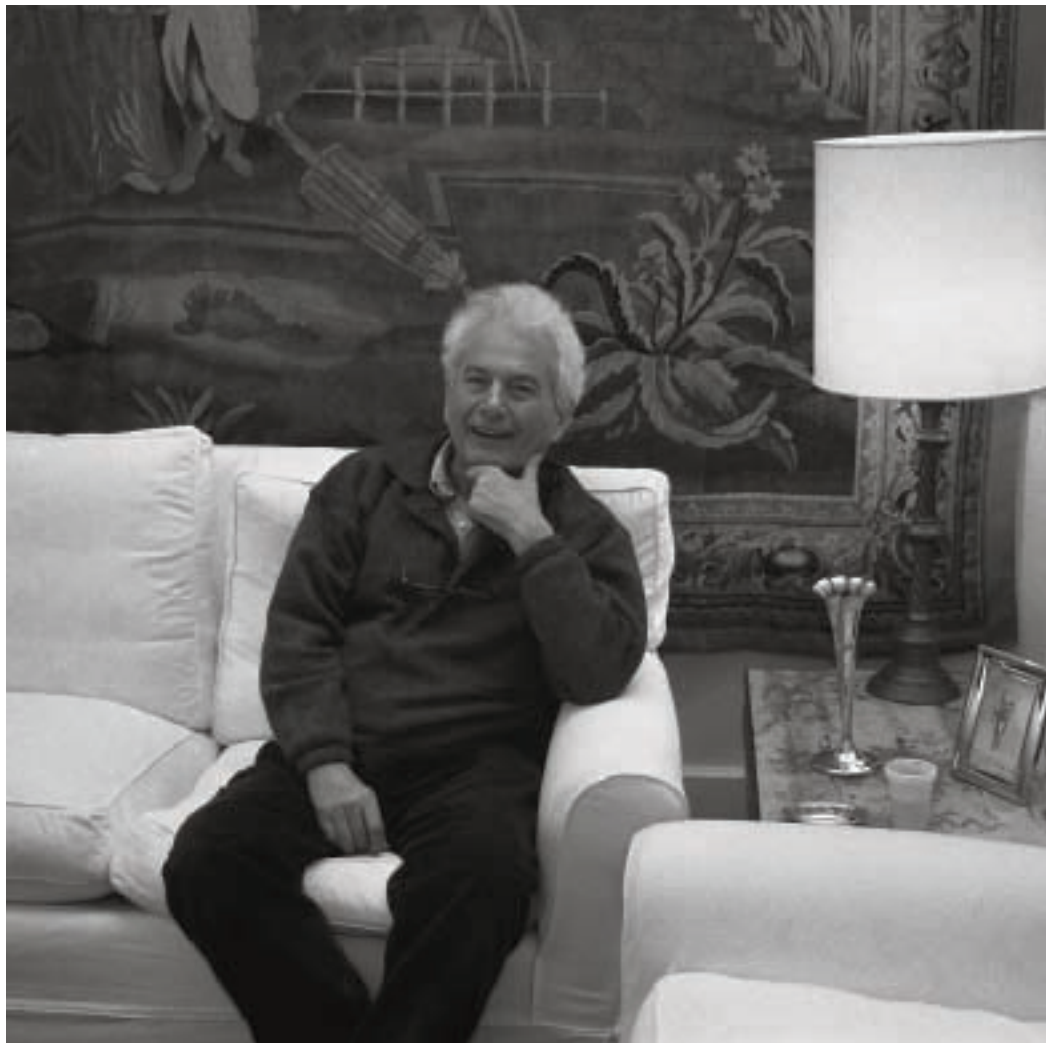
Anthony Hecht

“The Darkness and the Light Are Both Alike to Thee”
Psalms 139:12

Like trailing silks, the light
Hangs in the olive trees
As the pale wine of day
Drains to its very lees:
Huge presences of gray
Rise up, and then it’s night.

Distantly lights go on.
Scattered like fallen sparks
Bedded in peat, they seem
Set in the plushest darks
Until a timid gleam
Of matins turns them wan,

Like the elderly and frail
Who’ve lasted through the night,
Cold brows and silent lips,
For whom the rising light
Entails their own eclipse,
Brightening as they fail.



Joseph Heller

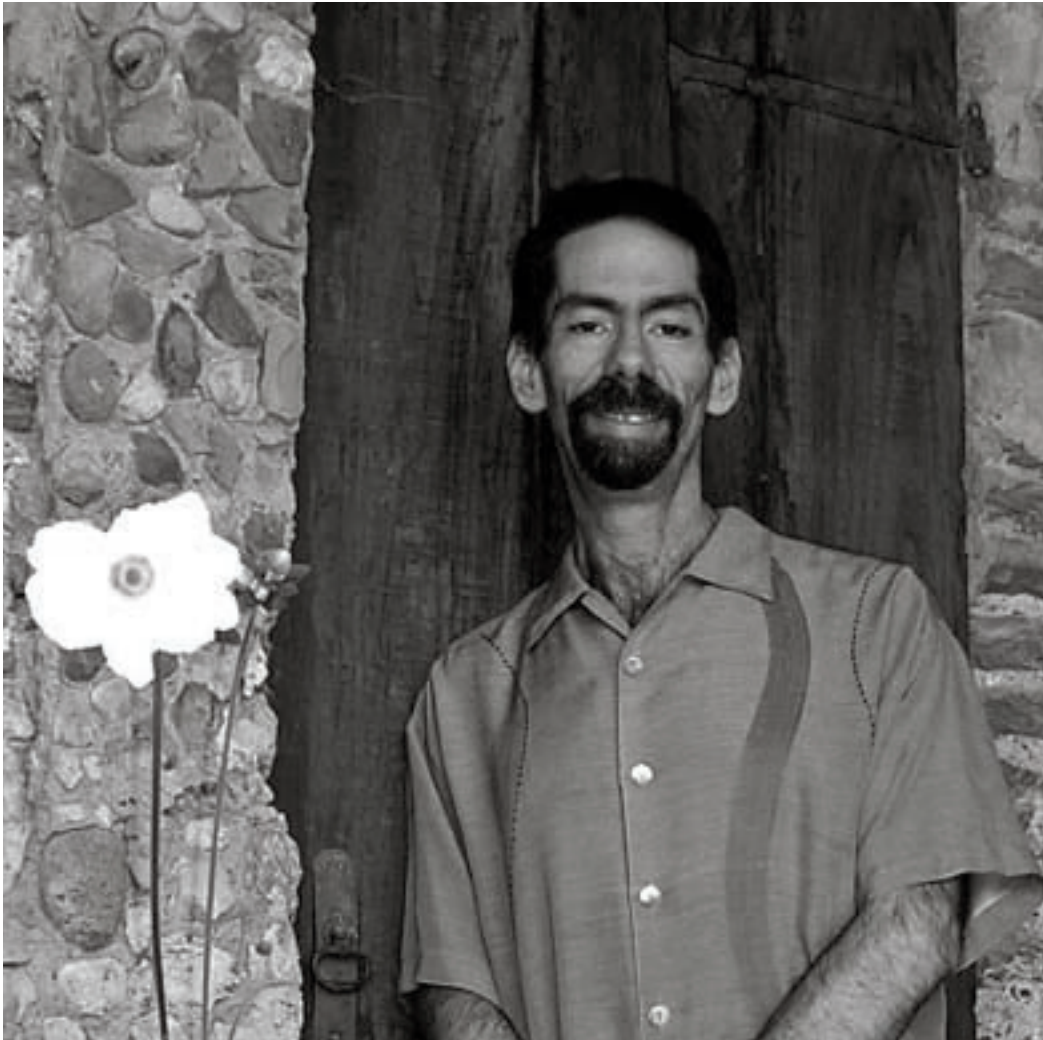
I arrived, as customary, with optimistic plans for achievement more ambitious than any one human could realistically hope to accomplish: notes and plans compiled over months for three successive chapters in my novel *Closing Time*. The first would draw on the imagery of Dante for blending into our normal big city life; the second on the moody sensibility and pessimism of characters in Thomas Mann; the third from events in my own previous work blended into the narrative action of this present one. Within three or four days after arriving in Bellagio, the idea struck me—and it was a brilliant one, although it might not seem so in this sentence—to fuse them all into a single segment comprising a single chapter. And this I was able to do before the time for my departure arrived.

Instead of three successive narrative chapters spread out over 150 typewritten pages I have a single, more effective unit that does it all better in 44. When the new plan came to me, it seemed so obvious I berated myself for not having thought of it from the beginning. But the inspiration did not come to me until I was already there and settled in

Another invaluable benefit of the Villa was the company and assistance of the people I met there from week to week, as a social group and as an unimpeachable source of information. From two biologists I obtained answers about genes and genetic behavior I wanted for the very chapter I was working on. From a history professor from Cornell I obtained information on early American history, and from a professor of law I obtained confirmation for views on legal philosophy I was intent on expressing

The one complaint I have with the entire experience is the regulation now existing that bars me from going there again for another stay until ten years have passed. Obviously, at least to me, the regulation is absurd—I will be 79 in ten years—and I intend to write another letter about that shortly, urging persuasively, I hope, that a waiver be granted, the regulation be amended or relaxed, and an exception made—at least for me.

If the novel is published in two years and receives the favorable attention it should, I will hope to be back there in three.



Fred Hersch

I had heard about Bellagio during one of my many residences at the MacDowell Colony. It sounded amazing, but I thought, I will never get in, because I am a jazz composer. It was a pleasant surprise to be admitted on the first attempt, and in the perfect month of August to boot.

What sets Bellagio apart from any of the artist colonies I have been to is the tremendous diversity of its fellows. During my stay, I was the only composer—there was just one visual artist and just one playwright. So I had a chance to meet and interact with social scientists, historians, political scientists, health-care ministers, research scientists, and theologians from four continents.

I truly believe that Bellagio is an important think tank for the creative mind. Moreover, I feel that the special atmosphere in every way supports and encourages the fellows to produce work of lasting significance.



Fred Ho

Working at odd hours (napping from 8 p.m. to midnight, then composing from midnight to 4 a.m.) in the composer’s studio, an eerie bat cave in the park, I could wail on my baritone saxophone, bang on the piano, or chortle off-key at the top of my voice while the rest of the human world slept.

Only with uninterrupted, intense hours bounded by the simplest of group schedules could I unlock the intricacies of the libretto written by Ruth Margraff and compose melodies and song forms that could maintain a vernacular or pop-like character. Sometimes a bar of music would take hours to perfect. And whenever I ran into a creative blockage, I could take a refreshing swim in the cool waters of Lake Como, or burn calories in a row boat, or hike to hidden forest sanctuaries among the rolling hills and mountains. The natural beauty, creative productivity, and both physical and social enjoyment made Bellagio an unforgettable experience.

Emerita professor of English at the Graduate Center and founding director/publisher of The Feminist Press, both at the City University of New York

1997: writing an essay on the future of women’s studies and a memoir
2001 to 2005: leading six teams of Africans working on regional volumes called *Women Writing Africa*

2008: completing *Moving: Stories of Consciousness and Change*, the memoir

Florence Howe

Bellagio profoundly changed my inner life by allowing me to find my “creative bone;” then it offered Feminist Press’s ambitious publishing project, focused on restoring the lost culture and history of African women, the use of the Frati’s magnificent resources for creative team projects.

Long ago, in 1945, my high school English teacher told me kindly one day, as we were working on the yearbook, that she was grateful that I “did not have a creative bone in my body,” for I was doing all the slogging work to get the book out. Cynthia Ozick, my classmate, had the creative bone, which made her exempt from such labor. That sentence, pronounced on me in a most friendly manner by Miss Brubaker, controlled the way I thought of myself from that day forward. When I earned an “A” in freshman English in college, and was supposed to enter Creative Writing, I petitioned not to. Though I worked as a professor of literature and an editor and publisher for 50 years, and though my bibliography is lengthy, I never thought of myself as a “writer.”

While searching for women’s studies tapes the night before I left for a month-long stay at Bellagio in October 1997, I came across audio tapes I had made with my mother in 1980 but had

never listened to. By 1997, my mother’s Alzheimer’s was in its seventh year. When I had said goodbye to her earlier that day, I was fully aware that she hardly noticed my presence.

The next morning at Bellagio, under the fresco of the turtle on the ceiling of my tiny study behind my huge bedroom, I listened to my mother’s strong, often sarcastic disembodied voice responding to my quiet questions. My childhood love of mysterious omens asserted itself: I would write at least for a week about myself as a child, about mother, father, grandparents, and school. As it turned out, I wrote consistently for six hours every day but two through the four weeks. In addition to a long essay on women’s studies, I completed the first 150 pages of a memoir. I write this testimony from Bellagio, where, 11 years later, I am using that “creative bone” to finish that memoir.

I owe still more to the gifts of the Bellagio Center. When, at the turn of the 21st century, Gianna Celli, then director of the Center, undertook a restoration of the Frati, a 16th-century monastery on the grounds of the Villa Serbelloni, she and Lynn Szwaja, then my program officer at the Rockefeller Foundation, suggested that I apply for team awards to facilitate the completion

Voices and Visions



of *Women Writing Africa*, huge anthologies that would help broaden knowledge of the history and culture of African women through the publication of work in their own voices, using both orature and literature. Funded by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, we envisioned four regional anthologies that would contain songs, stories, journalism, historical documents, letters, memoirs, poetry, and court records, all from as far back as one could go.

Between 2001 and 2005, six groups of African academics, both women and men, came from various countries to work on different volumes of these books. For the East African anthology, for instance, ten women and two men from Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, and Uganda collaborated on writing headnotes, revising translations, and

planning and writing the scholarly preface and introduction. The Frati allowed team members the privacy of individual rooms—all with beautiful views—for reading and writing. It also offered generous varieties of communal space for discussion and teamwork. This particular team, like the West African/Sahelian team before them and the North African team that followed, organized 120 different texts, arranged chronologically into hundreds of years of East African history, and then into units about which they could write both theoretically and materially.

Three of the four volumes have been published, and the last will soon appear. These books have won awards and are now used in classrooms, in libraries, and by scholars.



Mary Jane Jacob

After two years of planning (the sheer effort of getting the project off the ground), followed by two years of convening a national consortium of arts professionals in a project called “Awake: Art, Buddhism, and the Dimensions of Consciousness,” and now facing the tasks of editing the manuscript and writing our contributions, Jacquelyn Baas and I knew we needed time. But it was space that was Bellagio’s greatest gift to us.

Space is both physical and mental. As a curator, I create an open space in which artists can work and in which not only new art but insightful steps can be taken—and this pays off for the art-viewing audience, which is, after all, my constituency as well. Bellagio is an “open space” by virtue of its being: culture and nature, solitude and social gatherings, one’s ideas and those of others in exchange or coexistence. Perhaps most of all, it is Bellagio’s energy as a shared space of production-reflection that plays an essential and transformative role. Quietly flowing, this dynamic between thinking and making is a creative undercurrent.

For several days I had been working through the 12 artists’ interviews I had conducted, when Jacquelyn and I met for tea one afternoon. I remarked on how struck I was that nearly every artist had brought into their thinking the incidents of 9/11, and that this seemed more than a mere coincidence of timing. With a flash, as we stood on the Villa’s balcony, we had a greater realization. Writing in *Buddha Mind*, I shared this:

The artist’s path is the Buddha’s path. This was borne out in these interviews—somewhat to my surprise, I must admit. It was a revelation.... It became apparent that, by different paths, each artist had arrived, like the Buddha, at the subject of human suffering. Art, like Buddhism, is a path by which we can deal with suffering. (p. 168)

Art practice and art viewing, like Buddhist practice, allow us to experience our world more fully. We need a practice that can help us cultivate this, remind and refresh us from time to time, so that we can bring this into daily practice. Bellagio is not everyday life but it is a center, a place in which to be centered, and a space in which to create significant outcomes that can play a role in the lives of others.

Scott Johnson

It's a very good idea to talk to strangers from time to time, as they voice their own preoccupations, on their own home turf. Exposure to Bellagio's mix of scholars, writers, social scientists, and artists of all descriptions was like installing a very large window in my little studio. Much to my surprise as a very solitary worker, I gradually altered my usual schedule in order to work longer hours during the day, so that I could spend most evenings talking, debating, and generally enjoying a lot of smart people whom I normally would never have met.

Thanks to a lucky accident, my work found an unexpected symmetry with this novel social environment. My initial inclination toward a contemplative and nature-oriented project was interrupted by an unusual commission, for music based on interviews with immigrants to the United States from many countries. These had been recorded by Judith Sloan and Warren Lehrer in preparation for their book, *Crossing the BLVD: Strangers*,

Neighbors, Aliens in a New America, and they wanted to include a CD of music and audio art with the book. They contacted me because writing instrumental music based on recorded speech is a type of work I'd come up with at the very beginning of my career, and the technique spread as digital sampling became common in the 1980s. First I analyze the spoken pitches and rhythms, and then I transcribe them for use in an instrumental score, which then provides an accompaniment. Carefully synchronized, the speech appears to be in time and in tune with the surrounding music.

Thinking about worldwide perception of the United States was essential in a project about those who have recently chosen to move there—some from countries well-disposed toward America, some not so much. But thinking about other people's attitudes is not the same as actually interacting with them. My Bellagio residency fell a year after the 2001 attacks on my home city of New York, just as the United States was gearing up to invade Iraq. As an American who was very aware of, and troubled by, the growing sense of America vs. The World that was extant at that moment, I spent a great deal of time at Bellagio



listening to various ideas, impressions, and assumptions about America among this international group of people, which every week slightly changed as residents departed and new people arrived.

The experience helped cement my approach to the music I was writing. It allowed me to stand back and let the immigrants have their say on whatever struck them as significant, and then to place them within a musical language clearly indebted to American rock and jazz, simultaneously underscoring the poetry in their speech and representing the culture they had gravitated to. And, of course, I had to take a good look at myself as a composer from that culture.

I ended up with a three-movement concert work called *Americans*, based primarily on the voices of immigrants from China, Romania, and Afghanistan. I can't think of anywhere in the world where this effort could have found a more compatible setting than Bellagio's combination of artistic focus and a shifting, international pool of intelligent companions.



Novelist, translator, critic,
and Charles Barnwell Straut
Professor of English Emeritus,
Princeton University

1982: writing an essay on the
Greek poet C. P. Cavafy

2003: attending an International
PEN conference

1989: working on the translation
of selected poems of another
Greek poet, Yannis Ritsos

Edmund Keeley

My first residency at the Bellagio Center in the early 1980s, in the late winter, placed me in splendid isolation for work on an essay to conclude a collection of essays on contemporary Greek poets, this one about the best of them, C. P. Cavafy, himself something of a recluse during his working years in Alexandria, Egypt. My studio was near the tip of the promontory that splits Lake Como, a charming outpost stone hut (called San Francesco, who is known locally as Guardiano della Selva, or Guardian of the Forest), small enough to keep me warm, with a view beyond its doorway that must be the most startling available to the lucky fellows of the Center: the last fringe of the forest above the Villa Serbelloni, then the open lake, then the spread of snow-covered mountains rising only the gods know how high in the distance. The studio was too far out to be on the walking route of most fellows, and I was so much the captive of Cavafy’s poetry at the time that I never heard passing footsteps or anything that could be called a distraction beyond the mind’s occasional wandering—except once.

I would sometimes step outside the guardhouse to stretch my legs and quiet my imagination, and on one such quick break I found a gentleman standing on the path nearby, gazing up and far away for what I assumed was his own reach into nature for a touch of reality. He turned out to be the man who had sat next to me at dinner the previous evening; I had learned that he was from Pakistan and a scholar of much knowledge and humor. “Hello there,” he said, lowering his gaze only for an instant. “It must be very inspiring for you to be out here among the bards. Am I right?” “Well, actually, the only bard I’ve run into out here is the poet I’m working on, but maybe—” “No, no, I mean the bards in the trees, my friend. Just listen.” I did listen, then and most every other time I stepped out to study the gorgeous gift of a view I was granted that late Italian winter.



Professor of International Affairs, Princeton University; author of *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*

1993: working on a project involving state compliance with international treaty commitments

2003: attending a seminar on the International Criminal Court

Robert O. Keohane

Unlike other research-study centers for social scientists, Bellagio includes artists. When I was first at Bellagio as a research fellow, I benefited not only from the time to think and write, but also from discussions with Eileen Blumenthal about theater, from Dozier Bell’s painting, and from Patricia Goedicke’s poetry. It is not just its beauty that makes Bellagio remind us that there are more things under heaven than are encompassed by our own disciplines.

I had the same experience of transdisciplinary stimulation when I returned briefly to Bellagio 10 years later for a week-long seminar on the International Criminal Court. Participants came from Europe and the United States in roughly equal numbers, and likewise from law and political science. Americans were notably more skeptical about the court than Europeans, political scientists more so than legal scholars. The result was a set of vigorous discussions, with much disagreement, that one would not have had in the United States—or probably in most European institutions of higher learning. Once again, we were forced out of our silos to think about arguments that we would not normally have taken seriously. Yet the context of Bellagio is so congenial that these vigorous disagreements coexisted with warm feelings toward one another as people. We could respectfully disagree yet enjoy the outdoor vistas, the hikes, and the ambience as fellow human beings.



Aaron Jay Kernis

Bellagio was the epitome of comfort and elegance at the end of nearly a year of artist-colony hopping (a necessity for keeping the creative mind active and poverty at bay for this composer, then just 29 years old). While it took a while to get to know the international array of residents and become acclimatized to the formality of seating arrangements at dinner, it took no time to feel ecstatic at the beauty of the Villa and its surroundings—the stunning gardens, the hourly church bells, the olive and fig trees heavy with fruit, and particularly my apartment’s bathroom, the largest I had ever spent time in. Accustomed to tiny New York City apartments, I could’ve happily lived for years in that bathroom alone. October was a perfect time to be so close to Lake Como—the tourists had left, the air was still, the composer studio was secluded, all of which contributed to a month ideally suited to contemplation, camaraderie, and concentration.

Joyce Kozloff

I had just finished several large public-art commissions. One always begins with diagrams, floor plans of the site, working new ideas into them. It had occurred to me that I might use that method in my more private art, treating the map as an organizing structure into which I could weave layers of personal and geopolitical content. At the Bellagio Center, I borrowed atlases from the library and carried them to my sequestered studio. Then I gridded and laboriously copied maps of nine cities onto watercolor paper. These were cities that had powerful associations for me—places where I’d visited, lived, worked.

When I returned to New York, the city maps remained in a drawer for more than a year while I completed other projects. Later I dismembered and reworked them, juxtaposing and overlapping their parts to form strange hybrids, worlds that do not exist except as fragments of memory. Eventually, the Bellagio watercolor studies grew into larger cartographic pieces, such as *Imperial Cities*, in which I sliced and recombined parts of the maps of four former imperial capitals (Rome, Vienna, Istanbul, and Amsterdam).

Altogether, I produced five mixed-media pieces appropriated from pages in Bellagio’s albums, the beginning of a body of cartographic work that continues to this day. Since the 1970s, my art has had two viewing angles: the long shot, an architectural structure as seen from a distance; and the closeup, its intricately worked surface. With the maps, I can create wide-angle macrocosmic, aerial views of landmasses, plus microcosmic zoom shots of bird’s-eye mini worlds. Maps are neither exclusively figurative nor abstract; they are utilitarian, yet contain a sophisticated semiotics. This discovery has reinvigorated and enlivened all my visual explorations.



Joyce Kozloff, “Imperial Cities,” 55” x 55”, watercolor, lithography, and collage on paper, 1994.
Collection of Patricia Conway and Roger Milgrim.

Ralph Lemon

Every day was better than the last. I felt like some privileged character in a Stendhal story or a euphoric phantom in a Japanese *ukiyo* pleasure world for the brain. After one week I dreamed what I might be able to make there. Three weeks later I had made what I had dreamed.





Beatriz de Faria Leao

Through the adequate use of IT, I truly believe it is possible to promote a quantum jump in the health conditions of a country. Bellagio stimulated us to think from a different perspective, to open up our horizons and to work toward the construction of a global effort that can lead to better health for all through new partnerships and collaborations.

Back in 1989, when I decided to abandon my clinical work as a cardiologist (which I liked very much), intending to assist with the construction of the Brazilian Health Informatics Society, many thought I had gone crazy. It has been a journey full of detours, with experiences in the academic, government, and private sectors in which hard work, disappointment with the political game, and frustration at the lack of resources have been commonplace. At the same time, it has been most rewarding. I’ve been blessed to participate in amazing projects, such as the Brazilian National Health Card project (2000–2004), and SIGA Saúde, the integrated public health system deployed in São Paulo since 2004. In addition to that, my work with African countries has been very exciting and enriching.

In the Bellagio meeting rooms, the world became even smaller than it already is. The equator no longer divided competencies. Suddenly, the dream of using IT to improve the health conditions of a population was not only possible but feasible as well. One of the results of the Center’s eHealth conference series has been a concrete plan to build a framework strategy for integrated eHealth systems for developing countries. If the wonderful Bellagio energy and momentum do not continue, may the ghosts of the Frati House haunt our nights from now to eternity!

Lowell Liebermann

Bellagio is a place that spoils one for life. So often do I have Proustian moments of recall that remind me of my time there (no doubt betraying a Freudian desire to return to that fecund womb of creativity that Bellagio represents for me). I can't see a plum or a loquat at the fancy produce market I shop at without remembering the trees just off the terrace where we would have lunch in good weather. I can't see a picture of a monkey without thinking of those in human garb gamboling about on the walls of the Villa Serbelloni salon. I can't even take the ferry to Manhattan from my home in Weehawken without half expecting the conductor to call out, "*Cadenabbia! Menaggio! Varenna!*"

So much has been written about the place's natural beauty that I will refrain from dwelling on that subject too much, except to say that Bellagio is the single most beautiful place I have ever been to. But the beauty is only one part of its magic. So many specific memories flood my mind when I think of my time there: the gourmet meals (of course),

the panoramic view of Lake Como from the terrace, the formal uniforms (with epaulets!) that the staff wore, Gianna at cocktails with pairs of freshly picked cherries draped over her ears in place of earrings, wandering through the grounds and coming across a hidden tomb or the fantastic crypt of the old monks, exploring the ruins of the fort at the top of the hill, the steep walk down the steps to the town below (and the steep climb back), the fascinating and varied company of the other residents, the lake itself, the sun, and the smell of roses and jasmine and cypress. And yet somehow in the midst of all that I was able to compose the entirety of my "Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra," a work that was premiered the following year by the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Kurt Masur, with the legendary principal trumpet player Philip Smith.



I think this was, for me, one of the most amazing things about Bellagio: that despite all of what one might imagine could be a distraction or a temptation *not* to work, I experienced an ability to focus on my work with an intensity that has been unsurpassed at any other place I've visited. The little cork-lined composer's studio (one could not help thinking of Proust!) nestled on a secluded hillside spot in the woods provided a pure haven for creativity and reflection, a haven so drenched in history and atmosphere that it was impossible not to be inspired. I would pin up the already written pages of my composition on the cork walls and sit back to view and assess what I had composed, and I would feel a sense of peace in creativity that I have seldom felt anywhere else.

I could stare out the windows all day and never see another person. I would just see the trees with the sunlight streaming through the leaves, and hear the birds and the rustling wind and the magical pealing of the bells from the little church in the town below. The afternoon of every day those bells would climb their way up the hill to my studio and eventually crept their way into the piece I was composing. The second movement of my concerto features these bells, tolling on the same three pitches, and every time I hear that movement I am transported back to that blissfully creative period of my life.

Glenn Ligon

Bellagio came during a period in my life when I really needed a break from New York and the pressures of being a young artist in a tough city. I spent my entire first two days just sitting and reading on the steps of my studio. With classical music on my radio and the sound of the waves lapping at the shore of the lake just a few yards away, those first couple of days set the tone for the rest of my stay. That summer I planned three exhibitions, wrote an essay for a catalogue that sparked an interest in writing about art for books and magazines, and started a series of drawings that I showed in a Los Angeles gallery. Yes, Bellagio was the right place at the right time.



David Lodge

All you had to do, to come and stay in this idyllic retreat, pampered by servants and lavishly provided with food and drink, given every facility for reflection and creation, was to apply.

Of course, you had to be distinguished—by, for instance, having applied successfully for other, similar handouts, grants, fellowships and so on, in the past. That was the beauty of the academic life, as Morris saw it. To them that had had, more would be given. All you needed to do to get started was to write one really damned good book—which admittedly wasn’t easy when you were a young college teacher just beginning your career, struggling with a heavy teaching load on unfamiliar material, and probably with the demands of a wife and young growing family as well. But on the strength of that one damned good book you could get a grant to write a second book in more favourable circumstances; with two books you got promotion, a lighter teaching load, and courses of your own

devising; you could then use your teaching as a way of doing research for your next book, which you were thus able to produce all the more quickly. This productivity made you eligible for tenure, further promotion, more generous and prestigious research grants, more relief from routine teaching and administration. In theory, it was possible to wind up being full professor while doing nothing except to be permanently absent on some kind of sabbatical grant or fellowship. Morris hadn’t quite reached that omega point, but he was working on it.

He stepped back into the cool, restful shade of his spacious room and discovered an adjoining study. On the broad, leather-topped desk was a neat stack of mail that had been forwarded to Bellagio by arrangement. It included a cable from someone called Rodney Wainwright in Australia, whom Morris had forgotten all about, apologizing for the delay in submitting his paper for the Jerusalem conference, an enquiry from Howard Ringbaum about the same conference which had crossed with Morris’s rejection of Ringbaum’s paper,



and a letter from Desiree’s lawyers about college tuition fees for the twins. Morris dropped these communications in the waste basket and, taking a sheet of the villa’s crested notepaper from the desk drawer, typed, on the electric typewriter provided, a letter to Arthur Kingfisher, reminding him that they had been co-participants in an English Institute seminar on Symbolism some years before; saying that he had heard that he, Arthur Kingfisher, had given a brilliant keynote address to the recent Chicago conference on “The Crisis of the Sign,” and begging him, in the most flattering of terms, for the favour of an offprint or Xerox of the text of this

address. Morris read through the letter. Was it a shade too fulsome? No, that was another law of academic life: it is *impossible to be excessive in flattery of one’s peers*. Should he mention his interest in the UNESCO Chair? No, that would be premature. The time would come for the hard sell. This was just a gentle, preliminary nudge of the great man’s memory. Morris Zapp licked the envelope and sealed it with a thump of his hairy-knuckled fist. On his way to the terrace for aperitifs he dropped it into the mail box thoughtfully provided in the hall.



Professor and Director, Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota

2003: writing about economic development policy and practice

Ann Markusen

I’m an economist. Usually that puts people off, even academics. Taught economics in a stilted, equation-thick manner, they often think economists are bright and clever and understand complicated things that they don’t. Although I have managed in my scholarship to write broadly, in plain but powerful language, I had forgotten how to *think* broadly. Until the month I spent at Bellagio.

I planned to write a brief for radically altering economic development policy and practice, a project I called “Creating Good Work.” I perennially struggle with the narrowness of my discipline’s approach to economic life and its impoverished normative underpinnings—that equity and possibly stability matter, but, above all, efficiency. But over 25 years of writing journal articles, reviewing others’ work, and judging grant proposals and promotion cases, I had become enmeshed in the specialized language and conventions of my field.

As month-long residents at Bellagio, we are asked to present our work to others. The first few of these were riveting for me. Sid Strauss, an Israeli professor of child development and education, gave a powerful presentation on teaching as human activity. He joined complex notions from psychology with experiences that we had all had, as learners and teachers, to make his case. I went back to my 11th-century tower desk and began to ask myself deeper questions about work than I had planned.

One evening, Irish artist Patricia McKenna presented slides of two very political projects. In one, she invited people in a small rural town to bring in letters from and objects that had belonged to people who had emigrated. These she hung on the walls of an old vacant house. In another, she collected dirt from each of Ireland’s counties, north and south, and piled them separately on a spacious gallery floor as metaphors for soldiers who had been lost in the Troubles. The earthen piles were so much alike, and yet so very distinctive. I went back to my tower, thinking about how to bring values and politics more centrally into my research.

Even the playful evenings left their imprint on my writing. Wendy Woodson, an American professor of theater and dance, entrapped me into playing four-handed improvisations at the piano. This stretching of my capabilities, I found, could be replicated in my study!

And these weren’t onetime encounters. Because we dined together three times a day, I found myself probing the motivations and thought processes of my various colleagues. And listening deeply, and productively, to their expertise.

The month at Bellagio initiated the richest period of intellectual struggle for me since my dissertation. I tackled tougher subjects in economic development than I had been willing to before and drank more deeply from multidisciplinary work. Whereas economic development focuses crudely on job creation and pay levels, I began thinking about work more holistically. About economic security and working conditions. About work flexibility and satisfaction. Even more fundamentally, about whether jobs offer workers a chance to serve and produce something of value. About human contact and respect. About cooperation versus competition.

The project has since taken several directions, including a book, *The Distinctive City*, to be published in 2009 by Cornell University Press. The values vector became my 2006 Roepke Lecture at the annual American Association of Geography meetings: “Why Can’t We Talk About Values in Economic Geography?” The room was packed, and the feedback tremendous. Younger scholars have since felt more empowered to assert normative values in their research designs and writing.

Because of the close and extended collegueship with artists at Bellagio, I subsequently committed myself almost entirely to research on the cultural economy, focusing on artists rather than on arts organizations or industries. I have interviewed more than 200 musicians, writers, and visual and performing artists, profiling many of them in my monographs, *The Artistic Dividend* (2003), *Artists’ Centers* (2006), *Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work* (2006), and soon, a study of Native American artists’ access to space and resources. I am beginning to write a deep critique of how arts and cultural policy are configured in the United States, based on my experiences with artists and other members of the arts community, as well as my reading of the works of arts and cultural critics and scholars.

The international reach of colleagueship at Bellagio quickened my hunger for working beyond the domestic scale. I have since given creative economy lectures before diverse audiences in Europe, Japan, China, and Australia, and taught and engaged in joint research on the cultural economy in Brazil and South Korea, all using an artist-centric lens.

This work, which has introduced me to intellectuals working in arts and cultural fields, is a wholly unexpected dividend from my time at Bellagio. For me personally, it has created good work. Challenging, satisfying, being of service (both in the academy and outside it), and replete with engaging human contact.

Elaine Tyler May

The Bellagio community was really incredible. We had nothing in common, yet we had everything in common. I have no idea if our group was especially close compared to other groups, but we really bonded. Eager to seize this rare opportunity for truly intense thinking, writing, creating, we were all there to work, and to work hard. It was a joyful, spirited environment. I'd never been around so many happy people for such a sustained period of time.

So what difference did it make that this community was there, and that we were all from different places and working in widely differing fields? As Michael MacDonald, a memoir writer from Boston, explained, the community "opens you up." Chatting with a painter or a composer or an economist, and transforming strangers into friends from so many other countries, exposes you to new ways of seeing the world. Ann McGarrell, a poet from Vermont and partner of Jim, a painter, said it was like an ongoing series of informal seminars with people who simply enjoyed "civil discourse." You just felt mentally refreshed there. Talking about nothing in particular, my mind relaxed, and I was more open to new thoughts, new

ideas, new perceptions, new jokes. If I had been at a convention of historians, even when we ate and drank and relaxed, the dynamic would have been different. Somehow, we all would still have been inhabiting the same paradigm, even when we weren't discussing our projects.

Each evening at Bellagio, after spending hours alone, isolated, we gathered to share ideas. When I returned to my studio to work, fresh insights often suddenly popped into my head from serendipitous conversations at these gatherings. For instance, one evening Michael mentioned the phenomenon of the media labeling certain children "super-predators." Just that day I had been drafting a section of a chapter on fear of crime and the politics of fear, drawing from social science data that shows fear of crime as a phenomenon independent of crime rates—something some criminologists think is an even more serious problem than crime itself.

I was exploring the fear many Americans feel toward strangers, especially young men of color. Michael, who works with at-risk teenagers in Boston, tries to counter the "super-predator" myth, and the media construction of children as dangerous. His observations really broadened my perspective. The problem of a society that fears its children is related to some



of the historical changes I was trying to figure out. I probably never would have known Michael MacDonald if we hadn't met at Bellagio. Historians and memoirists rarely attend the same academic conferences. Yet since discovering in Italy how much overlap there is in our work, we have collaborated on various projects, including a recently published collection of essays on the relationship between memoir and history.

Similarly, in casual chats with Lidia Sazonova, whose field is Slavic literature, and her husband, Michael Robinson, I learned a great deal about the domestic culture of the Cold War in Russia, as compared to my understanding of Cold War culture in the United States. I had written about the 1959 "Kitchen Debate" in Moscow, but Michael Robinson is the first person

I ever met who was actually there. Talking to Lidia and Michael put my own work in a new, broader context—one grounded in the personal experiences of two Russians who happened to be at Bellagio.

Lidia volunteered that what makes Bellagio special is that it is a "Renaissance environment." The other fellows, she noted, were all Renaissance individuals, with interdisciplinary approaches to their work and wide-ranging interests, talents, and curiosity. The magnificent physical environment, too, through its art and architecture, encouraged each of us to see ourselves as part of a community that broke old traditions and created art and ideas in an innovative way. My time at Bellagio enriched not only the work I did there, but the work I have been doing ever since.

Joseph Mazur

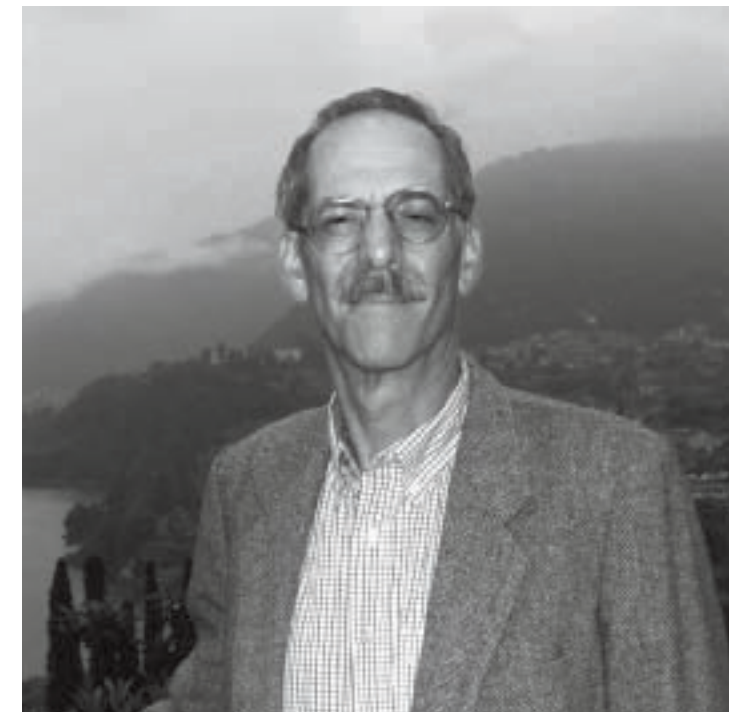
I marvel at the Villa muses, those magical spirits feeding my thoughts, one seamlessly moving to the next, until the last day and final hour of my residency, when I shall place that final punctuation point at the end of my postscript. Yet, beyond all the extraordinary productivity, it is the collegialities, the feedback, the interests and wisdoms of others, the attachments and friendships that feed the pleasurable environment and enhance the quality of my work and, I am sure, the work of others.

How fortunate we are to be among residents such as the Indian journalist who, through her energetic readings, provided us with powerful imagery of the violence in Kashmir. Her description of the historical shift from bloodstained swords to overwhelming AK-47s will forever be extended from our thoughts of Kashmir to conflicts around the world. She writes her stories the way she tells them, stirring heart-pounding energy into her fierce images while using elliptical pauses to hold you by silk threads above the forces of violence felt so deeply in the gut.

A philosopher works on a book about the nature of thought experiments. His work is fortuitously connected to a book I had written in 2005 about truth in mathematics. We meet for tea every day to exchange a few ideas. He is a philosopher, but one who is intimately connected to the philosophy of mathematics.

A U.N. lawyer working on the jurisprudence of intellectual property contributed to my work on the history, psychology and mathematics of gambling. Our talks have gone far beyond the boundaries of my work, often spilling into general conceptions and corrections of my own misconceptions of what constitutes intellectual property. He masterfully wove elements of six previous presentations into his own to broaden our understanding of moral justice for the intellectual culture-based rights of indigenous peoples.

Though my own work at the Villa is in almost every respect nonfiction, one poet and two fiction writers have influenced the storytelling components of this work. The poet read from her collection based on *Ignatz*, the syndicated comic strip character who appeared in Hearst papers from 1913 to 1944, to give a sense of how to write so that background scenes of literature (or, in her case, poetry) could radically jump as if sucked into an abyss of one world to appear in another without loss of continuity.



One writer read her stories about life in Bosnia in the 1990s. The effective metaphorical themes throughout her stories must have provided an inevitably unconscious addition to everyone's writing excellence. While reading translations of a Mexican writer's stories, I experienced the murmur of a symphony in sonata form rising from the harmony of his words. His style of long, extended paragraphs embraces uninterrupted visual movements. With all the physiological sensations of my own body, I felt with passionate exhaustion those draining emotions of the narrator.

There were those whom we affectionately called "the Ottomans"—three scholars working together on a paper investigating Jews who converted to Islam in the 13th century. They gave us an education in the methods and care behind manuscript acquisition and interpretation.

A composer whose work defies genre presented a heavy-metal requiem on the short life of Dolly, the first cloned sheep, merging with the choral work of the medieval composer Guillaume Dufay. Who would believe that this resident's choral mass, with its lyrical metaphor on life written by his life partner, could possibly touch the work of a mathematician working on a book about luck?

What is it about this place that brings about such bonding without the typical boarding school annoyances of cliques and coteries? No contests, no battles, just respect and esteem. When residents leave there is genuine sorrow, then eager anticipation of the next troupe, always with an uneasy feeling that the next could not wholly replace the last. Yet, you bond with the new as easily as you did with the old.



1974: writing an article that was published in *American Heritage* magazine and acclaimed by the Society of American Historians at Columbia University

Herbert Mitgang

At Bellagio I was able to make a scholarly contribution to my field of Lincolniana and American history. My self-assigned project was to discover a little-known fact: the effort to persuade General Garibaldi to join the Union Army during the American Civil War. I found the missing documents I needed to prove my theme in a Risorgimento Museum in nearby Milano. Writing my article in the supportive atmosphere of the Center made my project successful. I had been an Army correspondent in wartime Italy; what a different experience it was to be a working scholar in peaceful Bellagio!



Playwright; a former Artistic Associate of New York Theatre Workshop; creator of an under-graduate playwriting program at Bard College

2006: researching, rewriting, and writing

Chiori Miyagawa

My Bellagio residency was a life-changing experience. In the United States, non-commercial artists are not supported by the government, and are generally looked upon as somewhat of a burden to society. It was empowering to receive such respect in the form of enormously generous support as a playwright.



Author of three books of poems, of *The Bishop’s Daughter*, a memoir, and of *The White Blackbird: A Life of the Painter Margarett Sargent* by her

Granddaughter; teaches in the graduate writing program at The New School

2005: writing a memoir

Honor Moore

I had deep work to do, and though I wasn’t sure what relevance Bellagio would have to *The Bishop’s Daughter*, the memoir I was writing about my relationship with my father, Bishop Paul Moore (1919–2003), I did know I needed peace, quiet, care, and solitude, with stimulating companionship at the end of the day. I had been to many artists’ colonies and I knew such situations agreed with me, but this would be different—we would be in Italy, in an ancient villa, and the residents would be scholars as well as artists.

My trip began auspiciously, just days after my 60th birthday, which I celebrated by giving a grand dinner party for 40 of my friends. On my flight, I was seated next to a young man who was in business in Milan. Somehow we got to talking and soon I was offering him advice on his broken heart. His eyes teary, he told me about the girl he adored who had recently left him. I told him I was on my way to Bellagio, and his eyes lit up. He knew of the villa—George Clooney lived nearby, did I know that? Yes, I said. It turned out his uncle had lived nearby, and that he had been to the town many times. Would he, I asked, help me hire a car when we got to Milan? (I had not managed to make those arrangements ahead of time.) He was sure he could, he told me.

After we cleared customs, he ventured out to find me a taxi. Coming up empty, he offered to drive me to Bellagio. He had nothing to do the rest of the day and it would be a pleasure to give me a ride. Minutes later, I boarded his orange VW, a vintage Beetle. In Italy, the government lowers car tax if you keep an old vehicle, he was proud to tell me. We set off, the car’s interior reeking of gasoline. There was a slight leak somewhere, my companion sweetly explained.

The drive, as evening fell, was strange and mysterious. We stopped in Como for a late lunch and called Elena, at the Villa desk. My companion got directions, and we embarked on the final lap of our journey, the orange Beetle making its way, finally, slowly up the magnificent driveway, the cedars black in the fading light, against the pale splendor of the lake—a spectacle that exactly replicated an image that had come to me in a dream a year before, which had found its way into one of my poems. Quite an omen, I thought.

I bade my companion farewell after introducing him to Pilar, who welcomed me warmly and showed me to my quarters. The room, on the ground floor of the Villa, was of a vastness my mother would have characterized as “the size of a football field,” and my study was in an ancient stone turret, certainly perfect for the daughter of a bishop embarking on perhaps the most important book of her career. I breathed an enormous sigh of relief. I was sure I could work here.

It took only until breakfast for the magic to begin. Among those around the table was a literary critic writing a book on the notion of honor in English literature. Conversations with him would prompt me to dig beneath the family myths about how I got my name: “We had friends called Honor.” “We liked the name.” *What was honor anyway?* my new colleague at Bellagio invited me to ask myself. What did it mean that a war hero bound for the Episcopal priesthood and his idealistic wife had named a child Honor in the immediate wake of World War II? Wasn’t it more than a coincidence that my name turned up in the cavalier poet Richard Lovelace’s “To Lucasta, On Going to the Wars,” that 20 telegrams at my birth quoted its most famous line (“I could not love thee, dear, so much/ Lov’d I not Honour more”)?

Days later, Tom de Waal, a British journalist writing about the Jewish Diaspora in Odessa in the 19th century, arrived. It turned out that his father, in addition to being descended from a famous Jewish merchant family that had figured in Proust, had been the dean of Canterbury Cathedral, the site of ancient Anglican feuds, of the execution of Thomas à Becket. As a young priest, my father had taught and preached there. I had been 14 that summer, and I remembered the cathedral. It was not often that I discussed theology with a writer whose father was also an Anglican cleric! The following week brought another surprising Anglican, Debbie Little Wyman, an Episcopal priest who celebrated the Eucharist every Sunday outdoors in the Boston Common. My father had come to one of her services, she told me. And in her descriptions of her work, my father’s work at a mission parish in downtown Jersey City, a post–World War II version of her present work among the homeless, came back to life.

Other residents—a historian of Native American history, a young woman social anthropologist from Nepal, a choreographer from Los Angeles, an evolutionary biologist from Yale, a jazz composer from South Africa and his wife, a Texas legal historian, and an Egyptian feminist sociologist—all provided a warm and stimulating environment in which questions I might never have been asked enlarged the scope of my work.

Somehow, too, the fact that ancient philosophy had been written at the top of the hill a millennium earlier gave me a feeling of the continuity of humanist effort. I often felt, walking the corridors of the Villa on the way to the machine that dispensed delicious cappuccino, passing the tall Chinese porcelain vases, climbing the curving stairwell, that we were all lucky ghosts, perpetual shades residing in one of the most graceful houses on earth.

When I arrived, I had 80 pages out of order, and the leaves on the trees on the shores of Como were green, just beginning to turn gold. Each day I photographed the lake through my bedroom window. When I left, I had nearly 150 pages, my chapters were in order, and once in a while snow fell across Lake Como. I have a cadre of new friends with whom I am still in touch, a book in the world that owes something to that villa on a hill, and 30 photographs of Lake Como that bear witness to the fact that I once lived and wrote in such a place.



Lindiwe M. Sibanda:
Chief Executive Officer,
Food, Agriculture and Natural
Resources Policy Analysis
Network; policy adviser to
Ministers of Agriculture in
Southern Africa

Lindela R. Ndlovu:
Vice Chancellor, National
University of Science and
Technology, Zimbabwe;
Founding Member, Zimbabwe
Academy of Sciences

1995: writing a book about
improving goat production in
smallholder flocks in semiarid
areas of Southern Africa

Lindela R. Ndlovu and Lindiwe M. Sibanda

It was exciting to be involved in discussions on postmodernism among Western, Eastern, and Third World academics, all to whom the phrase meant different things. The projects discussed ranged from the esoteric to the applied, from stereochemistry to the principles of changing a national language. We attended poetry and painting discussions, a thing we would hardly ever do anywhere else, and enjoyed ourselves in addition to broadening our horizons.



Senior Consultant
Anaesthesiologist, Uganda’s
Mulago hospital, Kampala;
Chair of the National eHealth
Steering Committee; Board
member of the Uganda
Broadcasting Council

2008: participant,
eHealth conferences

Catherine Omaswa

Comprised of experts in different fields from both developed and developing countries, the meetings were friendly and open. The combination of formal and informal sessions, interactions, and settings made it easy to have truly frank discussions, to bond with other participants, and to accomplish a lot while generating and sharing groundbreaking knowledge.

We were all spurred to think globally and act locally. My colleagues from Kenya and Rwanda and I tried to ensure that the needs and perspectives of the East African Community (EAC) were included as we worked with participants from the developed world to create a Global eHealth agenda.

The relaxed, enthusiastic, and open dialogue—among statisticians, economists, researchers, public and community health officials, ICT experts, health ministers, financiers—culminated in a call for action that will help developing countries such as Uganda meet their U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly MDG 8 Target 18: “In cooperation with the private sector, make the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication ... available to all.”

Indeed, as a result of the Bellagio eHealth conferences, palpable action is taking place. For example, the pediatric department of Uganda’s Mulago National Referral Hospital is in the process of establishing a telemedicine link with the children’s hospital on Great Ormond Street in London. In addition, the October 2008 dialogue on eHealth and development in East, Central, and Southern Africa, for the Ministers of Health and ICT, which took place in the Seychelles, recommended the adoption and application of eHealth policy-development frameworks using lessons from the Bellagio meetings.

Michael Ondaatje

My four weeks in Bellagio were essential to my writing of *The English Patient*. I was, I think, halfway through the manuscript when I arrived, and Bellagio's open time—its allowed silence, during the days—led me into the Herodotus and local Italian history, and, I suspect, the slow quiet voice of the Patient.

I had all day to work—I took a sandwich lunch—and got back late in the afternoon to a lively sense of community among the others there: wonderful talk, the shy revealing of projects, much humor.

Four unforgettable weeks that I still discover, here and there, in my book.





Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and Director-General, the Energy and Resources Institute

1990 and 1995: developing the work plans of the Asian Energy Institute, a network of research and educational institutions, and attending energy conferences

2007: serving as a keynote speaker at the Rockefeller Foundation Global Urban Summit

R. K. Pachauri

The global character of Bellagio not only brought us together in spirit and mind, but also removed us from narrow and parochial interests. At dinner during one visit, I sat next to a professor of English who is also a well-known poet. At the end of our conversation, I plucked up enough courage to confess that I was an amateur poet and had been writing verse since the age of eight. Our evening ended with her asking me to write something, possibly overnight, and show it to her the next morning. In turn, I asked her to write something and give it to me the next day.

Both of us kept our promise, and she, of course, typed out a beautiful poem, which I retain, and I gave her something that I feel was one of my better literary efforts, but certainly nothing near her class. In order to produce the poem, I had worked for quite some hours during the night, but in the end I was generally happy with what I had done. As it turns out, she was also quite appreciative of the quality of what I had written. This certainly served as a source of encouragement to me and I thought that I had obviously not been writing enough poetry, a situation I decided to repair.

Since then, I have been trying to do so, with results that I feel are certainly good for my own sanity and emotional balance. I believe it is important for people to foray outside their professions, into other areas for which they may have a penchant or interest. My brief encounter with a poet in Bellagio was an extremely productive and heartening experience.



Suzan–Lori Parks

Bellagio worked its wonder on me when I was feeling hopeless and stuck in my writing. Leaving my daily distractions behind was initially terrifying. Then terror gave way to fear and fear gave way to a writing routine, and I burst into a new place with my work. Sometimes you need to get far away to hear the sound of what is very close. Bellagio helped me do just that.



Mira Schor, "Bellagio sketchbook," ink and gouache on paper, from a 6.25" x 9.5" spread, 2001.

Painter and writer teaching at Parsons The New School for Design

2001: writing "Blurring Richter," an essay for her book, *A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on Art, Politics, and Daily Life*; working on a series of artworks on paper

Mira Schor

This place is spectacularly beautiful. It occupies the high ground of a promontory that divides Lake Como. The topography is so complex that I still can't figure out exactly where anything is. Every angle and view serves to astonish, delight, and totally disorient, but it is certain that this is one of the most wondrous natural sites I have ever seen, combining bold wild nature, in the shapes of three rings of mountains, beginning with low cypress, pine, tall hills covered with olive trees around the lake, then craggy peaks beyond the tail end of the Dolomites, and the Alps on the other side. At the same time it is an intensely and anciently cultivated area, with towns climbing from luxurious, almost half-tropical lushness near the shore, up steep, narrow pebbled or cobblestone paths fit only for goats.

I think I am getting a lot of work done—much painting, less writing—and yet the place is heavily scheduled and the rhythm is a bit brisk and consuming. So many hills are climbed each day, so many drinks and glasses of wine, so many conversations with new people.... It is so exciting, stimulating both visually and socially, that I can hardly sleep at all. The lights at night are like stars. Even in the dark the cedar trees are darker and the few mountains, as in a Van Eyck, are grayer, a lighter dark in the bright moonlight. To the right there is no horizon or distance but one sees the lights from a village across the shore, with faint reflections in the lake. To the left, a taller peak, a set of peaks. The darkest dark of the cypress trees rises straight up into the pale gray of the lake and mountains beyond.

Breakfast: You can skip it if you like, but I have been mostly getting up in time to go, partly because it is a good way to know what people are planning for the day and because the best way to get any work done here is to skip the delicious lunch (preceded by *aperitivo*) and order a picnic lunch, and take it to your study or on your walk or excursion.

I finally availed myself of tea one rainy afternoon. It was a very pleasant thing to do, and, like every other food and drink ritual here, it clearly has some history, perhaps going back to what was considered the right thing before the Great Depression. It is like being on an ocean liner, and in first class for once.

As I said on a night of many toasts for departing residents, Bellagio is a bit like life, only more so. People enter your life and you make friends faster, they come and go faster, and sooner than later you, too, have to leave—only, unlike life, you know the exact date of your departure.



Writer of fiction (including *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*), memoirs, essays

1997: working on an autobiographical manuscript, *The Sam and Dorothy Show: A Memoir*

Alix Kates Shulman

I appreciated the mix of artists and scholars, as well as the mix by age, gender, and nationality. I gave two readings from my new memoir, one early on and one just before I left. These were my first public presentations of the work and were invaluable to me for breaking the ice and for getting a response from an audience quite different from my usual ones.

Author (*The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*; *A Stone Boat*, a novel; *The Irony Tower: Soviet Artists in a Time of Glasnost*); Lecturer in Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College

2006: writing *Unlike Love*, a book about how families bring up offspring who are deaf, autistic, have terminal illnesses, are prodigies, or have committed crimes

Andrew Solomon

Virginia Woolf once described a character’s belief that life was a thing running ahead of her with which she was forever trying to catch up, and that is the nature of my New York existence. It’s a joyous and celebratory life, in which the bulk of my writing happens in secret nocturnal solitude between midnight and 4 a.m. There are aspects of writing a book that can be accomplished in these brief postprandial intervals—that can, in fact, be patched in during the day when I am riding in the back seat of a taxi or waiting at the dentist’s office. There are other aspects of writing, however, that require the fluidity of time unperturbed, when I can concentrate on my great project for 20 hours at a stretch, when it can be the subject of my every waking moment and the dominant reality of my dreams. There is a time for balance between life and work, but there is also a version of inspiration that requires complete imbalance, with no time for pragmatics or even for love.

To be in a context that is as aesthetically pleasing as Bellagio is to feel honored—honored, in particular, for one’s work—and that energizes the writing process mightily. If you had felt insignificant, or that your book was a private obsession that might fail to set the world alight, the simple fact of being at Bellagio was redemptive. I walked in the gardens only occasionally, but I knew they were there every time I hit a key on my computer, and that knowledge dignified the process of writing. Those wonderful meals meant that I didn’t sit down at my desk with a feeling of being punished.

I’ve never been sure that beauty is truth, but I do believe that beauty plays a part in peace, and that peace is the best precondition for art. Some echo of all the thinking that has gone on at the Villa Serbelloni resonates in its elegant hallways. Being there, you are subject to the quiet sweep of that fine history, and it carries you with it to places you might never otherwise have gone. At some troubling level, I am always torn between doing things that

Voices and Visions



I don’t want to do and doing things that I do want to do, which is to say that when I am working on a book, even in the nastiest, stickiest bit of it, I have the sense that I am driving forward, and when I am on the beach, I often have a feeling that I should be at home writing and that life, in Woolf’s metaphor, is getting too much of a lead on me. Bellagio combines the best of both worlds. I worked there as productively as I’ve ever worked anywhere, and yet I was in a place of enormous pleasure. The consequence was a feeling of unmatched relaxation, happiness, and productivity.

The company in a community of scholars was noble, and the process of sharing details of our work was curiously rousing. Further, it was in some instances extremely useful. I am writing a chapter about deaf culture, and Nick Evans, an Australian linguist, told me over a pasta lunch about the village in northern Bali where a hereditary form of deafness affects a large part of the population. I went to Bali a year later and met the villagers and will refer to them in my book. My only real complaint about Bellagio is that one can go only for four weeks, twice in a lifetime. I would like to go for four months, twice in a year.

Literary theorist, philosopher,
novelist, filmmaker

1997: working on *In America*,
a novel

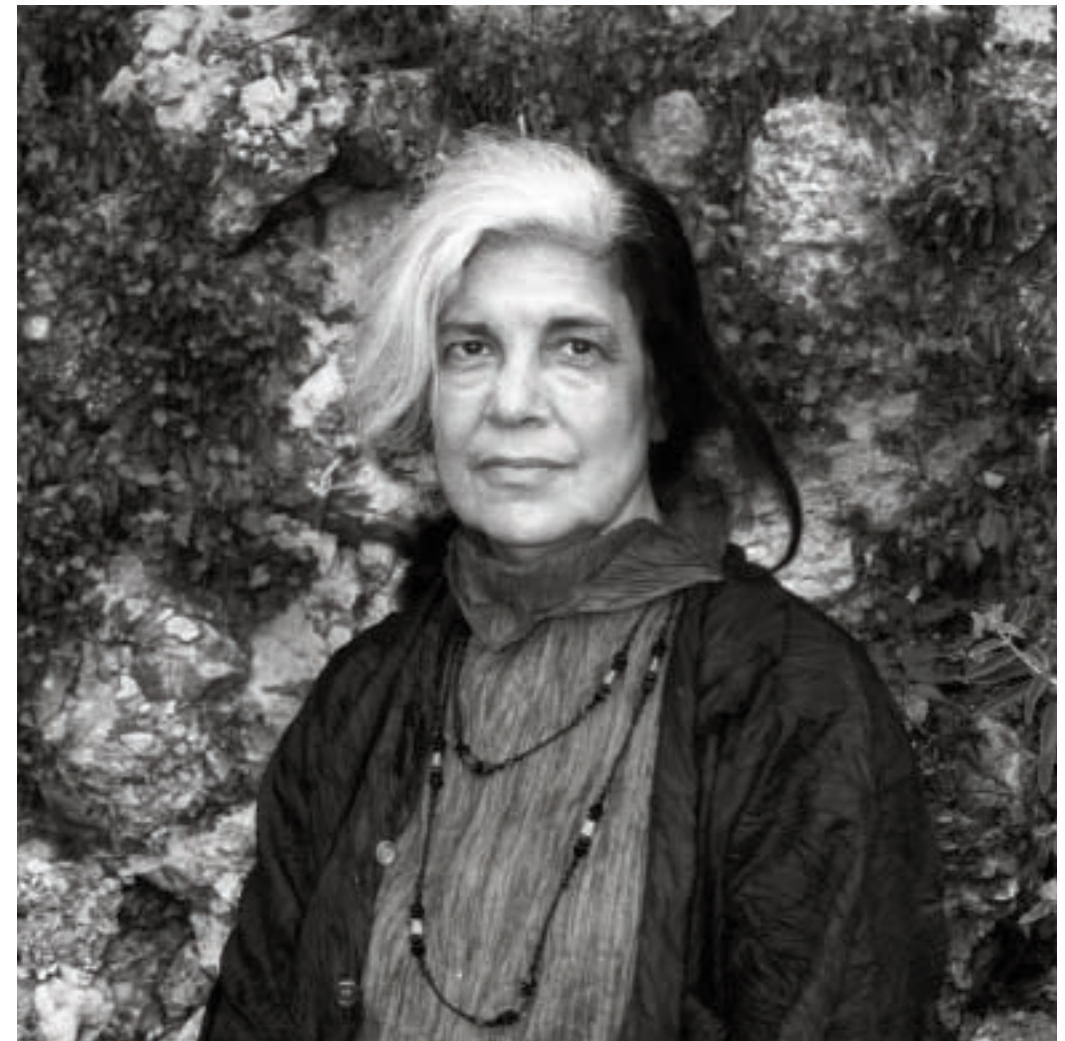
From an October 20, 1997, letter
to the Rockefeller Foundation

Susan Sontag

While I didn't finish the novel, which is now five years in the writing, I did start and complete an entire chapter. That's far more than I could hope to write in the same period of time in my apartment in New York City.

I was constantly aware of and moved by the beauty of the Villa and its grounds. I placed the desk in my study in front of the window, which gave onto a stupendous view of Lake Como. As far as I was concerned, I was in paradise.

Voices and Visions





The Richard L. Fisher
Professor of English and
Founding Director of the
Penn Humanities Forum,
University of Pennsylvania

2002: writing a memoir about
a trip to Eastern Europe

Wendy Steiner

Being at Bellagio was a magical experience for all the obvious reasons—the stimulation of the other fellows, the astonishing beauty of the setting, the comfort of the accommodations. The effect of all this on my work, however, could never have been predicted.

My project was to write about a journey I had taken to Eastern Europe to learn about my roots. On it, I had discovered nothing about my family, but, instead, that I had a life-threatening disease. I survived, and the memoir was my attempt to write away the trauma and, at the same time, to break with academia and begin a literary career. The Bellagio residency was the first support I had ever received for non-scholarly writing, and I found it tremendously encouraging.

I had been on the brink of this crossover for some time, split between a busy university career and intense periods as a cultural journalist and public intellectual. Hoping to combine the two, to bring the “big world” into the university, I had founded the Penn Humanities Forum, a center dedicated to both interdisciplinary academic research and humanistic programming for the general public. But the double pull was a strain, and I was eager to concentrate my energies on writing.

The roots trip and its aftermath had given this yearning urgency—a now-or-never feel—and I came to Bellagio full of optimism that the memoir would be my ticket to the world of letters. Every day, I spent hours working and reworking my preface, as if those three pages, if I could only get them right, would change the entire course of my career. After conversation over breakfast on the breathtaking terrace, I would retreat to my study in a turret of the Villa to juggle the symbolism of journeys and mortality, until it was time to dress for drinks and dinner. During breaks, I played my alto recorder in the echoing chamber, practiced yoga, took runs in the blistering June sunshine, and occasionally walked down to the town for ice cream, climbing back up hundreds of steps to return to my writing. Sometimes it hardly seemed worth it. There was so much interesting work going on at the Center—research on genetically engineered corn, class-action suits against tobacco companies, educational aid for Palestinian youths—and there I was, permuting the sentences and syllables of my preface.

A week before my stay was over, a legal scholar named Linda suggested we do a PowerPoint presentation as a farewell to the other fellows. We met each day at lunchtime, scandalizing the musicologist down the hall with the tastelessness of the clips we were playing. The giggling must have puzzled her, too. We pulled canned images and tunes off the Web and managed elementary animation effects, depicting our time at Bellagio as a series of scholarly and gastronomic misadventures. Making this presentation was the highlight of my residency, though back at home the DVD turned out to be incompatible with any program I could find to show it. I never saw our little production after leaving Bellagio.

But though the presentation did not travel, a lesson from it did. Not too long afterward, I put my memoir in a drawer and took out an opera project that had been sitting there for some time. It was called *The Loathly Lady* and was based on Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Wife of Bath’s Tale.” With a little serendipity, I managed to find a composer. Meanwhile, I realized that the magic and comedy of *The Loathly Lady* would make it ideal for production as a full-length animated film. I thought of applying for a Bellagio team grant with the collaborators I had gathered—composer Paul Richards, artist John Kindness, and animation artist Joshua Mosley—but the timing was too complicated and we were eager to get started. By the fall of 2006 we had made a pilot demo.

The experience of creating this short film was utterly wonderful, but it taught me that a full-length animation was far beyond my or any individual’s power. A staged opera, however, was another matter entirely, and I am proud to announce that *The Loathly Lady* will have its concert première on April 1, 2009, at Irvine Auditorium in Philadelphia. The cast includes the soprano Julianne Baird, baritone Tom MeglIORANZA, countertenor Drew Minter, and contralto Susan Hellauer, as well as other members of Anonymous 4. The musicians playing shawms, rebecks, cornettos, viols, nakers, sackbuts, and yes, recorders, are among the world’s finest early instrumentalists. Gary Thor Wedow will conduct.

It would be too much to say that Bellagio *caused* me to create this opera. But while I was at the Center, I watched the photographer Lyle Gomez lugging his gigantic camera around the grounds in complete bliss. I saw the excitement of the resident composer as she set off every morning for her studio in the woods, coming back for dinner with another 12 seconds of music in the bag. On a group outing, I marveled at the Villa del Balbiannello, and, as the sun set over Lake Como, a mathematician told me about the complexity of froth. I think Bellagio allowed me to change the subject when it came to creativity, to see it not as a matter of therapy or careerism, but as a realm of pleasure and whimsy and freedom. I am still a professor, but I am a librettist, too, and I am grateful to Bellagio for the unpredictable part it played in helping me reach this place.

Betty Woodman

I wanted to get out of my clay studio and develop ideas that were emerging from preparatory drawings for wall-mounted reliefs. By the time I got to Bellagio, I was more than apprehensive about the whole endeavor. What in the world was I going to do for a whole month making drawings? Who did I think I was?

The first night there, I was awakened by the clamor of fireworks exploding over the lake. It seemed to be a welcome for me. The next morning, I was introduced to various other fellows and then taken to my lakeside studio, formerly a boathouse. What a perfect place! The constantly changing colors of the lake seen from the window and the washed pastels of the buildings provided the inspiration for my palette of colors. In all, I made about 20 large drawings, each roughly 5 x 6 feet, working happily and intensely every day. It was sort of like holding my breath, because I was so excited and involved in what I was doing.

Finally, I had to come up for air and went off with my new friends, Wade and Joyce Dodd, to explore Como and take the little ferry boat to the various island towns. Evenings were spent in the company of the other residents. I learned about everything from polio vaccine to literary criticism and perceptual psychology.

Many of the drawings from Bellagio have found homes. One at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and recently another at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. They have been shown at the Stedelijk; Max Protetch Gallery, New York; and the RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island, among other places. But perhaps most important, they have led me to a whole new direction in my work. Other drawings, prints, and, most significant, installations involve painted canvas upon which ceramic elements are mounted, in a synthesis of the work started at Bellagio and continued in my studios in New York and Italy.



Betty Woodman, "Bellagio Drawing 2-16," terra sigillata, graphite, wax on paper, 74" x 50", 1995.
Courtesy of the artist and Max Protetch Gallery, New York.



Tribute

A crowd jostling to greet President John F. Kennedy as his car arrived in June 1963. A pensive Maya Angelou. A composer at a piano. A Nigerian scholar and diplomat. Lush hills overlooking Lake Como. These are among the many iconic Bellagio Center images captured by photographer Sandro Lanfranconi over nearly 40 years, from the funeral of the Principessa whose gift made the Center possible until a year before his own death, in 1997.

Lanfranconi, born in Menaggio in 1922, opened his photography business in the town of Bellagio in 1949. During the Center's conferences and residencies, as exchanges of complex ideas and new perspectives led to fresh solutions to old problems around the world, his arresting portraits of focused individuals, collaborative groups, and inspiring settings immortalized decades of hard work at Bellagio.

The Rockefeller Foundation is grateful to Lanfranconi for turning his creative eye to the Bellagio Center for so many years and to Gina Ortellì Lanfranconi and her family for sharing some of her late husband's most memorable photographs in these pages.