

HAYSTACK
BOOK
FESTIVAL

A circular woodcut-style illustration of a haystack in a rural landscape. The haystack is the central focus, with a conical top and a textured surface. It is surrounded by rolling hills and fields, with a small building visible in the background. The entire scene is enclosed within a circular border.

2025

Haystack Book Festival brings together, in unmoderated conversation, writers and thinkers who have something to talk about. Past and upcoming conversations are as various as Pulitzer Prize finalist Janice Nimura and Dorothy Wickenden on the women who helped spark the first American civil rights movement, David Chaffetz and Sarah Maslin Nir on horses as treasured companions and engines of power, *NYT Cooking's* Sam Sifton and Melissa Clark on the world of cooking, William Egginton and Samuel Moyn exploring the public circulation of ideas, George Packer and Elizabeth Becker on the coverage of war and how it has changed, Allen Ellenzweig and Jarrett Earnest on the work of photographer George Platt Lynes, Hugh Eakin on Picasso and the movement of modern art to America, and conversations on our environment and the nature that surrounds us with Noah Charney, Carl Safina, David Allen Sibley, and many others.

In memoriam—our friends

Stephen Getz

Starling Lawrence

Writers in Conversation

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

2:00 PM: Plato and the Tyrant

with James Romm and Frederic Hof

4:00 PM: Never Take the Rule of Law for Granted: China and the Dissident

Mark Clifford and Jerome Cohen *with* Richard Hornik

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3

4:00 PM: Sargent's Greatest Patron

with Jean Strouse and Susan Galassi

6:00 PM: The Brendan Gill Lecture

with Betsy Lerner

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4

10:30 AM: Farther Than We Can See . . .

with Hampton Sides and Adam Higginbotham

1:00 PM: Worthy and Unworthy Lives

with Dagmar Herzog and Sophia Rosenfeld

3:00 PM: American Whim

with Caleb Smith and Jennifer Fleissner

5:30 PM: A Haystack Evening at "The Knoll" Melville House*

**Ticketed Event*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5

8:00 AM: A Walk in the Woods

with Brian Donahue and Mike Zarfos

11:00 AM: Building Local Building Green

with Brian Donahue and Mike Zarfos

1:30 PM: What Is a Cookbook Anyway?

with Kevin West and Sara B. Franklin



Plato and the Tyrant

Acclaimed historian James Romm, author of *Plato and the Tyrant: The Fall of Greece's Greatest Dynasty and the Making of a Philosophic Masterpiece*, will share the stage with Frederic Hof, author of *Reaching for the Heights: The Inside Story of a Secret Attempt to Reach a Syrian-Israeli Peace*, to talk about political drama and cherished ideals in times when many have believed that democracy failed.

With its powerful articulation of the “just society,” Plato’s *Republic* is required reading for many in the course of their education. And yet hardly anyone is familiar with how this “just society” was tested during Plato’s lifetime, nearly destroying his reputation and stoking controversy in the cities he aspired to transform. Through a set of little-known, revelatory personal letters, Romm tells the thrilling story of one of the most consequential episodes in ancient Greek history: the tyrannical reigns of Dionysius the Elder and Younger, Plato’s disastrous role as an advisor to these rulers, and the fall of Syracuse, at the time the most powerful state in the Hellenic world. In an age of upheavals and tensions between democracies and autocracies, *Plato and the Tyrant* asks anew whether philosophy acts in service of, or fights against, tyranny.

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In due course, Plato's insertion into the court of Syracuse helped bring about a rift in the ruling family that led to a chaotic and violent civil war. Plato took the side of Dion and assisted his party in seizing Syracuse from Dionysius the Younger and rebuilding it. Against the grain of *The Republic*, Plato argues in the *Eighth Letter* that successful states are a blend of democracy and autocracy: "Both slavery and freedom in excess are entirely evil," he writes, "but in due measure, entirely good." Romm asks whether Plato, while extolling the good as the source of transcendent joy, ended up collaborating with evil. How far did he bend the noble ideals of *The Republic*—its unwavering commitment to justice—when he entered a world where injustice prevailed?

James Romm is the James H. Ottoway Jr. Professor of Classics at Bard College and the editor of the "Ancient Lives" biography series from Yale University Press. He is the author of several other studies of Greek and Roman history, and his reviews and essays appear regularly in the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Review of Books*.

Frederic C. Hof has had a distinguished career with the US Army, Department of State, and the international consulting firm AALC, specializing in the Middle East. His publications include *Galilee Divided: Line of Battle, Border of Peace? The Line of June 4, 1967*; and *Beyond the Boundary*. He also contributes to *Foreign Policy* and *The Atlantic*.

"James Romm has taken a little-known episode from ancient Greek history—the somewhat shady-sounding relationship between Plato and the tyrants of Syracuse—and developed it into a fascinating, richly detailed narrative. I may yet have to read the *Republic*."

—Mary Norris, author of *Between You and Me* and *Greek to Me*

"Israelis and Syrians not able to reach an agreement? Nonsense! When a knowledgeable, experienced, and tough-minded diplomat is involved, it can happen. Hof reveals the oh-so-close agreement he negotiated in secret. If not for the murderous rampage against his own people by Assad and the reluctance of the Obama administration to use its influence to stop it, the Middle East map would certainly be changed."

—Ambassador Richard L. Armitage, former Deputy Secretary of State

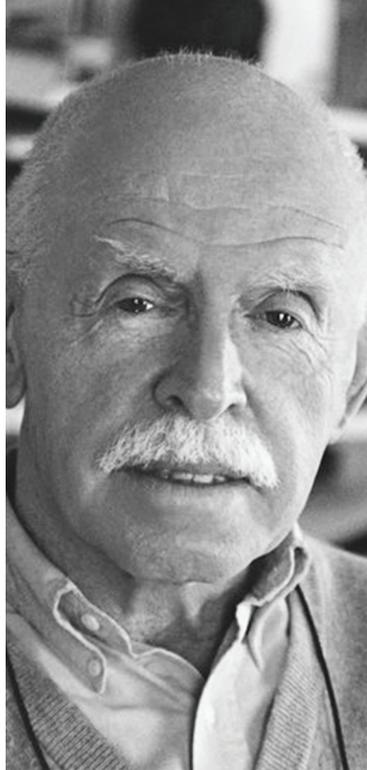
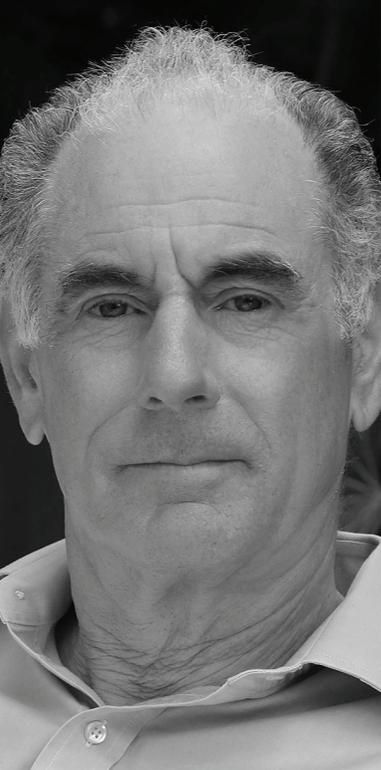


Photo by David McInyre/Zuma Press

Never Take the Rule of Law for Granted: China and the Dissident

Mark Clifford, author of *The Troublemaker: How Jimmy Lai Became A Billionaire, Hong Kong's Greatest Dissident, and China's Most Feared Critic*, and Jerome Cohen, author of the memoir *Eastward, Westward: A Life in Law*, sit with journalist Richard Hornik to discuss China and the rule of law.

Xi Jinping and Jimmy Lai have two very different visions of what it means to be Chinese and of the type of politics that are best for the Chinese people. Xi wants to control the citizenry and their narrative through policies. Lai wants to unstitch this control through the mechanisms of democracy and so-called western values. For years, Hong Kong was a shining example of the rule of law. This legacy differentiated it from China. Its legal structure made it a financial powerhouse and the perfect conduit for international trade with the mainland. Hong Kong's system stood out for its integrity; it was a system that its citizens and foreigners alike could trust.

In recent years, things have changed. Xi Jinping's vision for China has imposed restrictive laws on the people of Hong Kong and has altered

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China's relations with the West. These actions have been highlighted by the arrests of over 1900 people accused of various crimes against the state. No case is more emblematic of this than the ongoing trial of the former billionaire dissident Jimmy Lai who is facing life in prison.

What is happening in Hong Kong is all too familiar: Can citizens rely on the justice system to protect them from an over-reaching executive? Or is the legal system now just an extension of the executive branch? And, finally, what can we learn about the US involvement with Hong Kong's democracy movement and support for Jimmy Lai?

Mark L. Clifford is the president of the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation and a Walter Bagehot Fellow at Columbia University. Previously, Clifford was the editor-in-chief of the *South China Morning Post* and publisher and editor-in-chief of *The Standard*. He held senior editorial positions at *BusinessWeek* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Jerome A. Cohen is a professor of law at New York University School of Law and faculty director of its U.S.-Asia Law Institute. Cohen also served as C.V. Starr Senior Fellow and Director of Asia Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is the author of eleven books, including *People's China and International Law: A Documentary Study*.

Richard Hornik, is Adjunct Senior Fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu and is the co-convenor of its China Seminar. He has served as executive editor of *AsiaWeek* and was *TIME* magazine's bureau chief in Beijing and Hong Kong. He co-authored *Massacre in Beijing: China's Struggle for Democracy*, and has written for *Foreign Affairs*, *Fortune*, *The New York Times*, and the *Wall St. Journal*.

Praise for *The Troublemaker*

"Lai's journey—from an impoverished childhood in China's southern Guangdong province during the Chinese civil war era to becoming one of Hong Kong's richest men—is a genuinely gripping yarn."

—Kevin Peraino, *The New York Times*



Sargent's Greatest Patron

Jean Strouse, author of *Family Romance: John Singer Sargent and the Wertheimers*, and Susan Galassi, author of *Picasso's Variations on the Masters*, talk about the relationship between the great artist and his closest patron.

At the height of his career, John Singer Sargent painted twelve portraits of one English family. The man who commissioned the paintings was Asher Wertheimer, an eminent London art dealer of German-Jewish descent who became the artist's greatest private patron and close friend. The Wertheimers worked with Rothschilds and royals, plutocrats and dukes—as did Sargent. Asher left most of his Sargent portraits to London's National Gallery, a gift that elicited censure as well as praise: it was a new thing for a family of Jews to appear alongside the Anglo-Saxon dignitaries painted by earlier masters. The story travels back through hundreds of years to Habsburg Vienna and forward to fascist Italy. Strouse and Galassi discuss the dramas, mysteries, intrigues, and tragedies surrounding the portraits, and look at the intersections of all these lives with the sparkle and strife of the Edwardian age.

Friday, October 3 • 4:00 PM

Jean Strouse is the prize-winning author of *Morgan: American Financier* and *Alice James: A Biography*, which won the Bancroft Prize in American History and Diplomacy. Her essays and reviews have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, *Architectural Digest*, *Newsweek* and elsewhere. Strouse has been a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation and served as the director of the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library.

Susan Galassi is Curator Emerita of The Frick Collection and a noted expert on Picasso, Whistler, Goya, Monet, and other artists. She is the author of *Picasso's Variations on the Masters* and co-author of *Goya's Last Works*, among other publications.

"Vivid social portraiture . . . *Family Romance*, a book as finely crafted as the portraits it describes, tells a story that is both specific and universal—about the yearnings for recognition and the tenuous rewards of achieving it."

—Benjamin Balint, *The Wall Street Journal*

"I read and shivered and tried, unsuccessfully, to think of other sub-three-hundred-page works of nonfiction that deserve to be called epic."

—Jackson Arn, *The New Yorker*

Celebrating The Norfolk Library

THE NORFOLK LIBRARY



HISTORY • CULTURE • COMMUNITY

The Norfolk Library has been the centerpiece of civic life in Norfolk since 1889. A masterpiece of Victorian architecture, the historic building regularly attracts the attention of visitors and passersby. Even residents of Norfolk and neighboring towns find themselves marveling anew at its beauty—inside and out. Perhaps because of this special ambience, the Norfolk Library has been for more than a century the heart of our community.

In *The Norfolk Library: History, Community, Culture*, Library Director Ann Havemeyer tells its story from the beginning in 1888 when Isabella Eldridge decided the town should have a library. Descended from Norfolk's most

prosperous family, Isabella saw the need for a reading room as well as a gathering place for lectures and musical events. And she insisted they be free and open to everyone. All these decades later Isabella's legacy endures.

Colorful tales—such as Commander Robert E. Peary's failed attempt to reach the library in 1907, snowbound; and the missing librarian who absconded with the town treasury only to turn up in Canada with a new wife and an assumed name—bring the history of the library to life. Recent events of the past 50 years document the library's renewed place as a cultural center for the town. Stunning photographs by Christopher Little complement the historic images taken by Norfolk's own Marie Kendall, who photographed the library when it was new.

The Norfolk Library: History, Community, Culture is available for sale here at the book festival.

Celebrating Brendan Gill

Longtime Norfolk resident Brendan Gill died in 1997. In 1998 "The Brendan Gill Lecture" was established by the Norfolk Library Associates to honor Gill's generous contributions to the library. As an admirer of the library's cultural spirit, Gill donated himself to library events whenever he was asked to participate.

Brendan Gill wrote for *The New Yorker* magazine for over fifty years. He contributed short stories, profiles, and book reviews, and was in successive decades the movie, theater, and architecture critic.

Gill's book, *Here at The New Yorker*, describes the oddities, wonders and joys of his work at the magazine.

As part of his New York City life, Brendan served as the Chairman of the Board of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Municipal Arts Society where he was instrumental in saving Grand Central Station.

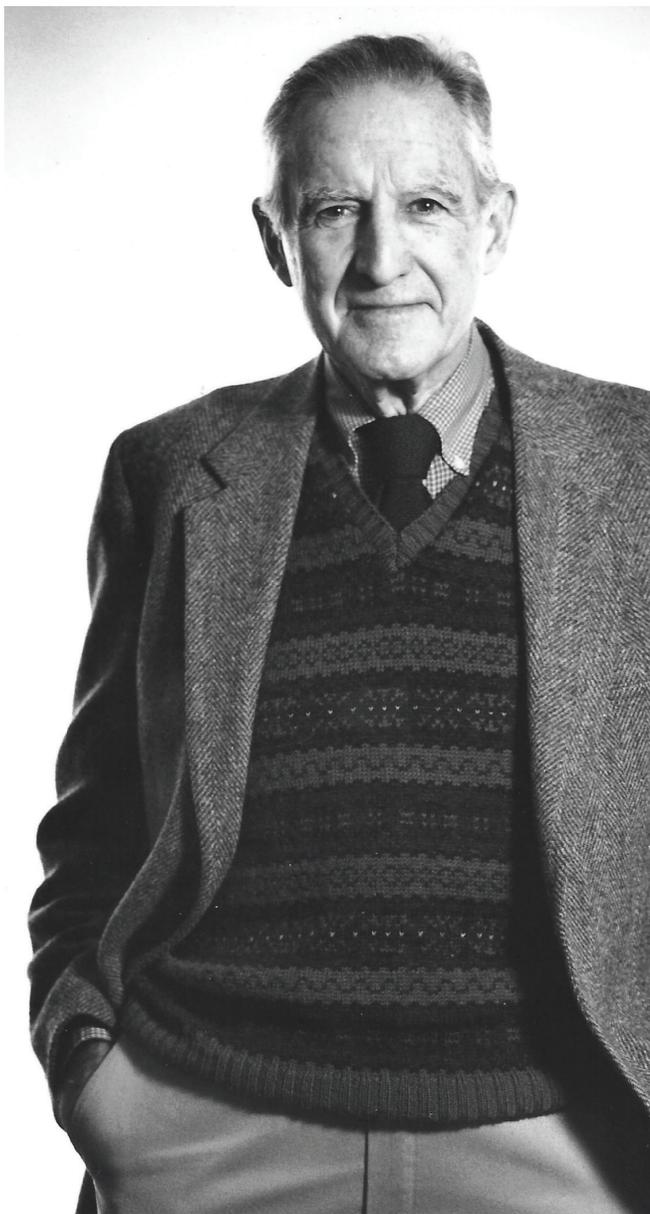


Photo courtesy of the Gill Family

The Brendan Gill Lecture

Betsy Lerner, author of *Shred Sisters: A Novel*



Photo by Maryana Karayim

"In the veteran author and editor's first novel, Lerner enchants . . . It's exquisitely written, featuring pitch-perfect wit, crackling dialogue, and deep insight into the excruciating pain of being in a perpetual awkward phase, as Amy mostly is. It's as if Lerner is Amy—that's how intimate and emotionally fine-tuned the novel is . . . Drama, disappointment, and despair thread throughout this bittersweet saga, but empathy, humor, and the narrator's sharp yet loving powers of observation make it a joy to read . . . In Amy and Ollie, Lerner has given us a love story for the ages."

—Leigh Haber,
Boston Globe

Spanning two decades, *Shred Sisters* is an intimate and bittersweet story exploring the fierce complexities of sisterhood, mental health, loss and love. Betsy Lerner, celebrated author of *The Bridge Ladies*, gives us a wry and riveting debut novel about family and a hard-won path between two sisters.

It is said that when one person in a family is unstable, the whole family is

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destabilized. Meet the Shreds. Olivia is the sister in the spotlight until her stunning confidence becomes erratic and unpredictable, a hurricane leaving people wrecked in her wake. Younger sister Amy, cautious and studious to the core, believes in facts, proof, and the empirical world. None of that explains what's happening to Ollie, whose physical beauty and charisma mask the mental illness that will shatter Amy's carefully constructed life.

As Amy comes of age and seeks to find her place—first in academics, then New York publishing, and through a series of troubled relationships—every step brings collisions with Ollie, who slips in and out of the Shred family without warning. Yet for all that threatens their sibling bond, Amy and Ollie cannot escape or deny the inextricable sister knot that binds them. *No one will love you more or hurt you more than a sister.*

Betsy Lerner is the author of the popular advice book to writers, *The Forest for the Trees*, and the memoirs *Food and Loathing* and *The Bridge Ladies*. She received an MFA from Columbia University in Poetry. A publishing professional for more than thirty years, Lerner is a literary agent in New York. Her novel, *Shred Sisters*, was longlisted for a Debut Novel Award from The Center for Fiction and was selected as one of best 100 books by *The New York Times*.

“Wise to the woe and wonder of families and the bedeviling forces that shape them, Betsy Lerner’s masterful novel, *Shred Sisters*, delivers you through grief and devastation toward tremulous, exquisite hope.”

—Bill Clegg, author of *Did You Ever Have a Family*



Photo by Kitty Leaken

Farther Than We Can See . . .

Bestselling authors Hampton Sides, author of *The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition, First Contact and the Fateful Voyage of Captain James Cook*, and Adam Higginbotham, author of *Challenger: A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space*, discuss the spirit of exploration and our willingness to face adversity in the name of discovery.

The theme of exploration serves as a powerful reflection of humanity's innate desire to push boundaries, whether across the vast oceans of the 18th century or into the uncharted realms of space in the 20th century. Sides transports readers to a time when the sea represented the ultimate frontier, filled with peril and promise, as explorers sought to uncover new worlds and expand their understanding of the Earth. In contrast, Higginbotham delves into the ambitions of space travel, where the challenges of technology and human capacity echo the maritime voyages of the past. Both narratives highlight a fundamental aspect of human nature: an insatiable curiosity and relentless pursuit of knowledge—a quest for discovery and the timeless hope of transcending our limitations.

The challenges faced by explorers in the 18th century and of astronauts

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today, while situated in vastly different contexts, share some fundamental similarities as well as unique obstacles. In the 18th century, maritime explorers battled treacherous waters, unpredictable weather, and the limitations of navigational technology. Astronauts today confront the complexities and danger of space travel, including the harsh vacuum of space, radiation exposure, and life support systems that must function flawlessly during missions. Furthermore, they must endure the psychological stress of confined living conditions and the vast openness of space. Despite these differences, both groups impart the willingness to face adversity in the name of discovery.

Hampton Sides is the author of the bestselling narrative histories *Ghost Soldiers*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Hellhound on His Trail*, *In the Kingdom of Ice*, *On Desperate Ground*, and *The Wide Wide Sea*, which *The New York Times* named one of 2024's Ten Best Books of the Year. He has also been a contributor to *Outside*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and many other publications.

Adam Higginbotham has written for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Wired*, *GQ*, and *Smithsonian*. He is also the author of *Midnight in Chernobyl*, which was the winner of the William E. Colby Award and the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction.

“Hampton Sides, an acclaimed master of the nonfiction narrative, has taken on Cook’s story and retells it for the 21st century . . . The result is a work that will enthrall Cook’s admirers, inform his critics and entertain everyone in between.”

—*Los Angeles Times*

“Higginbotham is an intrepid journalist and skillful storyteller who takes care to humanize the dozens of major and minor players involved in NASA’s many successful, and occasionally catastrophic, space missions . . . For cynical Americans, disaster buffs, and engineers, *Challenger* will be a quick, devastating read . . . It’s a universal story that transcends time.”

—*The New York Times*



Photo by J. Bauer

Worthy and Unworthy Lives

Distinguished historians Dagmar Herzog, author of *The Question of Unworthy Life: Eugenics and Germany's Twentieth Century*, and Sophia Rosenfeld, author of *The Age of Choice: A History of Freedom in Modern Life*, offer complementary perspectives on profound and long-term shifts in values characterized by conflicts over individual freedoms and human interdependence.

What makes life worth living? Which lives are worthy of being cherished? Who gets to make those determinations? This session brings together two historians who have reflected deeply on these universal questions. Whether they study concepts whose meanings are taken for granted and seem self-evident—like choice or disability—or look at topics that are hotly contested—like democracy and truth or sex and fascism—both are attuned to the very real consequences of battles over meanings and moralities. Herzog's *The Question of Unworthy Life* reconstructs the long pre- and post-histories of the Third Reich's first genocide—the “euthanasia” murder program—in its intricate entanglement with the Holocaust of European Jewry, but it also recovers remarkable advocates who, in every age, developed imaginative

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ways of encountering people with impairments based in ideals of equality, reciprocity, and human possibility. Rosenfeld's *The Age of Choice* asks how we came to equate freedom with choosing from menus of options reflecting personal preferences—and how this development has changed the way we live, from shopping, believing, and pairing off to voting and exercising bodily autonomy. Both authors are interested in the values that animate the past and continue to haunt the present.

Dagmar Herzog is Distinguished Professor of History and the Daniel Rose Faculty Scholar at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She is author of seven books, including *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History*, and *Unlearning Eugenics: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Disability in Post-Nazi Europe*.

Sophia Rosenfeld is Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History and chair of the History Department at the University of Pennsylvania. Her latest book, *The Age of Choice*, was a *New York Times* Editors' Choice. She is also the author of *A Revolution in Language: Common Sense: A Political History*, and *Democracy and Truth: A Short History*

"[Herzog's] book opens new vistas on the past and present of disabilities. . . . Pairing first-rate scholarship with a deep moral sensibility, it restores emotion – and, when possible, voice – to those previously deemed unworthy of life."

—Corinna Treitel, *Times Literary Supplement*

"Perceptive and nimble. . . . Rosenfeld has a knack for zooming in on seemingly ordinary objects, interpreting them in unexpected ways, and using them to reframe our picture of the modern world. . . . In *The Age of Choice*, she assembles an eclectic mix of everyday objects like menus alongside social practices like ballroom dancing, political debates about issues like voting rights, and high philosophy, reading those varied texts to piece together the story of the ideology of choice."

—Andrew Lanham, *New Republic*



American Whim

Caleb Smith, author of *Thoreau's Axe: Distraction and Discipline in American Culture*, talks with Jennifer Fleissner, author of *Maladies of the Will: The American Novel and the Modernity Problem*, to explore the tension between individual agency and societal influence in American life.

Smith examines how Thoreau's ideas on discipline and the avoidance of distraction serve as a counterpoint to the volatile whims of contemporary culture, suggesting a path toward focused living amid chaos. Fleissner scrutinizes the complexities of willpower and moral agency in American novels, illustrating how characters grapple with modernity's pull on their desires and decisions. Together, these works illuminate the struggle between the seduction of immediate gratification and the pursuit of a more deliberate, meaningful existence, revealing that the American spirit is often a dance between whim and will.

Smith and Fleissner offer distinct perspectives on modernity, shaped by their focus on discipline and willpower, respectively. One critiques modernity through the lens of distraction, the other examines modernity's impact on individual agency as depicted in novels. While Smith advocates

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for a return to discipline to navigate modern distractions, Fleissner reflects on the internal conflicts that arise when individuals confront the demands of modernity on their sense of self and agency. Together, they offer a framework to analyze how individuals might better engage with modern life and its inherent challenges.

Caleb Smith is professor of English at Yale University. He is the author of *The Prison and the American Imagination*, *The Oracle and the Curse*, and *Thoreau's Axe*. He also authenticated and edited Austin Reed's *Life and the Adventures of a Haunted Convict*. Smith has written about media, politics, and the arts for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Public Books*, *n+1*, and other venues.

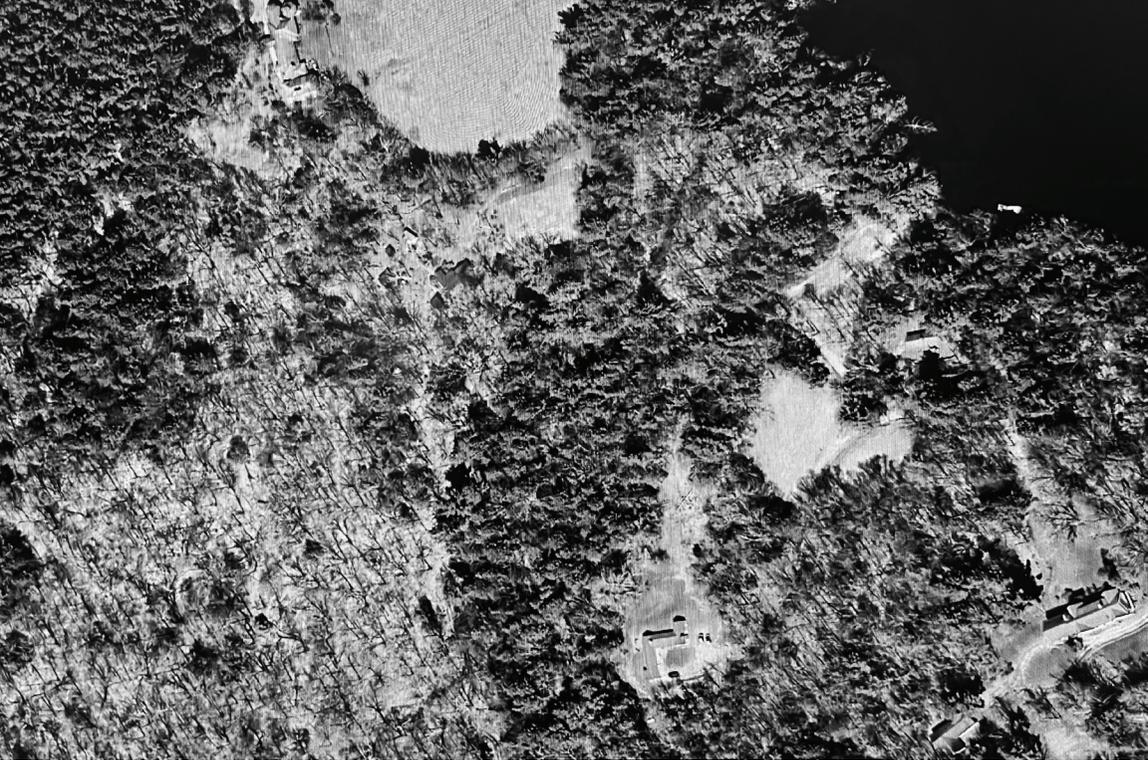
Jennifer Fleissner is professor of English at the University of Chicago. She is the author of *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* and *Maladies of the Will: The American Novel and the Modernity Problem*, both published by the University of Chicago Press.

"Anxieties over attention and distraction are nothing new but also, and more to the point, [Smith] raises an enduring cultural contradiction: like Thoreau, many of us feel distracted by shifts and accelerations in *collective* life—by new media, to be sure, but also by capitalism and its myriad crises—and yet, to combat these collective distractions, we turn inward and desperately try to become more disciplined, attentive *individuals*. . . . Smith is not the first to name this tension, though his 'genealogy of distraction and the disciplines of attention' might be the first to unearth its deep cultural roots."

—Chelsea Fitzgerald, *Los Angeles Review of Books*

"In this brilliant, utterly singular study of the will, the modern individual, and modernity itself as problems, Fleissner makes a stunning intervention in the history and theory of the novel. It is no exaggeration to say that *Maladies of the Will* is on par with the achievements of Ian Watt and György Lukács. But Fleissner's ability to combine astonishing erudition with deft diagnoses of critical impasses in our present strikes me as unparalleled. This book marks nothing less than a historical turning point in how we will read literature."

—Sianne Ngai, *University of Chicago*



A Walk in the Woods*

Make sure you have your hiking boots ready for a short field trip in Great Mountain Forest with author and conservationist Brian Donahue, author of *Slow Wood: Greener Building from Local Forests*, and GMF Executive Director Mike Zarfos. Learn about “worst first” forestry and the connection between America’s houses and local woodlands.

***Registration required – limited to 20 people.**

Meet at the Great Mountain Forest Sugar House, top of Windrow Road.

Sunday, October 5 • 8:00 AM

Praise for *Slow Wood*

"These are enjoyable and very much informative tales of one family's journey along the right path. Using local wood, timber framing, and masonry heaters, does it get any better?"

—Jack A. Sobon, author of *Hand Hewn: The Traditions, Tools, and Enduring Beauty of Timber Framing*

"Brian Donahue makes a passionate and innovative case for the responsible use of forests as a place to ground a sustainable future."

—Nancy Langston, author of *Climate Ghosts* and *Sustaining Lake Superior*

"*Slow Wood* is an honest and elegantly written work that explains the tie between forest use and house construction, and shows how to live more productive, less environmentally costly, and more beautiful lives."

—Mark Fiege, author of *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States*

"An engaging and thought-provoking insight into nature, community, and human responsibility to both that draws from Donahue's deep knowledge of history, ecology, and conservation and lifelong commitment to working and living the land of farms and forests."

—David R. Foster, author of *A Meeting of Land and Sea: Nature and the Future of Martha's Vineyard*



Building Local Building Green

Brian Donahue, author of *Slow Wood: Greener Building from Local Forests*, talks with Great Mountain Forest's Mike Zarfos about the connection between American houses and local woodlands.

American homes are typically made of lumber and plywood delivered by a global system of ruthless extraction, or of concrete and steel, which are even worse for the planet. Wood is often the most sustainable material for building, but we need to protect diverse forests as much as we desperately need more houses.

Donahue and Zarfos will talk about the relationship between humans and forests through responsible, sustainable use of local and regional wood in home building and offer a blueprint and stewardship plan for how to live more responsibly with the woods; they will suggest a sustainable approach to both forestry and building centered on tightly connected ecological and social values.

Donahue documented his experiences building a timber frame home from the wood growing on his family farm, practicing "worst first" forestry.

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Through the stories of the trees he used (sugar maple, black cherry, black birch, and hemlock), and some he didn't (white pine and red oak), they will discuss and explore the history of Americans' relationship with their forests.

Brian Donahue is professor emeritus of American Environmental Studies at Brandeis University. He is a farmer, historian, and conservationist, and the author of prize-winning books about the past and future of New England farms and forests.

Mike Zarfos is the executive director of Great Mountain Forest. He holds a BA in biology and global studies from Colby College, an MA in international relations from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University and a Ph.D. in conservation biology from SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF).

Zarfos has also led research teams studying bird and plant communities on seabird islands in the Gulf of Maine with National Audubon, in the salt marshes around Long Island Sound with UConn, and in the beech-maple-birch forests of the Adirondack Mountains.

"Beautiful, insightful, and written for the ages, *Slow Wood* asks us to stop seeing the woods as a warehouse for future two by fours or a living painting. Instead, Brian Donahue asks us to use trees as the best way to know them, appreciate them, and conserve them."

—Steven Stoll, author of *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*

"Brian Donahue makes a passionate and innovative case for the responsible use of forests as a place to ground a sustainable future."

—Nancy Langston, author of *Climate Ghosts* and *Sustaining Lake Superior*



Photo by William Hereford



Photo by Katrin Bjork

What Is a Cookbook Anyway?

Kevin West, author of *The Cook's Garden: A Guide to Selecting, Growing, and Savoring the Tastiest Vegetables of Each Season*, and Sara B. Franklin, author of *The Editor: How Publishing Legend Judith Jones Shaped Culture in America*, talk about our relationship with food and the masters who put it on our tables.

From the time of Judith Jones's first success with Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, the very idea of a cookbook has evolved remarkably, and cookbooks remain a cornerstone of the home. Franklin and West will roam through the history of cookbooks to ask: why do we love them so? What does a cookbook provide other than recipes? What is their role in the world of infinite online recipes? Why, for all their enduring popularity, are cookbooks considered less prestigious than "real writing"?

The intersection of memoir and cookbook represents a rich narrative form that blends story telling with culinary instruction, creating a unique space for authors to share their experiences alongside cherished recipes. Traditionally focused on merely providing instructions, cookbooks have evolved to incorporate anecdotes, cultural reflections, and explorations

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of family history, enriching the reader's connection to food. In the digital age, while the internet offers vast resources and instant access to countless recipes, the role of the cookbook has shifted towards fostering community and preserving individual narratives. Home cooks now seek not only how-to guides, but stories that resonate with their own experiences, making the memoir-cookbook hybrid a compelling avenue for sharing culinary heritage and fostering connections in a fast-paced world.

Kevin West comes from country people with generations of commitment to growing delicious food. He is the author of *Saving the Season: A Cook's Guide to Home Canning, Pickling, and Preserving* and also coauthored *The Grand Central Market Cookbook* and contributed to *Edna Lewis: At the Table with an American Original*.

Sara B. Franklin is a writer, teacher, and oral historian. She received a 2020–2021 National Endowment for the Humanities Public Scholars grant for her research on Judith Jones, and teaches courses on food, writing, embodied culture, and oral history at NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. She is also the editor of *Edna Lewis* and coauthor of *The Phoenicia Diner Cookbook*.

"*The Cook's Garden* is an inspirational self portrait of a passionate cook and his garden plot. In a voice that is at once wise and personal, Kevin West shares his considerable gardening and cooking experience and the symbiotic seasonal joys to be had in both. Packed with welcome and useful information, simultaneously scholarly and down home, this book is an indispensable guide for gardeners and cooks alike."

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