

CIVITELLA  
RANIERI









*“Every once in a while, if you are lucky, you get to experience a place so beautiful that you get an overwhelming sense that the creativity of the universe, of nature, is more splendid than anything anyone could have imagined. This is home. A place in time, remembered with those with whom you shared it. Such is, and will be, Civitella, my Civitella.”*

KEN UENO, CRF 2013

## INTRODUCTION

Located in a 15th-century castle in the Umbrian region of Italy, Civitella is a residency program for international writers, composers, and visual artists. Since 1995, Civitella has hosted more than 800 Fellows and Director’s Guests. In keeping with the spirit of its founder, Ursula Corning, and the tradition of hospitality and support for the arts that she established at the castle, the Center enables its Fellows to pursue their work and to exchange ideas in a unique and inspiring setting.



## MISSION

Artists require unfettered time and space to engage in their work and the world. Building on the legacy of our founder, Civitella Ranieri Foundation opens the doors of its 15th century castle in rural Umbria annually for four six-week residency sessions of self-directed studio and work time.

Each residency community of 12-15 brings together accomplished international artists, writers, and composers at emerging and established moments in their careers. They are joined by a limited number of invited Director's Guests to foster a robust contemporary dialogue that transcends disciplines and geography. A Civitella Fellowship changes lives, develops permanent connections, and refreshes the work at hand.

*"There is no place that takes such good care of its Guests and Fellows as Civitella Ranieri does; no place that offers so much and demands so little in return. There is no place that I know of where such a profound relief from the cares and distractions of daily life are possible and where work, even one's best work, can be done, with pleasure and without interruption."*

MARK STRAND, DIRECTOR'S GUEST 2008 & 2010





## SELECTION PROCESS

Civitella Ranieri Fellowships are awarded through a careful nomination and jury process by a rotating group of distinguished artists, academics, and critics that ensures access to a highly diverse group of emerging and accomplished candidates from around the world.

Only nominated candidates may apply and a review jury makes selections.

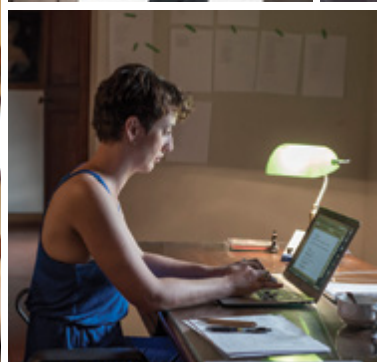
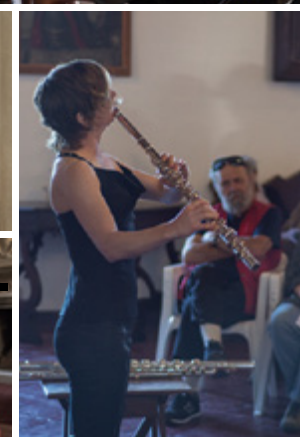
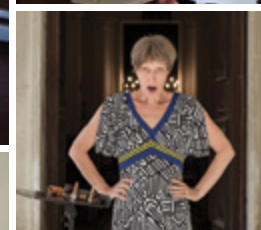
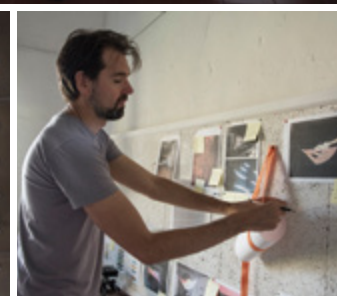
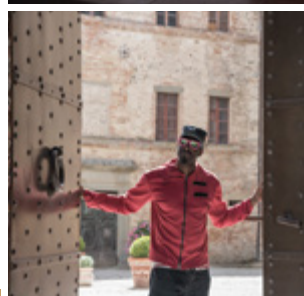
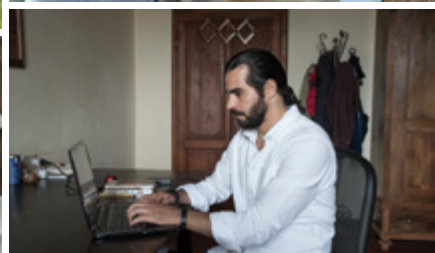
The Fellowships include round-trip travel, room, board, and studio or work space.

## OUR FELLOWS

Emerging talent, mid-career Fellows, and senior, established professionals are all sought to round out the community of any given group. English is the common language.









## STUDIES & STUDIOS

Each Fellow receives a private room and bathroom and has access to a study or studio twenty-four hours a day. Studies are often connected to the sleeping quarters. Because most of the studios are housed within the castle, the typical ‘white box’ studio space does not exist, but is rather replaced with wonderfully odd and peculiar spaces based on the medieval structure of the castle itself.

*“At Civitella I worked hard, laughed hard, and was consistently amazed—by the beauty of the landscape in which we lived, the food we ate, and the art we visited, by the talent and intelligence of my fellow residents, and the effort and care that Civitella staff exerted to feed me, teach me, and think of everything I might need so I could think only of my work.”*

SARA NOVIĆ, CRF 2016





## DAILY LIFE

Fellows choose from four six-week sessions offered annually beginning in May and ending in early November. Most Fellows are housed in the castle, but several outer buildings are also well-loved studios and apartments. Blessed by constant breezes at its hilltop location, Civitella provides immediate access to wooded pathways for walks and reflection. There are gardens of indigenous plants and flowering bulbs, wild roses, and lavender. Tables and chairs are set in a variety of locations, all with Wi-Fi access. Everything is orchestrated to provide Fellows with a maximum amount of privacy and uninterrupted time for working, talking, wandering, and reading.

Lunch may be taken to your studio or apartment, or shared with a group that might gather on the ‘Russian Terrace’ or under the gazebo. Everyone comes together to eat the evening meal at 7:30. Late evenings often involve movies, ping pong, bocce, gelato excursions, or more studio time.

Weekly excursions are vital to our time together. Fellows and staff propose destinations, and groups are accompanied by the Director, the Program Coordinator, or visiting scholars who come as Director’s Guests. Frequent destinations include Arezzo, Sansepolcro, Monterchi, Urbino, Perugia, Assisi, Rome, or Florence. Piero della Francesca’s work is often the focus of our explorations. We have organized excursions to the opera, contemporary music festivals, special exhibitions, literary events, and traditional local festivals, such as ‘Ceri’ in Gubbio. Two cars are also available to Fellows for personal use and small group excursions.

In addition to a fleet of bikes, Fellows have twenty-four-hour access to a well-equipped gym in the castle. Several nearby agriturismo offer pool usage for a daily spa fee, and the local area abounds with recreational facilities, from gyms to tennis courts.



*“Civitella is the kind of place I dreamed of as a child: an ancient and battle-scarred fortress in an impossibly glorious landscape, seething with birdsong and history. I saw right away, when we arrived, that the boy in me had found a paradise. But it’s also the kind of place I dreamed of as a young man, as a writer just beginning his career: an assembly of unique and strange and brilliant minds, at a remove from the distractions and stressors of their lives in the world, for no other reason than to work and reflect and be delighted and astonished by each other. If anyone had told me, while I was writing my first book, that I’d be given the opportunity to spend six weeks in such a place, I’d have fallen out of my chair.*

*Both the writer and the child in me are deeply grateful.”*

JOHN WRAY, CRF 2012



## FOOD

At Civitella, we are dedicated to the pleasures of well-prepared, and well-presented food. Our food program is central to our Foundation's identity, and to the health and well-being of our Fellows and guests.

We take seriously the responsibility of protecting our local identity of Umbrian and Tuscan food traditions while exploring international trends and influences. Whenever possible, we travel no more than 50 kilometers to secure the best and healthiest products available, and source much of our produce from a biologically sound on-site garden.

Our head chef, Romana Ciubini, has worked with Civitella since 1996 and has studied at and visited food programs and conferences internationally, including Blue Hill restaurant in New York, the Cordon Bleu, and the American Academy in Rome. She has taken numerous special courses in pastry making and food preparation.

Romana is assisted in her vision by Patrizia Caini and Patrizia Corsici in the kitchen and by Maurizio Bastianoni and Ennio Santini in the garden.



*"Civitella is geographically rich, and this asset cannot be overemphasized. The regular forays into the Renaissance landscape are stimulating, of course, but also soothing. They transfer easily from the 'recreation' category to the 'important for my work' column; this is only partly true, of course, but also a comforting illusion, to seamlessly blend work and play."*

WARD SHELLEY, CRF 2010







## THE LIBRARY

The Civitella library is housed both on the attic floor of the castle, the 'Library Annex', and in the castle's 'Armory' on the piano nobile. The collection comprises over 10,000 volumes, including the work of current and former Fellows and Director's Guests in the areas of literature, visual arts, and music, CDs and scores, reference materials for current Fellow and Guest projects, books on Italian art and culture, background information for field trips, and recreational reading, listening, and viewing materials. We were the recipients of a major bequest from the late US poet laureate Mark Strand's personal library, which has significantly strengthened our collection in the fields of poetry, literature, and criticism. The library also features a growing Italian film collection, with more than 500 films available to our Fellows and Guests for viewing.

*"Civitella Ranieri—if its name were to appear in a dictionary written by those who have been there, the first definition would have to be: 'Civitella Ranieri, n: a castle raising in all who enter the capacity for new creation.' But, as with any definition, there are also a multitude of auxiliary associations—the community of extraordinary artists so carefully gathered together each residency; the day trips to see the racing wooden saints of Gubbio or the Piero della Francesca Madonna in Monterchi, the Renaissance Palace of Urbino or the cell of Saint Francis in Assisi. There is the generosity of the dinner table, amazing in both its meals and its conversation. In truth, I think Civitella Ranieri must be one of Calvino's imagined invisible cities, infinite in possibility. And yet, the luckiest of artists, writers, and composers can visit, it is visible and can be lived in, and the harvest of that experience goes with us, altering and augmenting the rest of our lives."*

JANE HIRSHFIELD, DIRECTOR'S GUEST 2013





## THE GALLERY

The gallery is a shared communal space for lectures, small concerts, presentations, and exhibitions. Opened in 2008 and equipped with Wi-Fi and a surround sound speaker system, the gallery is available for Fellows' use. Its doors open onto the loggia, restored in 2012, and to the adjacent Secret Garden.

## DIRECTOR'S GUESTS

Director's Guests come to Civitella on a space-available basis for three-week stays. Outstanding professionals, Guests represent many fields and participate in daily life at the Castle, giving readings and conducting field trips or studio visits. Though often nominated by our Fellows, Guests may also send letters of inquiry to [info@civitella.org](mailto:info@civitella.org).

*"Civitella Ranieri is an exquisite place to work. There is a grand feeling here of care-taking that is rare and stupendous and lucky. As if the goal of the staff, and the deeper spirit and mission of the place, is really and truly about the commitment to an environment that nurtures creation. My five weeks were some of the most productive of my life. And also, some of the most pleasurable, because of the warmth of the staff, the beauty of the countryside, and finally, the castle library, which offered chance encounters with books that shaped what I was doing in most helpful, and unforeseen ways."*

RACHEL KUSHNER, CRF 2016





## AFFILIATED FELLOWSHIPS

Civitella has a longstanding tradition of Affiliated Fellowships. For many years, we collaborated with the UNESCO-Aschberg Bursaries for Artists Programme. More recently, we have partnered with the PEN America Center to reach writers from underrepresented US populations; the Academy of American Poets, which sponsors an annual Fellowship for an emerging poet as part of its Walt Whitman Prize; Composers Now, which brings one distinguished composer to the castle every year; the Center for Italian Modern Art, which awards a Fellowship to an art historian; the Lexi Rudnitsky First Book Prize in Poetry; and the Kirby-Mewshaw Affiliated Fellowship. Fellowships are often funded in part by the sponsoring agency and in other cases, travel expenses alone are covered by the Affiliate. Collaboration with outside agencies enriches the program, the pool of Fellows, and the profile of the Civitella community. If you or your organization is interested in participating in an affiliation please e-mail [info@civitella.org](mailto:info@civitella.org) to explore possibilities.

## INTERNSHIPS

Interns are a treasured and integral part of our community and daily life. They provide assistance with library functions, the meal program, excursions, presentations, and exhibitions. Our interns work with both the Executive Director and the Program Coordinator on a variety of special projects built around individual interests, experience, goals, and skills. The Civitella internship is a true formative experience stressing public speaking, teamwork, problem solving, and program planning.

Our annual competition for interns begins with a fall announcement in the News section of our website. The deadline for applications is December 31st each year.

Please visit the internships page on our website for more details.





## LIFE AFTER CIVITELLA

Reentry to one's real life can be challenging after six weeks at Civitella. Fellows, Director's Guests, and Friends of Civitella have found an ongoing sense of community through special events, friendships, professional exchanges, our website, blog, and news listings. Alumni activities are focused in New York where our numbers are greatest, but Civitellians have gathered, visited, worked together, and reminisced all over the world. Upcoming events are regularly posted on our website and social media channels.

Fellows' ties to Civitella are further reinforced through their nominations for future candidates and through giving to the Fellows' Fund. The Fellows' Fund was established in 2013 to better support the travel and work of Fellows demonstrating need.

*"Civitella was magical: beautiful, tranquil, a place unlike any other. It was one of those rarest of opportunities to turn inward, to be in an undisturbed state in which the intellect and imagination are unfettered. And when that freedom (it is the case that freedom can overwhelm) threatened to send me hurtling off into the furthest reaches of myself—from which it can be difficult to return—there was dinner every night. A time in which to come back to earth, so to speak, and commune with others who are on similar journeys. All in all, an incredible experience."*

AYANA MATHIS, CRF 2017





## SUPPORTING CIVITELLA

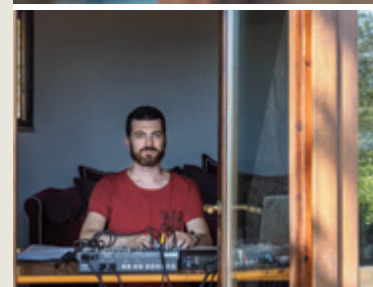
Contributions are a lifeline, allowing us to expand our program and make vital capital improvements so we can better serve the artists, writers, and composers we host from around the globe. In recent years, your donations have enabled us to renovate the old wine-making wing of the castle, and add three new apartment-work spaces, to procure and refurbish a much-needed grand piano, and to make our facilities more accessible to the disabled. Every gift, regardless of size, is a direct investment in the lives of working artists and the cultural vibrancy of the world. Please join the many Fellows, Director's Guests, and Friends who give annually to support Civitella's mission. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by US law.

If you would like to make a donation, please log on to our website's Support Us page. Alternately, checks may be sent to our administrative office in New York at the address below:

Civitella Ranieri Foundation  
28 Hubert Street  
New York, NY 10013

*"Civitella is a space where the best parts of humanity are given a chance to flourish. There should be a program where world politicians and leaders can go and live there and be with us, and see how much can change for the better, in heart and mind, when a meal is shared and lives are opened in words, in shoulders rubbing against one another, nourishing and being nourished in turn. Grazie."*

OCEAN VOUNG, CRF 2016





## AFTERWORD

Within these castle walls, here in the dark green heart of Umbria, the lives of international writers, visual artists, and musical composers are transformed by time together. Informal conversations change the course of our work, visits to local sites make us ponder the world differently, and distinct new possibilities emerge that had been invisible before.

Here at Civitella, where worldwide cultures collide, and where our backdrop is a 15th century castle and Nature herself, we find an unforgettable ongoing dialogue between the physical and the intellectual, between the heart, the hand, and the mind, and between culture, history, and time.

It has been my special pleasure to witness the many collaborations and marvelous energies of our Fellows each year. As enthusiastic over a plate of pasta as they are about Piero della Francesca, they are at the core of what we are all about. The buildings are amazing, the landscape is breathtaking, and the food divine, but what really makes us thrive is the remarkable fabric woven by the Fellows themselves. For some, the greatest value of their stay at Civitella has been the freedom to dive unfettered into work, for others it has been the friendships and global understandings they found with peers from around the world; and for others yet, it would be the chance to partake of this particularly magical corner of Italian landscape and culture.

Civitella is committed to continuing to bring together international participants to experience this very special place. We welcome your interest and support of our global exploration.

Dana Prescott, Executive Director



*“Peace and fresh air and freedom to work, to write, to read, to create,  
to walk in the beautiful Umbrian hills, to sing and share stories and laughter  
and wine and good food and discover new friends for a lifetime.”*

JOAN LABARBARA, CRF 2013



## OUR FOUNDER

Ursula Corning, founder of Civitella, was born in Switzerland in 1903, studied in England, and spent most of her life in New York City. A gifted linguist whose extended family lived in four countries, she crossed borders with ease. Yet, if there is such a place as one's true home, for Ursula, it surely was Civitella.

Ursula began visiting Civitella castle as a young girl but it wasn't until 1968 that she made the momentous decision to rent the castle indefinitely. Thus began the fabled Civitellian summers enjoyed for the next 35 years by Ursula's wide and varied, always stimulating, always provocative circle of international friends. The atmosphere of the ancient castle and the quiet beauty of the countryside inspired her guests to express themselves through poetry, music, and the visual arts.

Generations of regular guests, whom Ursula called "the Civitellians," their friends, and the occasional strangers Ursula spontaneously invited, had the good fortune to enjoy her unparalleled hospitality. Ursula took great pleasure in breaking down social barriers at the dinner table, seating backpackers next to bankers, the old next to the young, and always separating couples. Ursula, who preferred others take center stage, would sit back and listen to the conversations, carried on in as many as five different languages, and watch friendships blossom between people whose paths were unlikely to have crossed otherwise.

In the last decade of her life, Ursula often wondered, "What will become of my dear Civitella after I die? Will it be turned into a dusty museum?" Those who knew her well say that, were she to return today, she would be thrilled to see the castle abuzz with activity generated by the new Civitellians, the international Fellows now in residence.

—Excerpted from 'Ursula Corning and Civitella Ranieri' by Deanne Stone, 2008





## FOUNDER

Ursula Corning, 1903 - 2002

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with administrative offices in New York City.

We welcome your interest and contributions to the Foundation.  
Please visit our website, [civitella.org](http://civitella.org), for more information.





