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After fire, paintings return to Yaddo

By ANDREW J. BERNSTEIN
The Saratogian

SARATOGA SPRINGS — More than a year after fire damaged an administrative building at Yaddo, 65 works of art damaged by soot in the fire have been returned to the artists' retreat.

On Tuesday, workers from Oliver Brothers, a Boston-based firm specializing in restoring damaged artwork, delivered a truckload of art, including paintings, drawings, lithographs and sculptures.

The fire broke out in Yaddo's "garage" May 10, 2008. The

building houses administrative offices as well as the maintenance and grounds crews. The fire started in a riding mower at night, when the building was unoccupied.

No one was injured in the fire, but Yaddo Public Affairs Coordinator Leslie Leduke said the Saratoga Springs Fire Department rescued a cat that lived in the building.

The fire destroyed the building's electrical, telephone and heating systems, but did not cause significant damage to the

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Yaddo maintenance supervisor Don Farmer unloads artwork Tuesday afternoon. The works were restored after a May 2008 fire.

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structure. Restoration work on the building is still ongoing, and Yaddo Vice President Patricia Supp said work on the building would be complete in late September. Until the building is completed, the art will be stored on Yaddo's property.

Leduke said that most of the damaged art was from the collection of Yaddo founders Spencer and Katrina Trask. Some of the works were by Yaddo residents, although most of the foundation's most valuable works are housed in the mansion, where artists-in-residence are housed during stays at Yaddo.

Oliver Brothers restoration workers Greg Bishop and Peter

Tysver, who delivered the art, said most of the restoration work focused on removing soot, although some of the pieces had "pre-existing conditions," such as peeling paint, which required workers to stabilize the works to ensure they would not be damaged as they were cleaned.

Leduke said Yaddo expects to claim about \$2 million in damages due to the fire, including restoring the artwork. The organization will pay an additional \$600,000 to update some building systems.

Yaddo will hold its annual benefit Friday, June 19, and will feature former Yaddo resident and author Matt Witten.

For more information, go to www.yaddo.org.



The office complex at Yaddo is still undergoing restoration work, but once complete, the building will again house artwork.

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