

Featured Fellow: Charles Oberndorf
Literary
Fiction



2010 - Cleveland

Why have you chosen Cuyahoga County as a place to live and work?

- 1) I grew up here, and the woman I fell in love with couldn't move away. My initial plan had been to live in or near some East Coast City that I loved.
- 2) I like living here. It's inexpensive, my parents live here, my friends and colleagues are here, and most of the things I like to do I can do in Cleveland.

What is your favorite place, event, or "hidden gem" in Cuyahoga County?

The Cleveland Cinematheque, which is committed to showing great film of all types, and is perhaps one offers some of the greatest film programming anywhere in the country.

Who or what has influenced you locally and elsewhere?

In terms of my writing, it has been important to be

a member of three different writing groups. The Cajun Sushi Hamsters, probably one of the most important communities of science fiction and fantasy writers in the country, played a key role in helping me write my first two novels. The East Side Writers, started by CPAC Fellow Sarah Willis, features some of Cleveland's finest prose writers. An unnamed group started by Susan and Mary Grimm is unique because it includes both poets and fiction writers, including CPAC Fellow Krisin Ohlson. This latter group employs uses a discussion technique rather than the standard round robin for talking about a piece of writing. The discussion technique works best for rough drafts, and it was this group that helped me finish a difficult novel and encouraged me through various writing experiments.

As a person, I grew up the most due to four influences. My time as a counselor at Falcon Camp in Carrollton, Ohio. My time in living in Spain, mentored by Tony Geist, who has been like my older brother during key moments in my life, and Paul Hecht, who lived a life guided by art and love rather than a desire for accomplishment and success. Abe Osheroff, who is the subject of my biographical novel, taught me a lot about trying to match ideals to action. April, my wife, and my son, Andrew, have taught me a lot, sometimes inadvertently. Falling in love with April and those first years raising our son contain some of the most formative moments of my life.

How do you generate new ideas?

New ideas come from collisions of random ideas that start to feel like stories. I worry less about ideas for stories than generating ideas so the story feels like a story and not a list of incidents. More

featured fellows

than ever before, I spend time thinking about how to provide surprises for the reader, how to make a story move along, all while providing a story that feel true to the way people feel, think, and react to circumstances.

What is the hardest part about creating?

Sitting still and putting words on page. The older I get, the harder it is. The internet doesn't help much.

What is the best moment you have had creating or presenting your work?

Every now and then a story seems to come together and write itself (that doesn't mean I don't spend hours thinking about how I'll write the next scene). This has happened twice in my professional life, a novella called *Testing* which grew out of everything I thought about teaching and learning morality, and in a novelette called "Another Life," which, I guess, grows out of the contrast beyond fresh love and long-lasting love.

How has the Creative Workforce Fellowship affected your career as an artist or your art work?

- 1) I get a lot of nice compliments for winning the Fellowship.
- 2) After a long writing drought, the Fellowship has been like the spring rain, encouraging the growth of flowers I've been planting over the past few years.
- 3) It gives me the opportunity to do the research I only dreamed of doing for the biographical novel I am currently writing.

For more information about the Creative Workforce Fellowship or the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, please visit www.cpacbiz.org or contact (216) 575-0331 or info@cpacbiz.org.

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