

*Wormfarm Institute and Sarah E. White present*



WORMFARM INSTITUTE

## *Responding to Experience: Writing the Personal Essay*

*A small-group generative writing retreat  
immersed in the Farm/Art DTour, October 10-13, 2024*

### Overview

Explore your personal response to the artworks that dot Wormfarm Institute's Farm/Art DTour through immersion in an event celebrating the Sauk County cultureshed. It only happens every other year—don't miss this! Plunge into a rural experience, soak in the many sensory experiences the DTour has to offer, and write!

### What is the Farm/Art DTour?

A fifty-mile, self-guided driving route laid out every other October that draws thousands of visitors to the eastern edge of Wisconsin's Driftless Region. The tour meanders through rolling farmland and includes site-responsive sculpture installations, pasture performances, and roadside poetry.

"The tour always feels very cinematic to me," said artist Sara Daleiden. "...the autumn landscape, the rolling hills, the moving car—it's more than the actual stops. It's the restaurants and shops on the main streets of the towns, the weather, the landowners and the art installations, the roadside culture stands. They're all celebrating the creative and cultural economy."

### About the retreat

Participants will be gently guided by writing instructor Sarah White, holding space for your reflection on the DTour experience as you draft a personal essay you could develop for publication or personal growth. We'll make literary art from our connections, reactions, and recollections, stimulated by Sauk County's most remarkable interdisciplinary cultural event. We'll write, rest, play, and eat together or enjoy solo time in a spectacular setting. This small-group retreat is limited to five participants.



PHOTOS BY SARAH WHITE EXCEPT WHERE CREDITED.



Spend three nights in tranquil accommodations at the eastern edge of Sauk County's magical Driftless area. The Abbey's location along the Farm/Art DTour 2024 route gives us immediate access to all that the event celebrates.

### Thursday Oct. 10

- *Welcome dinner, meet your hosts*
- *Evening discussion, orientation to the Farm/Art DTour*

### Friday Oct. 11

- *Breakfast*
- *9:30 Writing workshop exploring the Personal Essay. We'll develop shared prompts for the day and awaken our senses*
- *11:00 Prepare sack lunch, drive Loop 1 together; Stop for lunch and meet a farm host as part of your DTour experience*
- *6:00 Enjoy a Wisconsin Supper Club fish fry or make your own dinner plans*

### Saturday Oct. 12

- *Breakfast*
- *9:30 solo writing time or optional small group discussion*
- *11:00 Prepare sack lunch, drive Loop 2 together, stop for lunch at the Witwen Food Chain. Meet the Wormfarm staff and visiting artists, enjoy performances.*
- *6:00 Evening meal together*
- *7:00 Evening discussion of the day's experience or solo writing time*

### Sunday Oct 13

- *Breakfast*
- *9:00 meet to share our writing, reflect on the experience*
- *12:00 Prepare sack lunch for your drive home*

### Optional add-ons

We invite you to extend your retreat experience by arriving earlier or staying later at the Abbey at Otter Creek. Sauk County has so much to offer!

Email Sarah at [sarah.white@firstpersonprod.com](mailto:sarah.white@firstpersonprod.com) for more info.

*Your creative spirit  
is calling. Will you  
answer?*

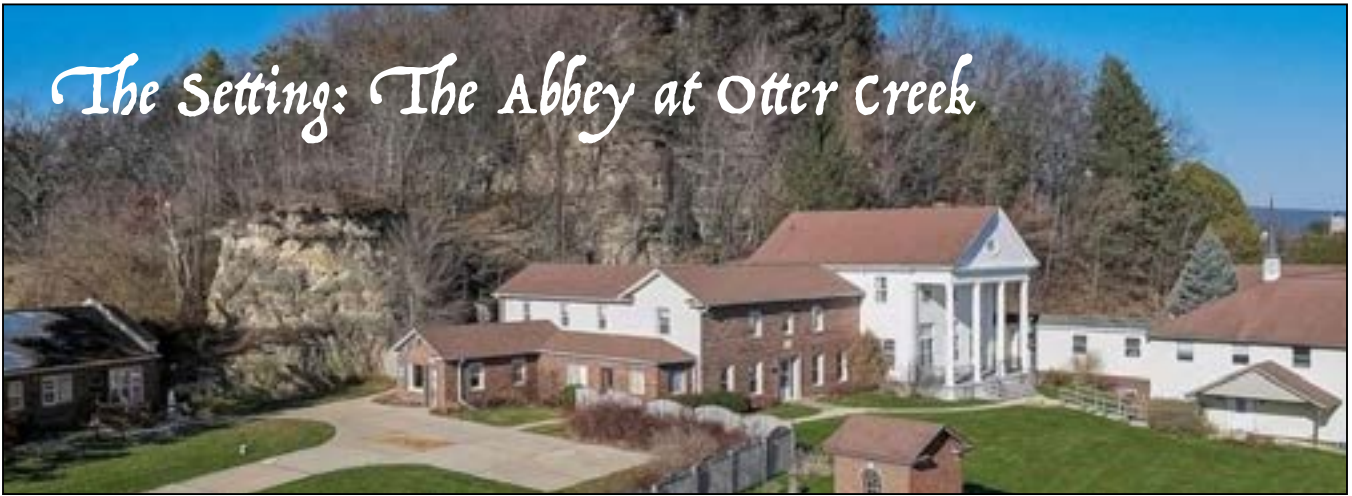
### Your hosts:

The event is cosponsored by **Sarah White, First Person Productions,** and **Wormfarm Institute.**

Sarah E. White is a freelance writer and personal historian who helps people write about their lives and work from her home base in Madison. She teaches reminiscence writing, creative nonfiction, and writing craft in the continuing education program of Madison College, as well as through area libraries and senior centers. Sarah holds a Journalism degree from Indiana University, an MFA-Creative Nonfiction from the University of King's College, and a certificate in Reminiscence and Life Story Work from the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

Wormfarm Institute is a national leader in rural creative placemaking. Wormfarm explores the links between urban and rural communities within and beyond the food chain, creating opportunities for cross-sector collaboration that brings together farming, conservation, and the arts.

# The Setting: The Abbey at Otter Creek



Marx Family

## Where we'll stay

Our lodging will be as memorable as the Farm/Art DTour. Your spacious private room on the second floor includes a queen bed and comfortable furnishings. Some rooms have en-suite bathrooms.

We have the use of the farmhouse including dining room, porch, and kitchen, as well as the elegant Governor's Mansion addition, which features a great room with fireplace and a library perfect for reading or writing. Outdoors, the patios, gardens, and walking trails await us.



## History

The glaciers came to the doorstep of the Abbey three times but never rolled over it. Meltwater formed the landscape of rolling hills and rugged bluffs that rise majestically from the lush valleys. Once home to the Ho-Chunk people, their rich traditions and deep connection to the land still resonate.

This property became a family farm in the 1820s. It was purchased a century later by Emmanuel Philipp, Governor of Wisconsin from 1914 until 1921, for his summer home. He commissioned the stately Governor's Mansion wing adjoining the farmhouse. Subsequent generations of owners operated a tea room in the glorious home.

In the 1950s, the property became home to Cistercian nuns who lived in prayer, work, and contemplation. Over time, their community grew, and a 22-room dormitory and chapel were added. The sisters moved to a new monastery in January 2024.



## Today

The Marx family purchased the 25 acre property and began preparing the historic estate for its next chapter. They are transforming it into a retreat center along Otter Creek framed by picturesque rock bluffs, an enchanting pond, and perennial gardens. The entire house has been recently renovated, and we will be among the first guests.



## Price



WISCONSIN INSTITUTE

\$1200 includes your lodging for three nights, eight meals plus snacks, transportation on the D-Tour routes, and the writing workshop. .

Thanks to generous supporters, a few scholarships are available. If requesting a scholarship, note your interest and reasons on your application.

## To Enroll

Complete the registration form that follows and submit via email to Sarah White at [sarah.white@firstpersonprod.com](mailto:sarah.white@firstpersonprod.com).

Application must be received by July 15. Places will be reserved on first-come, first-served basis. You will be notified of your acceptance by August 1st.

Deposit \$600 due upon acceptance. Balance of \$600 due September 7.

Payment can be made via Venmo to @Sarah-White-872 or by mailing a check made out to Sarah White to:

- Sarah White  
50 S. Fair Oaks Avenue  
Madison, WI 53714

## Important

The price does not include optional activities or independent travel during the retreat. Deposits are non-refundable. The last date for cancellation is September 7. If a medical or family emergency arises after that date, it is up to the sponsors' discretion to determine if a refund will be issued. No smoking, please, in the lodgings, venues, or vehicles during the tour. Any behavior incompatible with the safety, comfort, or convenience of other retreat participants will result in being asked to leave.

After acceptance you will receive a list of suggestions about what to bring and what to expect. We are planning a low-waste, environmentally friendly retreat and appreciate your help. Chef-designed meals will be prepared on-site for you; dietary preferences and needs will be accommodated. Wine/beer/spirits are welcome but not included in the fee: BYOB.



SARAH FITZSIMMONS



Complete this form and email to sarah.white@firstpersonprod.com by July 15, 2024.

Name: First    Last    Pronouns

Address    City    State    Zip

Phone    Email

COVID Vaccine Status      Yes, current      No

All bedrooms are on the second floor; as a historic property, the house is not ADA-compliant.

Are you able to climb stairs?      Yes      No

Are you physically able to walk on uneven terrain for short distances (up to ½ mile)? The art installations and performances take place in farmer’s fields, along narrow country roads.

Are you comfortable on your feet?      Yes      No

### Interests and experience

Feel free to write more than this form allows; simply include with your email. There are no “wrong answers” to the application questions – they are designed to help us tailor the workshop to your interests.

What about the rural experience intrigues you?

What about the idea of site-specific art intrigues you?

What is your experience as a writer?

What is your experience as an artist? For example, do you make any arts or crafts?

What would you like to have accomplished by the time the workshop concludes?

## *Links of Interest*

### About the sponsors

[Sarah White, First Person Productions](http://www.firstpersonprod.com): [www.firstpersonprod.com](http://www.firstpersonprod.com)

[Wormfarm Institute](https://www.wormfarminstitute.org): <https://www.wormfarminstitute.org>

### About the Farm/Art DTour

[About the Farm/Art DTour](https://www.wormfarminstitute.org/programs/farm-art-dtour): <https://www.wormfarminstitute.org/programs/farm-art-dtour>

[Short film clips from 2022 Farm/Art DTour](https://tinyurl.com/3a65asxs): <https://tinyurl.com/3a65asxs>

[Article in Wisconsin Academy's People & Ideas Sarah wrote about the Farm/Art DTour](https://tinyurl.com/fnyvez4d)

<https://tinyurl.com/fnyvez4d>

### About Sauk County

[Explore Sauk County!](https://exploresaukcounty.com/) <https://exploresaukcounty.com/>