Dear School of the Arts Alumni:

We hope you’re all holding up in this very difficult time, but at times like these we realize the importance of our family, friends, and community. The situation on campus has been somewhat surreal. It's empty, like so many other places, while the libraries and many facilities are closed and classes are held via Zoom for the remainder of the semester. Additionally, all public programs, performances, and exhibitions have been either cancelled or postponed until further notice. While these were very difficult decisions, they were made by the university with the health and well-being of our community being our top priority. You can be proud of your alma mater for leading New York City and the country with its quick response.

School of the Arts Alumni have been invited to participate in a Virtual Networking Hour, hosted by Columbia Alumni Association Arts Access, Tuesday on April 21 from 6:30 - 7:30 PM. In addition, all School of the Arts students and alumni are encouraged to join the Artists’ Resource Center Facebook and LinkedIn groups. On Facebook you will find interesting craft talks and lectures. You can find job and professional development opportunities, including fellowships and grants, in our LinkedIn group. The Artists’ Resource Center has also compiled a list of grants, including some emergency grants, that you can find on the School of the Arts website.

The SOA Alumni Facebook Group will be encouraging you all to share your work with your fellow alums next week. The schedule is #VisualSoundTuesday, #WritingWednesday, #TheatreThursday, and #FilmFriday.

For those interested in volunteering their time and expertise, Columbia University Professors Shamus Khan and Jennifer Lena have started Youth Remote Learning, a platform for free online classes for youth.

Lastly, here are some updates from your fellow alums. While some of the below performances and exhibitions have been postponed or cancelled, we still wanted to acknowledge the work that went into creating them.

We are also happy to share with you this month’s Alumni Spotlight of Writing alumni Ashley Nelson Levy ‘12 and Adam Z. Levy ‘12.
Film

*Suk Suk*, written and directed by Ray Yeung ’13, won Best Film and Best Actor awards at the Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards. *The Restoration*, written and directed by Alonso Llosa ’16, produced by Gustavo Rosa ’16, co-produced by Mauro Mueller ’13 and David Figueroa ’13, executive produced by Olga Goister ’15, associate produced by faculty member Julia Solomonoff, and photographed by Sean Webley ’16, was acquired by Shoreline Entertainment for worldwide distribution. *Crystal Swan*, co-written and directed by Darya Zhuk ’15, won the Jury Prize at the Festival Univerciné Russe in France earlier this month. *Boys Don’t Cry*, co-written and directed by Kimberly Pearce ’96 and co-written by faculty member Andy Bienen ’96, was added to the National Film Registry. Rakesh Baruah ’16 published “Virtual Reality with VTK4: Create Immersive VR Experiences Leveraging Unity3D and Virtual Reality Toolkit”, which is available on Amazon. Last Fast Ride: The Life Love, and Death of a Punk Goddess, a documentary written and directed by Lily Ayers ’04, screened at UCLA and has been inducted into their library’s Distinctive Collections Punk Archives. The following alumnae screened their films at the Athena Film Festival at Barnard University: Valerie Lee Schenkman ’18, Samantha Buck ’16, Marie Schlingmann ’16, and Jennifer Lee ’05.

Theatre


Visual Arts

Uri Aran ’07 has an ongoing exhibition, titled House, until April 5 at Gavin Brown’s Enterprise. Decision Fatigue, a new exhibition by Ilana Harris-Babou ’16, runs through March 21
at Hesse Flatow, Go For Broke, an exhibition at Good Naked Gallery curated by Jaqueline Cedar ‘09, features work from both Grayson Cox ‘10 and Jared Thorne ‘10. David Brooks ‘09 showed his work at CINQUE MOSTRE 2020: Convergence organized by the American Academy in Rome, Italy.

Writing


Please continue to send your updates to artsalum@columbia.edu, and follow our alumni Facebook and LinkedIn pages, as well as the Artists’ Resource Center’s LinkedIn.

Best,
Laila Maher
Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs
This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features Writing alumni Ashley Nelson Levy ’12 and Adam Z. Levy ’12. If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our website, you can do so at this link.

Ashley Nelson Levy ’12’s debut novel, Immediate Family, is forthcoming from FSG (US) and Daunt Books (UK). Her work has been a Notable Mention in Best Nonrequired Reading and she’s the recipient of the Bambi Holmes Award for Emerging Writers. She received her MFA from Columbia University, where she was a Klein/Lemann Fellow. In 2015, she co-founded Transit Books, an independent publishing house with a focus on international literature.

Adam Z. Levy ’12 is the co-publisher of Transit Books, and the translator of The Book of Mordechai by Gábor Schein

Was there a specific faculty member or peer who especially inspired you while at the School of the Arts? If so, who and how?

Adam: I took a translation workshop with Susan Bernofsky, right around the time Columbia’s translation program began. I was always a big reader of translated literature and had tried out translating a few stories, but can’t say that I appreciated the way translation worked before Susan’s class. She changed the way I approached a text and the questions I’d ask myself at the level of the sentence or the word in order to re-effect what was happening in one language in another. The choices translators make are often overlooked or taken for granted or mercilessly picked apart, but I’m grateful to Susan for making the translator’s work visible and introducing me to its rigorous art.

Ashley: Studying with Ed Park really changed me as a reader, widening my understanding of what a book can be. I still talk wildly to anyone who will listen about most of the books on his syllabus—writers like Agota Kristof, Russell H. Greenan, Russell Hoban, B.S. Johnson, Rachel Ingalls. I could go on and on. It flipped a kind of switch that I feel now as an editor when I come across something special in a submission. And as a writer I think it encouraged me to be riskier, or at least not to shy away from that impulse.
How did attending the School of the Arts impact your work and career as an artist?

Adam: Ashley and I founded Transit Books in 2015 to publish exciting, boundary-pushing fiction and nonfiction from around the world. Our time at Columbia was formative for both of us. It’s where we met and where I also had the opportunity to study with the great Hungarian translator Ivan Sanders. We spent the years after working in publishing New York, teaching, writing, and translating. It’s all contributed to way we think about the press and about bridging the conversation between readers of domestic and international literature.

What advice would you give to recent graduates?

Ashley: I think I had the wrong ideas about achievement right after I left the program. I remember someone telling me that all the successful graduates had a book out within three years of graduating, and for a short and unhappy period I tried to hold myself to that standard. In time I somehow figured out how to let that arbitrary number go, I learned about the business of publishing, I held a full-time job, and I kept writing. My first book will be published next year, ten years after finishing my coursework. Which is to say: in the end I’m glad I took the time it required.

ABOUT TRANSIT

Transit Books is a nonprofit publisher of international and American literature, based in Oakland, California. Founded in 2015, Transit Books is committed to the discovery and promotion of enduring works that carry readers across borders and communities.

Transit Books publishes a carefully curated list (6-8 titles per year) of award-winning literary fiction, narrative nonfiction, essay, and prose that falls somewhere in between. Transit authors have received or been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Booker International Prize, the National Translation Award, the Windham-Campbell Prize, and more.

ALUMNI BENEFITS

+ Artists’ Resource Center (ARC)
+ Update Your Information
+ Email Forwarding & CU Address
+ Online Alumni Community
+ CAA Arts Access
+ Complete List of Benefits

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