

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

April 2020

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 VRTK4: 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 **Lilly 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

Jessi Cotter '16 is Assistant Stage Manager for the production *Dana H* at the [Vineyard Theatre](#). *The Karamazovs*, written and directed by **Anna Brenner** '11, is headed to the [New Ohio Theatre](#). **Saheem Ali** '07 directs [Shipwreck: A History Play About 2017](#) at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre. **Neil D'Astolfo** '13 appears in Season One of [High Fidelity](#) on Hulu. **Keith Pinault** '15 and **Andy Talen** '14 perform in **Celine Song** '14's play *Endlings* at [New York Theatre Workshop](#). **Hope Ward** '18 performs in and **Lou Moreno** '06 directs *Bundle of Sticks* at [INTAR Theatre](#). **Mei Ann Teo** '14 directs **Jillian Walker** '17's play *SKiNFoLK: An American Show* with [National Black Theatre](#). *SKiNFoLK* was named a *New York Times* Critics' Pick. **Kim Weild** '07 directs and **Rebecca Hirota** '09 performs in [Cry It Out!](#) at City Theatre Company. **JC Nwabueze** '19 performs in [Eclipsed](#) at The Milwaukee Rep. **Katherine Wilkinson** '19 associate directs [A Wonderful World](#) at Colony Theatre. **Alice Reagan** '04 directs *No Good Things Dwell in the Flesh* at [Yocum Institute](#). **Jeffrey Page** '19 directs *Bayano - My Odisea* with [National Black Theatre's](#) Institute of Action Arts. **Nora Sørena Casey** '18 and **Nana Dakin** '18 play *Sorry / Not Sorry* is receiving a reading at [The Bushwick Starr](#). **Jocelyn Bioh** '08's play *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* will be performing at [Berkeley Repertory 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

"I Can't Stop Watching Celebrity Cooking Videos," written by **Leah Bhabha** '18 was [published](#) in *Grub Street*. **Harrison Hill** '18 [reviewed](#) the new book *Red, White, and Royal Blue* for *The Los Angeles Review of Books*. "Berlin Wall: An Afterlife," written by **Etan Nechin** '19, was published in [The Brooklyn Rail](#). **Daniel Felsenthal** '15 [reviewed](#) SQURL's new record "Some Music for Robby Muller" for Pitchfork. Professor and alum **Timothy Donnelly** '98 was interviewed by Monica Fambrough for [The Poetry Society of America](#). *Home Remedies*, written by **Xuan Juliana Wang** '11, was nominated for the [PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize for Debut Short Story Collection](#). *A Prayer for Travelers*, written by **Ruchika Tomar** '12, was nominated for the [PEN/Hemingway Award for First Novel](#). **Hilary Leichter** '12 released her [debut novel](#), *Temporary*, with Coffee House Press/Emily Books. **Pamela McCorduck** '70 published her latest book, *This Could Be Important: My Life and Times with Artificial Intelligentsia*, with [Carnegie Mellon University's ETC Press](#). *St. Ivo*, written by **Joanna Hershon** '99, will debut in April, with [Farrar, Straus & Giroux](#).

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

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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 Clein/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](#)

Columbia University School of the Arts
artsalum@columbia.edu

Office of Alumni Affairs
Columbia University
School of the Arts
305 Dodge Hall, MC 1808
2960 Broadway
New York, NY, 10027
email: artsalum@columbia.edu