

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

February 2021

Dear School of the Arts Alumni:

I hope you are staying warm this winter wherever you are and that your year is off to great start. I remain hopeful for the year ahead, in no small part because I'm constantly awed by the amazing work you share with the world.

I want to share two upcoming events in which you may be interested. The first is an [alumni poetry reading](#) on February 10 with **Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge** '73 and **Campbell McGrath** '88 organized by the **Timothy Donnelly** '98, Writing. The [second is a conversation](#) on February 11 with Film faculty member **Ramin Bahrani** about his new film, *The White Tiger* — an adaptation of the Man Booker Prize-winning novel by **Aravind Adiga** — with **Hamid Dabashi**, Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature.

The University recently shared their first edition of [The Columbia University LGBTQ+ Guide: Resources to Foster an Affirming Community for LGBTQ+ Faculty, Students and Staff](#). In addition to resources, recommended reading, and downloadable Zoom backgrounds, the guide also includes sections on LGBTQ+ History at Columbia.

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](#) page.

With that I will leave you with this month's updates from your peers, as well as our Alumni Spotlight of Writing alum **Rodney Terich Leonard** '18.

Sincerely,

Laila Maher
Dean of Student and Alumni Affairs

Film

The following films showed at the [Sundance Film Festival](#): *Snowy*, a short documentary co-directed and photographed by **Alex Wolf Lewis** CC, '12; *Doublespeak*, a short film written and directed by **Hazel McKibbin** '21, produced by **Stephanie Fine** '21, and associate produced by **Meera Vaidya** '21; *Land*,

co-produced by *Joshua Cohen* '14; *These Days*, also co-executive produced by Cohen; *Luzzu*, a feature film produced by **Ramin Bahrani**. Two films screened at the [Slamdance Film Festival](#): *Comforter*, written and directed by **Cameron Bruce Nelson** '20 and produced by **Katya Skakun** '20; and *Me To Play*, a documentary feature produced and directed by **Jim Bernfield** '01 and shot by **Saro Varjabedian** '13.

The following projects and alumni have been nominated for an [Independent Spirit Award](#): *Dick Johnson is Dead*, co-produced by Associate Professor and Chair of the Creative Producing Concentration **Maureen A. Ryan** '92 and Adjunct Assistant Professor **Marilyn Ness** and including **Michael Toscano** '12, Assistant Director, **John Wakayama Carey** '14, Director of Photography, Adjunct Assistant Professor **Sarah Seulki Oh**, Production Manager, **Joshua Ryan Troxler** '18, Production Coordinator, **Mahak Jiwani** '18, Production Coordinator, **Kristy Richman** '19, Production Coordinator/Extras Casting, **Markus Kirschner** '09, Production, **Federica Gianni** '17, Media Manager, **Ewing Luo** '18, Production, **Frank Liu** '19, Production Assistant, student **Alex Yarber**, Production Assistant, **Jaclyn Noel** '19, Production Assistant, and **Christina Wood** '19, Production Assistant; *Time*, produced by former staff member **Lauren Domino**; *The White Tiger*, written, directed and produced by Associate Professor **Ramin Bahrani** CC '96 and associate produced by Adjunct Assistant Professor **Sean Haynes** '16 who also served as Title Designer; *The Assistant*, produced by Professor of Professional Practice **James Shamus**; *Unorthodox*, created and executive produced by **Anna Winger** CC '93; *Bull*, co-written by **Johnny McAllister** '05 and post supervised by Adjunct Assistant Professor **Sean Haynes** '16; *Lapsis*, line produced by **Alex Peace-Power** '17; *Immigration Nation*, executive produced by **Dan Cogan** '96, non-degree alumnus; *First Cow*, post supervised by Adjunct Assistant Professor **Sean Haynes** '16; and **Gerry Kim** '11 has been nominated for the Producers Award.

Ama Quo '18 was chosen to participate in [Disney's Creative Talent Development & Inclusion Writing Program](#). *Homeland Elegies*, a novel by **Ayad Akhtar** '02, was named one of the New York Times' [Best 10 Best Books of 2020](#). *The Fighting Shirley Chisholm*, directed by **Cherien Dabis** '04, will start production in 2021. *Mon Père, Le Diable*, directed by **Ellie Fombi** '17, will have its world premiere at the [Venice International Film Festival](#) next year. An untitled drama series about COINTELPRO co-written and executive produced by **Leon Hendrix** '15 is currently being developed by [Peacock](#). *Lust Life Love*, a film directed by **Stephanie Sellars** '13 and co-produced by **Sola Fasehun** '15, premiered at the Berlin Independent Film Festival. *Yasmine/Jasmine*, a feature project written by **Yossera Bouchtia** '19, was selected to participate in [Cinephilia Productions](#) '2021 Film Development Workroom.

Theatre

Golden Shield, a play by **Anchuli Felicia King** '18, is slated for [Manhattan Theatre Club's](#) 2021-22 season. **Ashley Tata** '12 directed [Con Alma](#), a live digital performance of classic songs from the Mexican and Jazz tradition and original works by composer **Paola Prestini** and vocalist and composer **Magos Herrera**. **Callan Stout** '17 was named a winner of The Film Fund's [2020 Narrative Contest](#) for a short film adaption of a play she wrote while at Columbia with her collaborators, current Columbia undergrads **Arielle Friedmand** and **Lucy Blumenfield**. [Broadway for Racial Justice](#) presents *Decolonize This: A Conference on Decolonizing Educational Space* featuring **Celine Song** '14. **Ilana Luca** '10 was recently appointed Vice President of the Canadian Theatre Critics' Association. [Apocalyptic Artists](#)

[Ensemble \(AAE\)](#) founders **Kea Trevett '16**, **Alice Renier '16**, **Peter Romano '15** and **Brynne McManimie '16** recently launched *The Shakespeare Project*, including free interactive workshops and professional performances for young audiences. The project also included **Fang Du '18**, **Kenard Jackson '15**, **Cassandra Nwokah '17**, and **Aaron Morton '16**. *Collegeburg, USA: The True Story of a Town in Crisis in the Advent of a Racist Regime, or Privileged, or Supreme (We Are Going to Have This Conversation)*, the new play by **Kerri Kochanski '01**, was featured in the [New Works Virtual Festival](#), a Broadway benefit for The Actors Fund. Season 2 of *Dickinson* premiered this month featuring **Manuela Sosa '19** and **Joey Odom '19**. **Marike Splint '07**'s virtual performance *You Are Here - A Homebound Travelogue*, commissioned by [La Jolla Playhouse](#), is now visible online. **Michel Hausman '14**, artistic director of Miami New Drama, was featured in *The New York Times* as [part of their review](#) of *Seven Deadly Sins*. *The Cooking Project* was presented by New York Theatre Workshop and featured work by playwright **Paola Alexandra Soto '20** with performances by current students **Merlixse Ventura** and **Katherine George** and alumnus **Andres Pina '19**. The project was created, written, produced, and performed by members of the [Dominican Artists Collective \(DAC\)](#), a group dedicated to uplifting the work by artists of Dominican descent while showcasing the intricacies of the Afro-Latinx experience. DAC was co-founded in 2019 by Paola Alexandra Soto and Andres Pina while they were both students in the theater program. **Tara Ahmadinejad '14** performed and co-directed *Disclaimer*, which she also wrote, with her collective [Piehole](#), at The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival 2021.

Visual Arts

Allison Janae Hamilton '17 has been included in the New York Foundation for the Arts' list "[16 Black Artists to Know Now](#)." **Annette Hur '19** is holding her solo debut exhibition, *Willful Unknowing*, at [Hesse Flatow](#) from January 14 to February 13. M 2 3 presents [No Can Do](#), an exhibition of recent work by **Bat-Ami Rivlin '19**. **Clare Koury '20** [also exhibited her work](#) at M 2 3 in January. **Esteban Cabeza de Baca '14** participated in *Impending Beauty, A Roundtable Discussion on Sustainable Fashion, Impact on the Land, and Cultural Identity* organized by [Smack Mellon](#). **Jeffrey Meris '19** exhibited his installation pieces at [White Columns](#), [Real Arts Ways](#), and at the exhibit *Unmastered* at [Mestre Projects](#) in Nassau, Bahamas. **José Delgado Zuñiga '17** is exhibiting his work at Central Fine Gallery in Miami until March 7, 2021. **Joseph Michael Lopez '11** was interviewed by [leica-camera.blog](#) about his photography study *Dear New Yorker*. Works by **Julia Phillips '15** were included in the exhibitions *Grace Before Jones: Camera, Disco, Studio* at [Nottingham Contemporary](#) in the United Kingdom, [A Million Roses for Angela Davis](#) at Albertinum, Germany, and [Studio Berlin](#) at Berghain in Berlin, Germany. **Mark Yang '20** is having his first solo exhibition, [Body Double](#), at the Steve Turner Gallery in LA. It will run from February 13 to March 13. **Maria Antelman '11** is showing her works at the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#) through April 24, 2021. **Nadja Marcin '10** is exhibiting her work in [even the rocks reach out to kiss you](#) at Transpalette - Contemporary Art Center in Bourges, France, from October 9, 2020 to January 16, 2021. **Nash Glynn '17** was featured in an article about her and her work in [Artforum](#). Work by **Nathan Catlin '12**, **Cara Lynch '20**, and **Erica Mao '20** was included in the exhibit *In the Cool of the Evening*, curated by **Cary Hulbert '16** and **Trinity Lester BA '20**, at [Project Gallery](#). **Patrice Renee Washington '14** is showcasing her works at the exhibit *how to be a human* at [Reyes | Finn](#), through February 12. **Ronin Aviv '20**'s artworks were shown at the exhibit *Borderwalls III* at [The Border](#) in Brooklyn, NY. Works by **Sebastian Black '12**, **Jamie**

Isenstein '04, and **Susan Chen** '20 were showcased in the exhibit [Escapism](#) at Meredith Rosen Gallery. **Vesna Pavlović** '07 showcased her work at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, Slovenia from May 15 to December 31, 2020. Her works are also featured in exhibit *Reflections of our time: Acquisitions of the Museum of Contemporary Art 1993-2019* at the [Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade](#) in Serbia, and in the exhibition *Traversing Geographies, Complicating Memories* at Whitespace in Atlanta, GA, until March 5, 2021.

Writing

Aristophanes: Four Plays, translated by **Aaron Poochigian** '16, [will be published](#) through Liveright, on February 16. "[Interstate Highway System](#)" by **Adam O. Davis** '06 was selected for *Best American Poetry 2021* by **Tracy K Smith** '97. **Albe Harlow** '19 published a piece called "Backstage, 1905" in [La Piccioletta Barca](#). Harlow also wrote a piece of nonfiction titled "[Architectural Possibilities of Renee Gladman's Prose Architectures](#)" in *3:AM Magazine*. **Allison Funk** '78 published a new collection of poems, *The Visible Woman*, with Parlor Press. **Christopher P. Wolfe** '18 serves as an advisor to [That Which Remains](#), a creative writing publication supported by the [Eric H. Holder Jr. Initiative for Civil and Political Rights](#) at Columbia College. The journal is published by a group of Columbia College students, and pieces of Wolfe and **Zach Davidson** '19 are featured in the first issue. **Daniel Felsenthal** '15 published a review of Dezron Douglas and Brandee Younger's *Force Majeure* in *Pitchfork Magazine*. Felsenthal was also awarded the [2020-21 Fellowship Grant](#) from The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. *The Longcut*, a novel by **Emily Hall** '99, was shortlisted for [The Novel Prize](#) from Fitzcarraldo Editions. **Geeta Tewari** '17 published an article titled "[Regarding Narrative Justice, Womxn](#)" in the *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*. **Heather Radke** '19 published [an interview with Damon Locks](#) in *The Believer* and produced [an episode of the podcast Radiolab](#) titled "The Great Vaccinator" for WNYC Studios. **Nina Sharma** '16 published a humor piece titled "[How to Avoid Ivanka](#)" in *The New Yorker*. **Robin Beth Schaer** '05 was selected for a 2021 Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. **Sam Apple** '02's new book [Ravenous](#) will be released by Norton later this year.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Photo by Abby Brenker

Rodney Terich Leonard '18 was born in Nixburg, Alabama. An Air Force veteran who served during the Gulf War, his society profiles and poems have appeared in *Southern Humanities Review*, *Red River Review*, *The Huffington Post*, *BOMB Magazine*, *The Cortland Review*, *Indolent Books-What Rough Beast*, *Four Way Review*, *The New York Times*, *The Amsterdam News*, *The Village Voice*, *For Colored Boys...* (anthology edited by Keith Boykin) and other publications. [*Sweetgum & Lightning*](#) is his debut collection of poetry. He holds degrees from The New School, NYU Tisch School of the Arts and Teachers College Columbia University. A Callaloo poetry fellow, he received an MFA in Poetry from Columbia University and currently lives in Manhattan.

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

I chose back-to-back poetry seminars with poet-professor Alan Gilbert. By the time we met for thesis workshop, I was ready to probe into new work and into the landscape (themes, edits & omissions) and architecture (shape, sheen & Afro) of my manuscript. Alan is a selfless teacher and literary encyclopedia. Much in my personal life was rearranged to wholly delve into Columbia's MFA program. My work schedule and curatorial commitments chose my classes; each class I took had to work. I worked Alan. Every student in thesis worked Alan. His rigor and empathy worked me toward a sensible manuscript. Alan is a compass; his steering didn't end in Dodge Hall. He insisted that I utilize my post-graduation summer to "clear out more of the overgrowth" in *The Winter Between Us*, my then-title. I partied in Prague, Rio, and Montgomery that summer; I wasn't thinking about that manuscript or anything poetic. Autumn arrived and Alan gently prodded me to "vastly" submit

my manuscript. That, I did do. Months later, I was in flight when I opened an email from Martha Rhodes, director of Four Way Books; the subject line, in lower caps, read, your terrific book. Joy goes directly to my bladder. I went into the lavatory and sobbed and emailed Alan. You've heard the saying: "It takes a village." I'm my mother's last child; I believe in villages and village work but I also know how mighty it is to be singularly challenged and nurtured to craft language into poems that adjust us. The notion is tall and marvelous. Thank you, Alan Gilbert, for your constancy. Thank you, Columbia University School of the Arts. Sweetgum & Lightning, my debut collection, arrives on 02/15/21.

What advice would you give to recent graduates?

There is something, perhaps, unusually innate, that guides one into considering an MFA, a laboratory of doubt and possibility. To me, currency and money have never been play things. My life-work and commitment to self-betterment qualified Columbia as an ideal intellectual investment. Succeeding at Columbia meant that I was most interested in students and professors who met me and my scholarship where we were and were not. I didn't claim "side glances" or "maybe" as nutrients for solidifying my writerly practice. I came to the School of the Arts to become a working writer! I was accepted into the program ripe into my forties; remember the Sondheim lyric "Losing my timing this late...." Ask yourself, "What does my thirst for advancing as a writer taste like?" Once you know, you know. And remind yourself that this interrogation is akin to an eclipse.

ALUMNI BENEFITS

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