

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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Dear School of Arts Alumni:

In this edition of the Alumni Newsletter, we profile recent alumnus **Max Ritvo** '16. To read Max's work or learn more about his story, see [Blunderbuss Magazine](#), [berfrois](#), [Boston Review](#), and [NPR's Only Human](#) podcast.

As we look forward to all of spring's activity, thesis season has arrived. We encourage you to see what our soon-to-be graduates have created during their time at the School. The Visual Arts thesis show will take place April 25-May 16, with an opening on Sunday, April 24 from 2-5 pm. The Columbia University Film Festival will take place in New York City May 13-17 and in Los Angeles June 13-17. [Columbia Stages](#) continues to present the thesis work of the Theatre Program's directors, playwrights and actors throughout the spring. Finally, Sound Arts will exhibit April 23-May 7, and the Writing thesis anthology will be out later in the semester. To keep up-to-date will all the goings-on at School of the Arts visit our [events calendar](#).

The Columbia Alumni Association recently launched the new [Columbia Alumni Community](#) to replace the Alumni Directory. Accessible only to Columbia alumni, the platform provides new ways for alumni to connect. Feel free to take a look and give us your feedback as we build our page. [Log in](#) to the new Columbia Alumni Community with your UNI and password. If you don't know your UNI, you can request it [here](#).

Also, congratulations to **Ito Aghayere** '12, who is starring in [Playwrights Horizons](#)' production

of *Familiar* by Danai Gurira, playing through March 27.

I encourage you to [submit your story](#) to our ongoing Spotlight series. As always, please continue sharing your news and achievements with us at artsalum@columbia.edu.

Best,

Laila Maher
Associate Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs

Alumni Spotlight

This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features **Max Ritvo** (Writing '16). If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our [website](#), you can do so at this [link](#).



Max Ritvo

Writing '16

Max Ritvo is a poet living in Manhattan. He was awarded a 2014 Poetry Society of America Chapbook Fellowship for his chapbook, *AEONS*. His poetry has also appeared or is forthcoming in *The Yale Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and as a Poem-a-Day for Poets.org. Ritvo's eight-poem sampler in *Boston Review*, introduced by Lucie Brock-Broido, was named as one of their top 20 poetry selections published in 2015. He is a poetry editor at *Parnassus: Poetry in Review* and a former teaching fellow at Columbia University.

Max's prose and interviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *Huffington Post*, *Boston*

Review, *Blunderbuss* and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*. His radio appearances include NPR's *Only Human* and *The Dr. Drew Podcast*. Max serves on the Board of Directors of Kids Kicking Cancer.

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

I wouldn't be who I am as a writer today without the trifecta of Lucie Brock-Broido, Tim Donnelly, and Dottie Lasky. I was passed between the three of them for

workshops, and what they taught me was completely cumulative. Dottie came first. When I told her I wasn't writing frequently enough, she put in her calendar to text me a prompt every day. The prompts were suffused with her mysticism and mindfulness-in one exercise, I had to drink cups of juice laid out in holy, geometric patterns. In another I had to change from a t-shirt and sweatpants into a three piece suit five minutes into writing. I don't think, before Dottie, I'd really understood how the riches of the present tense can save you in a poem. There's a moment where your thought has run its course, but there is still plenty of poem to write. It's a terrifying moment. But Dottie taught me to pick up a little statuette on my desk or just look out the window, and that there would be something beautiful there for me to feed into the poem, with which to breathe new life into it. After Dottie I got the Brock-Broido treatment, which Columbia would do well to patent. Lucie took these fiery, bestial poems that Dottie had catalyzed and taught me to seek out the core. To let nothing survive of them but what was wise and essential. She made me see that thought itself is mystic, that much of the mind is junk and flack, but that it's given moments of grace. And the role of the poet is to create plinths for those moments of grace, to undress the poem into them. My poems under her gained a sense of purpose, and I grudgingly started to love revision. (I think Lucie didn't even see the full extent of her impact when I was in workshop with her-I grumbled a lot when she'd call my bullshit, but came around to almost every call.) Then for my thesis workshop, I was given Timothy Donnelly, who is possessed with music's articulacy and articulacy's music. Tim helped me understand who I was as a human being through my poems, which grew them immensely. He called my poems "Goldberg Machines," which made me think of the energy in my poems, their ambitions, in a way that was more ironic, more passionate, more fun. He made me write odes to collages. He helped me understand my poems were really hopeful. That they were living life for me when I was really sick. He helped me understand that I was actually really spiritual-that my poems grew from the logic of Catholic mystics and Vedic mystics. (Perhaps Dottie had infected me back in Year 1.) I left Tim with a more refined notion of wisdom, with which to pursue my Brock-Broidian poetry purges, and a more refined notion of inspiration with which to select the rituals, the movies, the tunes, which I now accept are the meat of my mind's eye. In the end, I needed just these three poets, in just the order they came to me, in order to write like me.

What was your favorite or most memorable class while at the School of the Arts?

There will never be a class quite like Alan Ziegler's Short Prose Forms. The class was cross-genre so I got to hear all the work of all these brilliant nonfiction writers and fiction writers. And not just their work-but their minds were so exciting! Watching a journalist hammer away at a surreal snippet of prose and make sense of its mechanics was so enlightening. So too was reading class assignments with carefully crafted characters and psyche's driving your involvement with the work. This class infected me with a narrative bug I haven't ever shaken. Most of my

poems remain enslaved to an I, but now I want my I to do stuff. For time to pass. And none of this is to mention Alan Ziegler's quiet, mirthful brilliance. He gave a reading of his own prose poems that is in my marrow. And his campy, genius introductory "play" in which Baudelaire and Edgar Allen Poe discuss short prose was straight out of an episode of *The Magic Schoolbus*. Too much fun. Too much brilliance. I can't.

[More](#)

Events



THEATRE | DIRECTING THESIS

Undrown'd: Seeking Asylum

Directed and devised by Benita de Wit '16

Wed-Sat, Mar 9-12, 2016, 8 pm

Sat, Mar 12, 2016, 2 pm

\$15 General, \$5 Senior, and FREE with any valid student ID.

The Connelly Theatre, 220 E 4th Street

[More](#)



WRITING | POETRY READING

John Ashbery

Wed, Mar 23, 2016, 7 pm

Room 501, Dodge Hall

Use main campus entrance: 2960 Broadway

[More](#)



MELLON VISITING ARTISTS & THINKERS PROGRAM | SCREENING & CONVERSATION

The Shipment with Young Jean Lee and Christian Parker

Thursday, March 24, 6:30 pm

3rd Floor, Lecture Hall

Pulitzer Hall

[More](#)



VISUAL ARTS | EXHIBITION

2016 First-Year Visual Arts MFA Exhibition

Sat, March 26-Sat, April 9, 2016, 1-5 pm

Reception: Fri, March 25, 6-8 pm

[More](#)



THEATRE | DIRECTING THESIS

Outlying Islands

David Greig, Marc Atkinson

Wed, Mar 30-Sat, Apr 2, 2016, 8 pm

Sat, Apr 2, 2016, 2 pm

\$15 General, \$5 Senior, and FREE with any valid student ID.

The Connelly Theatre, 220 E 4th Street

[More](#)



THE LEROY NEIMAN GALLERY | EXHIBITION

Contemporary Ceramics

Wed, Mar 30-Tues, Apr 26, 2016

Reception: Thurs, Mar 31, 2016, 6-8 pm

The LeRoy Neiman Gallery, Dodge Hall

Use main campus entrance: 2960 Broadway

[More](#)

News



Film

Frank Angones '05 and **Amy J. Higgins '06** won an Annie Award for Best Animated Television / Broadcast Production for Children for their episode of *Wander Over Yonder* called "The Breakfast." The awards, which honor achievements in film and television animation, were held on February 6 at UCLA's Royce Hall in Los Angeles. [more](#)



Film

Disney is bringing a live stage version of **Jennifer Lee's '05** Oscar-winning film *Frozen* to Broadway in spring 2018. Lee, who wrote the animated musical and co-directed it with Chris Buck, will be back to adapt the hit for the stage, along with Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, who wrote the songs for the film and will provide music and lyrics for the stage adaptation. [more](#)



Theatre

Lila Feinberg '12 is adapting Katie Cotugno's *New York Times* bestselling novel *99 Days* into a half-hour, single-camera comedy for MTV. The coming-of-age story centers around one summer in the life of Molly Barlow, who has become the most hated girl in town after leaving her boyfriend for his brother. [more](#)



Theatre

Playwriting alumni **Hammaad Chaudry '14** and **Celine Song '14** have both been selected for the Public Theater's 2016-17 Emerging Writer's Group. Members of the prestigious program are selected biannually and receive a two-year fellowship at the Public. [more](#)



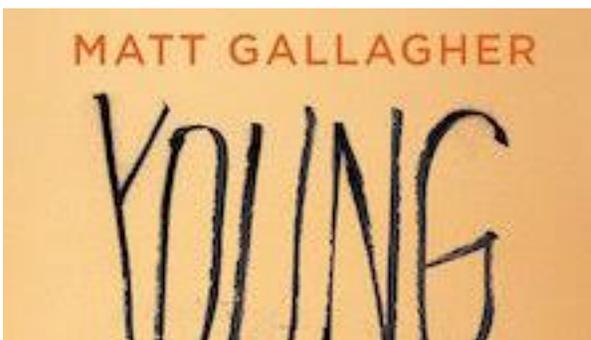
Visual Arts

Revisiting the Art of Inequality, an exhibit featuring work by **Emily Kloppenburg '16** and **Iaria Ortensi '15**, was recently on view at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University. [more](#)



Visual Arts

Tracy Molis's '11 solo exhibition *OSg-OSz* was held at Night Gallery in Los Angeles recently. Molis also participated recently in the group exhibition *Lesser Deities of Summer* at Underdonk in Brooklyn. [more](#)



Writing

Matt Gallagher's '13 debut novel, *Youngblood*, has been published to great acclaim by Simon and Schuster. This is Gallagher's second book; after serving as a U.S. Army captain in the Iraq War, he chronicled his experiences there on a popular blog that was published in 2010 as *Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in a Savage Little War*. [more](#)



Writing

The work of six Columbia writers was included in the *Boston Review*'s list of the 20 best poems published by the magazine in 2015, appearing alongside such celebrated poets as Anne Carson, Jorie Graham, Maggie Nelson and current U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera. [more](#)

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