

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

November 2018

Dear School of the Arts Alumni,

With fall upon us, we have a lot of exciting news and events to share with you.

This week, **Sigrid Nunez ('75)** won the National Book Award for Fiction for her novel *The Friend*. **Diana Khoi Nguyen's ('12)** poetry collection, *Ghost Of*, was a finalist for the National Book Award for Poetry. Diana is featured in this month's Alumni Spotlight.

We have an impressive showing at Art Basel Miami Beach. Among those showing work are: **Greg Parma Smith ('07)**, **Anna Conway ('02)**, **Lynne Golob Gelfman ('68)**, **Emily Ludwig Shaffer ('17)**, **Emily Mae Smith ('06)**, **Ursula von Rydingsvard ('75)**, **Patrice Renee Washington ('14)**, **Sebastian Gross Ossa ('98)**, and **Fabienne Lasserre ('04)**; as well as faculty members **Aliza Nisenbaum** and **Sable Elyse Smith**; and current student **Rafael Domenech ('19)**. Alumna and faculty member **Nicola López ('04)** and faculty member **Mark Dion** will be participating in the [Untitled Art Fair](#), also at Miami Beach.

If you are showing work at Art Basel, please send us the details at [this link](#) and we will happily spread the word. If you plan on attending the fair, we'd love for you to join us at the annual alumni reception at the Bass Museum. [Click here for tickets and more information.](#)

### Visual Arts

In addition to the magnificent work in Miami, our alums have been participating in a number of gallery and museum shows this month. **Heidi Howard ('14)** showcases her murals as part of a collaborative installation with her mother, sound artist and adjunct faculty member, **Liz Smith**. The murals, part of the [Queens International 2018](#), will be on view through August, 2019. **Asif Mian ('18)** also has work in the show. **Patrice Aphrodite Helmar ('15)** has a photo exhibit titled *Dirty Old Town* at the [James Kerney Campus Gallery](#) in Trenton, New Jersey. **Kambui Olujimi ('13)** has two shows up: *Zulu Time* at the UB Anderson Gallery in Buffalo, New York, and *Shadow Stories and Matters of Time* at the [SCAD Museum of Art](#) in Savannah, Georgia. **Julia Phillips ('15)** also has work in two shows: *Positioner* at [Matthew Marks](#) in Los Angeles, California, and *In the Air* at [ma ma projects](#) in Toronto, Ontario.

### Film

*United Skates*, co-produced and edited by **Katharine Garrison ('98)**, had its World Premiere at the [Tribeca Film Festival](#), where it also won the Audience Award. The film premiered internationally in Toronto at Hot Docs and was invited to be the closing night film at the LA Film Festival and AFI Docs. In the *New York Times*, **Robert De Niro** named *United Skates* [one of Tribeca's](#)

[“top picks.”](#) The *Amsterdam News* called it “a perfect film” and *Variety* described it as a “must-see doc.” *Life and Nothing More*, written & directed by **Antonio Méndez Esparza** ('08), [screened this month at Film Forum](#), and was recently named a New York Times Critic's Pick. *Shirkers*, written, directed, and produced by **Sandi Tan** ('00) and produced by **Jessica Levin** ('02), was nominated for [Best Documentary at the Gotham Awards](#). The film is available on Netflix. Sandi was recently interviewed about her film by [Mubi](#). *Everything Is Fine*, written & directed by **Mansi Jain** ('17), won the award for [Best Short Film \(Indian\)](#) at the Jagran Film Festival in Mumbai.

### **Theatre**

Our Theatre alumni have [taken the helm](#) at a number of organizations around the country. **Katherine Kilburn** ('17) is now the Executive Director at The Human Race Theatre of Dayton, Ohio. **Eric Keen-Louie** ('10) is the Producing Director of the La Jolla Playhouse, and **Brandon Kahn** ('17) is now the General Manager of the Alley Theatre in Houston. Here in New York, **Aaron Simms** ('15) will serve as the General Manager of the York Theatre Company, and Directing alumna **Mei Ann Teo** ('14) has been [named Artistic Director](#) of Musical Theatre Factory.

Also in Theatre, [Usual Girls](#), written by **Ming Peiffer** ('16) and directed by **Tyne Rafaeli** ('14), premiered as part of Roundabout Underground's 12th season. The show will run through December 23. At the Minnsky Theatre, Minnesotans had the chance to see **Nick Hadikwa Mwaluko's** ('10) play [Waafrika](#).

### **Writing**

**Katrine Øgaard Jensen** ('17) has won the [National Translation Award for Poetry](#) for [Third-Millennium Heart](#) by Ursula Andkjær Olsen, which she translated from Danish. Also in translation, **Elina Alter** ('16) has been selected as a [2018 ALTA Travel Fellow](#) by The American Literary Translators Association. **Frank Meola** ('93) has won the [Raymond Carver Story Contest](#) for his story “Home as Found.” **Jenessa Abrams** ('17) won the Second-Place Prize. **Georgette Mallory** ('18) won the [Audience Award](#) in the Pen2Paper contest for her essay “Disarmed.” You can read new flash fiction by **Geeta Tewari** ('17) in [the latest issue](#) of the *New England Review*. **Anne Whitehouse** ('79) presented a lecture titled “Longfellow, Poe, & the 'Little Longfellow War'” at the Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The lecture was based upon an essay she recently published, also in the *New England Review*.

To keep receiving news and updates, make sure we have your most recent contact information. If you know of a fellow alum who is not receiving emails from us but would like to, have them email us at [artsalum@columbia.edu](mailto:artsalum@columbia.edu).

As always, please continue sharing your news and accomplishments with us via [artsalum@columbia.edu](mailto:artsalum@columbia.edu), and like and follow our [Facebook](#) page. You can also keep an eye out for exciting new alumni achievements on our Twitter feed by following [@cusoaalumni](#).

Best,  
Laila Maher  
Dean, Student and Alumni Affairs

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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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This edition of the Alumni Spotlight features Writing alumna **Diana Khoi Nguyen** ('12). If you would like to submit your own stories to be included on our website, you can do so at this [link](#).

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[Diana Khoi Nguyen](#)'s debut collection, *Ghost Of* (Omnidawn, 2018), was selected by Terrance Hayes for the Omnidawn Open Contest. She is a poet and multimedia artist whose work has appeared in *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, and *PEN America*, among others. In addition to winning the 92Y "Discovery" / *Boston Review* Poetry Contest, she has been shortlisted for the National Book Award, and has received awards and scholarships from the Academy of American Poets, Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. Currently, she lives in Denver where she is a PhD candidate in creative writing and teaches in the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver.

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

**Lucie Brock-Broido** ('82), hands down. From her first phone conversation with me, inviting me to come to Columbia, to her last voicemail sent to me in the summer of 2018, months before I heard the news about her passing. During my much too brief time there, it seemed she gave her whole being to her students: every hour, every neuron, every breath. In addition to epitomizing service to students as an instructor, facilitator of creative writing, creative thinking, her emotional intelligence inspired me to see the world around me—its inhabitants, systems, and quiet wonders—as deeply and openly as possible. Her linguistic genius—shared with her students through her attentive modes of gentle inquiry, enabled me to access poetry and other creative work in ways which had been previously inaccessible to me. She taught me to see, to read—how to be. Not only as poet in this terrifying and wondrous world, but as a citizen indebted to it—for the gift of life.

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

"The Practice of Poetry," facilitated by Lucie Brock-Broido, which was a kind of mandatory poetry primer for all first year poetry students in the program. Each week, we all sat around the table, discussing one chapter from the voluminous reader Lucie had physically curated and assembled. The way in which she broke down parts of a poem and the process of writing, revising, and inhabiting poetry's medium (or inviting it to inhabit us—), provided the architecture

for my engagement with writing and thinking. I return to various chapters in that reader seasonally each year. It is read, reread—that reader, that class, were her hermeneutics of poetry itself.

**What advice would you give to recent graduates?**

Never stop writing, creating. No matter what. Make all other things in life, mold to your practice of art-making.

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## ALUMNI BENEFITS

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