

# PURCHASE

PURCHASE COLLEGE MAGAZINE | THINK WIDE OPEN

FALL/WINTER 2015



**Purchase College**

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## PLUS:

NEW MEDIA > THE COOL GEEK...

*It's Techie...It's the Center of Everyone's Attention*

PURCHASE HUMOR: *From Whip-Smart to Weird*

HELIOTROPE & PUCE ALUMNI BALL





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pursuits	1
New Media: The Cool Geek	6
Heliotrope & Puce Alumni Ball	12
Purchase Humor	14
News Briefs	20
Alumni in Action	25
Neuberger Museum of Art	29
The Performing Arts Center	29

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# [THIS MOMENT] IN TIME

By Thomas J. Schwarz



Purchase College had an honorary de facto mascot this fall: the raccoon. Lured by whatever tasty treats students left lurking in garbage cans, a community of raccoons took up residence on campus and captured the imagination of our students. One clever student even suggested that I might be a raccoon masquerading as college president.

It's no wonder that Noah Kantor '16, who wittily morphed an image of me into that of a raccoon and posted it on a student group Facebook page, is studying new media. Deploying the interdisciplinary set of skills in art, media, and technology required to conjure, create, and post social messages—albeit at my expense—lies at the heart of new media. Read

more about this fascinating program in the feature story on page 6.

Kantor also tapped his sharp sense of humor. Whether performed, drawn, or written, from sarcastic to weird to silly, humor has always held a sacred place at Purchase. Inside you'll read about several alumni unleashing their unique personal brands of humor on stage, television, the Internet, and more.

One of my favorite "duties" as president is attending alumni events. I place duties in quotes, of course, because it never feels like one. It was my pleasure to meet and greet so many of you at last spring's Heliotrope & Puce Alumni Ball. Enjoy some photos from the event on pages 12–13.

Finally, Purchase College was not untouched by the events culminating in the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Purchase is firmly committed not only to continuing the conversation, but to following up with action, so that all students feel safe, at home, and well represented.

Yours very truly,

*Thomas J. Schwarz*

Thomas J. Schwarz  
President

## PURSUITS/FACULTY NEWS & NOTES

### SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

**Thomas Baird**, Dance, spent six weeks teaching the Alexander Technique to singers enrolled in *Si parla, si canta*, an Italian-language course taught through Centro Studi Italiani in Urbania, Italy. While in Urbania, Baird also taught historical dances to students enrolled in Dance Masters 2015.

**Daniel Bauer**, Art+Design, curated *Party Beuys: What Comes after Farce*, an exhibit held at the Andrea Meislin Gallery in Chelsea, New York City, from July 9 through Aug. 14, 2015. The exhibition was featured in *New York* magazine's Critics' Picks, the *New York Observer*, and *Art F City* online.

**Sue Bernhard**, Dance, is presenting her work for the American Dance Guild Festival 2015 at the Joan Weill Center of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater from Dec. 3 through Dec. 6, 2015.



Charles Blenzig

**Charles Blenzig**, Music, performed with Gato Barbieri at the Blue Note Jazz Club in New York City on Sept. 28, 2015, and with Michael Franks at the Aliante Casino in Las Vegas on Oct. 17.

**Matt Bollinger**, Art+Design, is a 2015 recipient of a New York Foundation for

the Arts fellowship in painting. His work was featured at le Creux de l'enfer—Centre d'art contemporain in Thiers, France, in a solo exhibition, *Humeurs noires*, from June 17 through Sept. 15, 2015.



Bradley Brookshire

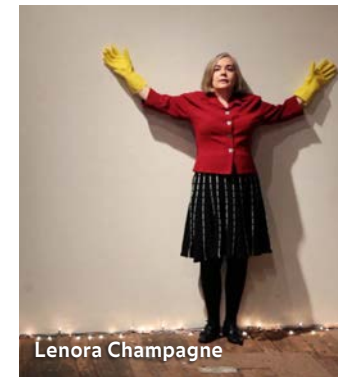
**Bradley Brookshire**, Music, appeared with the Metropolitan Opera in a number of *Metropolitan Opera Live in HD* performances that are now permanent entries in the Met's *On Demand* catalog. These include the Met's productions of *La clemenza di Tito* (Mozart), *The Enchanted Island* (pasticcio), *Giulio Cesare* (Handel), and *Rodelinda* (Handel).

**Deborah Buck**, Music, performed with the Lark String Quartet in a free concert at the Shelter Island Presbyterian Church on Sept. 6, 2015. The quartet includes Buck on first violin, Basia Danilow on second violin, Kathryn Lockwood on viola, and Caroline Stinson on cello. The Friends of Music of Stamford, NY, presented the quartet on Sept. 20.



Deborah Buck, The Lark String Quartet

**Darrah Carr**, Dance, gave a lecture and demonstration on the connection between Irish step dance and tap at the National Dance Education Organization conference in Phoenix, AZ, in October 2015.



Lenora Champagne

**Lenora Champagne**, Theatre Arts, presented a work-in-progress performance of *I.C. (I See)* at Dixon Place in New York City on Oct. 14, 2015. And *Lenora Champagne: New World Plays*, featuring three of her plays, was published by No Passport Press in June. The book launch was on Oct. 1 at New Dramatists in New York City.

**Todd Coolman**, Music, recorded a CD with the Scott Reeves Jazz Orchestra in New York City. In March 2015, he performed with the Jon Faddis Jazz

Orchestra in Pittsburgh at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, and at the Blue Note Jazz Club in Manhattan as part of the James Moody 90th birthday celebration shows.



Todd Coolman

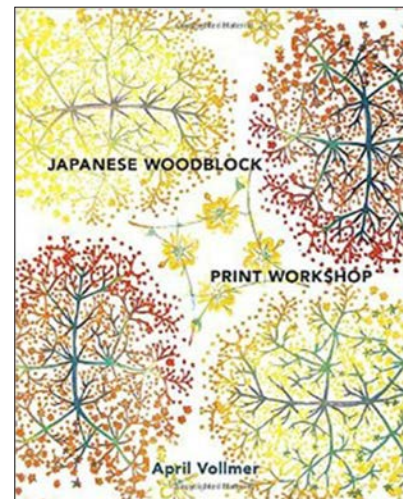
**Donna Dennis**, Art+Design, had her work *Coney Night Maze* (2009) exhibited at Real Art Ways in Hartford, CT, in conjunction with an exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum, *Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861–2008*, on view from Jan. 31 through May 31, 2015.



Ellen McLaughlin and Rachel Dickstein

**Rachel Dickstein**, Theatre Arts, in recognition of her work with her theatre company Ripe Time, was awarded the 2015 League of Professional Theatre Women's Lucille Lortel Award. Ripe Time was invited to a developmental workshop at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre Ground Floor series last summer for its newest production, an adaptation of Haruki Murakami's short story "Sleep."

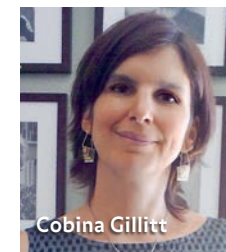
**Stella Ebner**, Art+Design, is one of the contemporary artists working with the Japanese woodblock process featured in the new, comprehensive guide *Japanese Woodblock Print Workshop: A Modern Guide to the Ancient Art of Mokuhanga*, by April Vollmer.



**Joe Ferry**, Music, has signed an exclusive recording contract with the internationally renowned record label Shanachie Entertainment Corp. His new album will feature Lester Sterling (the only surviving member of the ska band the Skatalites) and Corey Glover, a vocalist with Living Colour, as well as Purchase students and faculty.

**Jean Freebury**, Dance, assisted Silas Reiner in reconstructing Merce Cunningham's *Changeling* (1957) for performances at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, in October 2015.

**Dawn Gibson-Brehon**, Arts Management and Entrepreneurship, recently managed the Apollo Theater's international tour, the first in the theatre's 80-year history. The evening-length production *James Brown: Get on the Good Foot—A Celebration of Dance* toured Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, reaching 12,750 people over a four-week period. Celebrating, through dance, the music and legacy of worldwide icon James Brown, *Get on the Good Foot* featured 15 artists from the fields of tap, hip hop, Kathak, and modern dance.



Cobina Gillitt

**Cobina Gillitt**, Theatre Arts, had an introduction and two translations published in *Manoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing*. This issue has also been published as a standalone paperback book by the University of Hawai'i Press (2015) and was one of the featured books at the 2015 Frankfurt Book Fair, where Indonesia was this year's honored country.



**David Grill '86**, Stage Design/Technology, earned his third Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lighting Design, Lighting Direction for a Variety Special, for his work as lighting director on the Super Bowl XLIX halftime show starring Katy Perry. He also received a Daytime Emmy nomination and a Telly Award for Lighting Design/Direction of the opening ceremony for the 2014 Central American Games.

**Sharon Horvath**, Art+Design, was one of 19 visual artists elected by their peers for induction into the National Academy Museum and School. This year's class was formally inducted into the academy at a ceremony in New York on Oct. 27, 2015.

**Matthew Jensen**, Art+Design, had his photographic series *Hometown Stones* included in a group exhibition at the University of California, San Diego. Jensen was invited to give an artist's lecture in conjunction with the exhibition.



**Jonathan Jetter**, Music, provided additional engineering on the late December 2014 release of the album *New Vocabulary*, featuring jazz great Ornette Coleman, Jordan McLean, Amir Ziv, and Adam Holzman (System Dialing Records).



**Laura Kaminsky**, Music, was awarded a commission from the Houston Grand Opera for a new work, which will be her second collaboration with co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed, for the 2017 season. Another commission with Campbell and Reed came from Opera Parallèle (San Francisco) for 2018–19. Kaminsky received the 2015 Polish Gold Cross of Merit, a decoration awarded by the president of Poland in recognition of exemplary public service or humanitarian work that goes above and beyond the call of duty. Kaminsky, **Christopher Robbins**, Art+Design, and **Bettijane Sills**, Dance, were each recognized by ArtsWestchester as one of 50 outstanding artists working or living in Westchester, on the occasion of the organization's 50th anniversary.



**Jared Kirby**, Physical Education and Theatre Arts, was the fight director for the Hudson Warehouse's production of *Measure for Measure*, March 5–22, 2015, at the theatre's winter stage, the Bernie Wohl Center in New York. An interview with Kirby was published in *Backstage* magazine on Feb. 13.

**Aaron Krach**, Art+Design, was featured on Hyperallergic.com in the "Best of New York Art Book Fair" on Sept. 19, 2015. The gallery Invisible Exports (a collaborative multiartist project) and Krach presented the Greenwich Village Book Desecration League at the MoMA PS1 Art Book Fair in Queens, NY, from Sept. 18 through Sept. 20.

**Steve Lam**, Art+Design, co-curated, with Elaine Gan and Sarah Lookofsky, *Dump! Multispecies Making and Unmaking* at the Aarhus Kunstbygning Center for Contemporary Art, Kunsthall Aarhus, in Denmark, from June 26

through Sept. 20, 2015. The project is a curatorial and research collaboration between Aarhus University and Purchase.

**Warren Lehrer**, Art+Design, received accolades for *A Life in Books: The Rise and Fall of Bleu Mobley*, which earned the top award for Best New Fiction and Best Cover Design, Fiction, as well as being named a finalist in the Best Interior Design category at the 2015 International Book Awards, sponsored by USA Book News. The book also received the Wild Card Award at the 2015 Paris Book Festival.

**Judy Loeff**, Dance, proposed and participated in a panel, "Teaching Diversity and Inclusivity in Media," at the University Film and Video Association's conference held at American University in Washington, DC. Loeff's documentary film *Deaf Jam* was selected for the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation's Independent Film Tour, "On Screen/In Person." The film will close the series in the spring of 2016.

**Philip Listengart**, Art+Design, had work included in the *Art Design Faculty Exhibition*, April 16–June 7, 2015, at the Queensborough Community College Art Gallery in Bayside, Queens, NY.

**Steven Lubin**, Music, received a 2015 BRIO Award for piano performance from the Bronx Council on the Arts.

**Robin Lynch**, Art+Design, directed the video design, and **Peter Sprague**, Theatre Arts, co-directed the one-woman show *Bug Bite*, written and performed by Lizabeth Sipes at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland in August 2015.



**Lauren Kreha McIntyre**, Dance, presented her research, "Establishing Normative Concussion Baseline Values for University and Professional Dancers," during the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science's annual meeting in Pittsburgh.

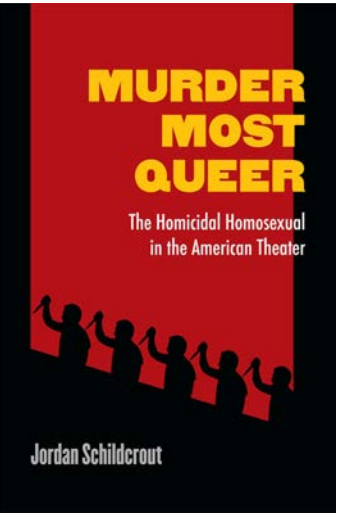
**James Mulligan**, Art+Design, received two gold awards from the Hermes Creative Awards organization for projects affiliated with his company, Central Graphics Group.

**Lenka Pichlířová**, Theatre Arts, spent her summer researching the notable career of the Russian émigré actor and acting teacher Mikhail Chekhov; her research was on display in September 2015 at the Chekhov International Theatre Festival in Ridgefield, CT, for which she serves as dramaturg.

**Janine Polak**, Art+Design, had work included in the following exhibitions: *Sixty Minutes: Sixty Artists and Sixty Seconds of Video*, Vanity Projects, Miami, FL, and New York, NY; *Improvised Showboat #12*, curated by Lauren Britton and Zachary Keeting, 530 Canal Street, New York, NY; and *An Argument for Difference*, curated by Yin Ho and Shama Khanna, which appeared at TSA New York, in Brooklyn, Sept. 18–Oct. 25, 2015.

**Christopher Robbins**, Art+Design, received a \$20,000 grant through the SUNY Arts and Humanities Network of Excellence for his project "Using Architecture to Transform Abandoned Buildings and Stimulate Dialogue." In collaboration with SUNY Buffalo, SUNY New Paltz, and community organizations in Detroit, the project will send SUNY students to Detroit for community engagement and urban renewal work. Robbins, **Raphael Zollinger** (Art+Design), and **Rachel Owens** (Art+Design) were Topol Faculty Development Award recipients, creating two new courses—an Advanced Digital Fabrication course and a Detroit Study Abroad course.

**Jordan Schildcrout**, Theatre Arts, participated in the 2015 Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He presented a paper, "*The Bat* (1920): Mary Roberts Rinehart and the Spinster Detective," and was a panelist in the roundtable discussion "Teaching LGBTQ Theatre and Film History." Schildcrout was invited by the University of Michigan Press to sign copies of his book *Murder Most Queer: The Homicidal Homosexual in the American Theater* at the conference.



**Rosanna Seravalli**, Dance, taught at the American Ballet Theatre summer intensive program and restaged for the students Frederick Ashton's *Midsummer Night's Dream* choreography of the Fairies. Seravalli was invited to teach master classes at Mercyhurst University in Erie, PA.



**Rob Swainston**, Art+Design, had work included in *FLOW. 15: Art and Music at Randall's Island*; in *Bronx Calling: The Third AIM Biennial* at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, July 9–Sept. 20; and in *The Animated Print* at the International Print Center New York, in the fall of 2015.

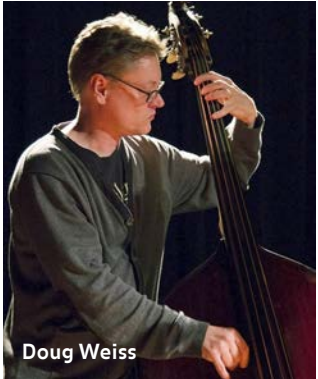
**Greg Taylor**, Theatre Arts, had "Thumbs in the Crowd: Artists and Audiences in the Postvanguard World" appear as the lead article in the book *Film Criticism in the Digital Age*, edited by Mattias Frey and Cecilia Sayad (Rutgers University Press, 2015).

**Jeffrey Taylor**, Arts Management, presented the paper "Graffiti Is Censorship" at the "Cultures in Disarray: Destruction/Reconstruction" conference at King's College, London, June 11–12, 2015.

**Stephanie Tooman**, Dance, taught at the Ailey School Italian Summer Workshop in Bari, Italy, including choreographing two class demonstrations. She also taught at Los Talleres in Mexico City and was invited to attend a college fair at Regional Dance America/Northeast in Philadelphia.

**Hakan Topal**, New Media and Art+Design, had his article "Collateral Damage, Condolence, and the Aesthetic of Impossibility Justice" published in *Aesthetic Justice: Intersecting Artistic and Moral Perspectives* in March 2015.

**Doug Weiss**, Music, performed at Smoke Jazz Club in New York City with Eddie Henderson, Gary Bartz, Billy Drummond, and Purchase visiting affiliate artist **Kevin Hays**. Weiss also made a recording with vibraphonist Jorge Rossy, drummer (and Miles Davis collaborator) Al Foster, guitarist Peter Bernstein, and saxophonist Mark Turner.



**Jennifer Wroblewski**, Art+Design, participated in the *Draw to Perform2*, a two-day performance/exhibition event held

at Num3er London, a south London cooperative artist/community space, on May 16, 2015. Wroblewski and 12 international artists made drawings in front of an audience over the course of six hours.



**Murray Zimiles**, Art+Design, had his work included in the National Academy Museum and School group exhibition from June 4 through Aug. 23, 2015. He will have a one-person exhibition at the Shchukin Gallery in Chelsea, New York, in November.

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES



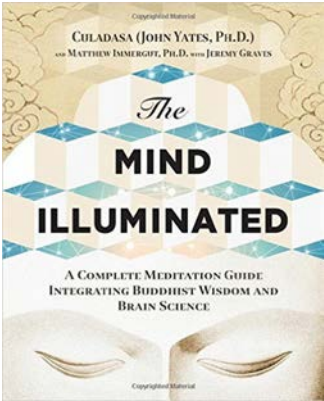
**Shemeem Burney Abbas**, Political Science and Gender Studies, was interviewed by Ryan Shaffer for the spring 2015 issue of the *Secular Humanist Bulletin*: "Blasphemy in Pakistan: An Interview with Shemeem Burney Abbas."

**Michael Bell-Smith**, New Media, exhibited a new work, *Fireworks Clock*, at the Post Contemporary in Troy, NY. His video "Rabbit Season, Duck Season" was recently screened at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center and at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Bell-Smith's solo exhibition of the video at Foxy Production was reviewed in the January 2015 issue of *Artforum*. He was featured in the *ARTnews* column "Consumer Reports," posted on Aug. 6, 2015.

**Stephen A. Cooke**, Chemistry, co-organized a mini-symposium, "Spectroscopy in the Classroom," as part of the 70th International Symposium on Molecular Spectroscopy held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in June 2015. The mini-symposium featured 20 oral presentations.

**Anthony Domestico**, Literature, published an essay on race in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* and Jeffery Renard Allen's *Song of the Shank* in *Commonweal* in July 2015.

**Matthew Immergut**, Sociology, is a co-author, with Culadasa (John Yates) and Jeremy Graves, of *The Mind Illuminated: A Complete Meditation Guide Integrating Buddhist Wisdom and Brain Science* (Dharma Treasure Press, 2015).



**Suzanne Kessler**, Liberal Arts and Sciences, co-wrote, with her former student Irena Michals, "Prison Teachers and Their Students: A Circle of Satisfaction and Gain," which appeared in the *Journal of Correctional Education*. The article is based on Michals' senior project in sociology, May 2014.

**David J. Kim**, Anthropology, published "Visions and Stones: Spirit Matters and the Charm of Small Things in South Korean Shamanic Rock Divination" in *Anthropology and Humanism*, a publication of the American Anthropological Association, in June 2015.

**Mary Kosut**, Media, Society, and the Arts and Gender Studies, published the chapter "Tattoos and Body Modification" in the second edition of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, edited by



IN MEMORIAM

**Kay Capo**, associate professor emerita of literature and of theatre and performance, died Oct. 31, 2014. She had been battling breast cancer since the spring of 2008. Her teaching career of 42 years included academic positions at Northwestern, Loyola of Chicago, SUNY Oneonta, and here at Purchase beginning in 1980. She retired from the Conservatory of Theatre Arts faculty in 2013. Capo was a dedicated and passionate teacher, completely devoted to her students and her love for literature, especially poetry and theatre. She received a Danforth Foundation Associate Award, as well as various grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, United University Professionals, SUNY, and Purchase College. She developed an extensive portfolio of poetry. Capo is remembered for her vitality, creativity, and encouraging spirit.

**Barbara Lynn Dexter**, an esteemed assistant professor of environmental science from 1994 to 2002, died of a heart attack in her Yonkers apartment before her 64th birthday on Aug. 22, 2015. Dexter started working part-time at Purchase in 1984.

**Lorraine Herbst**, who taught in the anthropology program intermittently between 2000 and 2003, passed away on Sept. 1, 2015. She started teaching at Purchase while finishing her Ph.D. at the New School. Her skills as a researcher were matched by her excellence as a teacher. In the time Herbst worked at Purchase, she made invaluable contributions to the training of anthropology majors in the classroom, as a senior project advisor, and as an informal mentor. She had a lasting impact on her Purchase colleagues, who remember her cheerful voice, warm smile, and compassionate, justice-loving spirit.

**Robert M. Stein**, professor emeritus of literature, died on April 24, 2015, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Stein was a medievalist in the literature program, a brilliant scholar and teacher, and a dear friend to many at the college. He taught from 1975 to 2012 and received the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. In addition to his other contributions, he was the faculty’s parliamentarian for years. He cut a remarkably consistent figure on campus: black boots, black jeans, a dark sweater, and dark-rimmed glasses, all of which highlighted a broad and bright smile.

James D. Wright, in May 2015. Kosut and **Lisa Jean Moore**, Sociology and Gender Studies, co-wrote “Like Bees to Honey,” which appeared in *Cabinet* magazine in June 2015.

**George P. Kraemer**, Environmental Studies, co-wrote an article with Jang K. Kim and Charles Yarish, “Use of Sugar Kelp Aquaculture in Long Island Sound and the Bronx River Estuary for Nutrient Extraction,” which appeared in the *Marine Ecology Progress Series* earlier this year.

**Steve Lambert**, New Media, and his work were featured in the 2Degrees Festival in London, June 1–7, 2015. His article “An Artist Reflects on When to Walk Away” was published in the September 2015 issue of *Creative Time Reports*. Lambert’s work was mentioned in articles in the *Guardian* (U.K.), “Why Climate Action Needs the Arts,” and *Daily Serving*, “The Business End of Art.”

**Louis Lazar**, Journalism, had an article, “News for and from Roosevelt Island,” published in the *Wall Street Journal*, Greater New York section, on Sept. 15, 2015.

**Susan Letcher**, Environmental Studies, contributed to a major study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Letcher gathered data from 57 coauthors in 13 countries for her article

“Environmental Gradients and the Evolution of Successional Habitat Specialization: A Test Case with 14 Neotropical Forest Sites,” published in the *Journal of Ecology*.

**Sara Magenheimer**, New Media, was the winner of the New York Award from Artadia: The Fund for Art and Dialogue in May 2015. Her video “Slow Zoom Long Pause” was included in the contemporary new-media culture festival Vision Quest at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, on Sept. 10. Magenheimer’s work was screened at the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center as part of the Projections Program on Oct. 4.

**Marjorie McAfee**, Journalism, a video journalist and investigative producer at NBC News, developed a story idea in 2012 about children with autism on the brink of turning 21. The resulting story aired on *Dateline NBC* in April 2015. Three years in the making, “On the Brink” follows two families as they face the reality of their autistic children’s futures.

**Maryann McEnroe**, Biology, published “Effect of Nutritional Status on the Osmoregulation of Green Sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*)” in *Physiological and Biochemical Zoology* with her collaborators at the University of California, Davis, and Pukyong National University in South Korea. The study reported in the article investigated potential effects of climate-induced changes to food webs on the physiology of endangered green sturgeon.

**Shaka McGlotten**, Media, Society, and the Arts, was awarded a Social Science Fellowship from the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany, for 2017. McGlotten’s book project *The Political Aesthetics of Drag* is now under contract with Routledge.

**Joseph D. McKay**, New Media, was in a show, *Play: In Three Acts*, at the Beall Center for Art + Technology at the University of California, Irvine, from Feb. 27 through May 23, 2015.

**Elizabeth Middleton**, Chemistry, was one of 27 recipients of SUNY’s 2015 Innovative Instruction Technology Grants. Middleton hopes her innovation—a series of supplemental videos—will better prepare students before they enter the lab in general and organic chemistry classes.

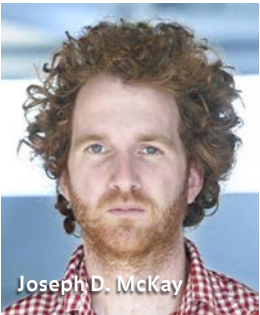
**Gaura Narayan**, Literature, presented a paper, “Everywhere and Invisible: Sexual Oppression of Lower-Caste Women in Rural India,” at a panel, “South Asian Women’s Bodies and Sexual Violence,” at the Modern Language Association conference in Vancouver, BC, Canada, in January 2015.

**Lorraine Plourde**, Media, Society, and the Arts and Anthropology, was interviewed in June 2015 on the Los Angeles public radio station KCRW for her research on Tokyo’s cat cafés.

**Jared Russell**, Philosophy, presented “Chemistry” at the eighth Clinical Study Day offered by Lacanian Compass on Jan. 24, 2015, in Miami, FL.

**Paul Siegel**, Psychology, was awarded a \$249,000 R21 research grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. Siegal is working in collaboration with Dr. Bradley Peterson, director of the Institute for the Developing Mind at Children’s Hospital, Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California, to investigate the neural mechanisms of a potential new treatment for anxiety disorders using brain imaging.

**Karen Singer-Freeman**, Psychology, presented “Paying It Forward: Mentoring Provides Effective Support for Underserved College Students” in May 2015 at a meeting of the Association for Psychological Science, New York, NY. Singer-Freeman contributed to “MMR Vaccine and Autism: Scientific Inquiry, Ethics, and Evidence-Based Problem Solving,”



SABO SCORES PICTURE OF THE YEAR



“I knew I had a great shot the moment it happened. I’ve been doing this a long time but I got butterflies in my belly with this one,” he recalls.

Sabo is not a sports fan, but that’s precisely why he believes he’s able to take great sports photos. “It always surprises people that I don’t like sports, but I think it has a lot to do with why I am good at it. The best sports photographers are the best visual storytellers, not fans of athletes.”

He adds, “I root for the best picture in the camera. If I made a great photo early in the game of a monumental touchdown, run, or goal, I want that team to win. Our readers aren’t interested in



seeing jubilation from the losing team, so I want the great photo to be the storytelling one.” Read more in his own words about how he captured the photo at [news.purchase.edu/photographer-robert-sabo-wins-award](http://news.purchase.edu/photographer-robert-sabo-wins-award).

GARY WALLER EARNS DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR RANK



**Gary Waller**, Literature and Theatre and Performance, was appointed a distinguished professor by the State University of New York Board of Trustees in May 2015. The distinguished professorship, SUNY’s highest academic rank, is conferred on individuals who have achieved national or international prominence and distinguished reputations within their chosen fields.

Waller was already a well-published, internationally recognized scholar with a 25-year career when he arrived at Purchase as vice president of academic affairs in 1995. In 2004, he returned to the faculty as professor of literature and cultural studies.

Waller’s work encompasses a range of academic fields: late medieval, Renaissance, and early modern English literature and popular culture, Shakespeare, theatre history, cultural studies, gender studies, and literary theory. He has published more than 20 books, written nearly 100 book chapters and scholarly articles, and presented scores of guest lectures and conference papers.

which appeared in a Scientific Thinking and Integrative Reasoning Skills Case Study published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. In October Singer-Freeman, with colleague **Linda Bastone** (Natural Sciences), presented a paper, titled “Effects of the Purchase College Bridges to the Baccalaureate Program on Degree Completion.”

**Hakan Topal**, New Media and Art+Design, was featured in the article “Boom, Boom, Boooooom! Notes on a Giant Implosion,” which appeared in *Ibraaz* magazine’s Platform 008, and “The Poetics of Remembrance: Facing the Armenian Genocide,” which appeared in *Creative Time Reports*.

**Jennifer Uleman**, Philosophy, published an op-ed, “What to Study at College, and Why,” in the *Journal News* on Sept. 16, 2015. Uleman delivered a paper, “On Suicide and the Moral Demands of Friendship,” at the 12th International Kant Congress (“Nature and Freedom”) at the University of Vienna in September.

**Ragnhild Utheim**, Anthropology, published “Restorative Justice, Reintegration, and Race: Reclaiming Collective Identity in the Postracial Era” in the peer-reviewed journal *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*.

**Louise Yelin**, Literature, wrote an essay for the exhibition catalogue *Chantal Joffe: Night Self-Portraits*, published by Cheim & Reid, New York, in conjunction with a one-person exhibition at the Chelsea gallery on view May 14–June 20, 2015.



SCHOOL OF LIBERAL STUDIES & CONTINUING EDUCATION

**Lawrence Berglas**, Arts Management, the author of *Civil Law in America: A Minimalist Law Book*, was invited to present a talk about his book at the Coral Gables location of the nationally recognized independent bookstore Books & Books in May 2015.



**Judith Dupré**, Liberal Studies, was awarded a Public Scholar grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her project, *One World Trade Center: The Biography of the Building*, will look at the design, planning, engineering, and history surrounding One World Trade Center through text, illustrations, and an interactive website. The book will be published by Little, Brown in 2016.

**Beth S. Gersh-Nesic**, Liberal Studies, contributed “From Paris to New York: *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*” to the catalog *Staring Back: On Picasso’s Demoiselles d’Avignon*, for the exhibition at the Robert Hull Fleming Museum at the University of Vermont in May 2015.

**Mary Ellen Marks**, Liberal Studies, had an article, “A Union of Form and Function,” published in the September/October 2015 issue of *Hook*.

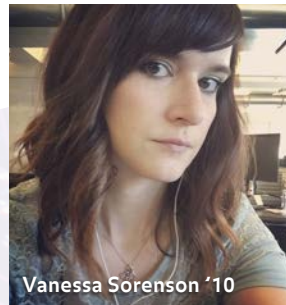




# NEW MEDIA

IT'S EDGY, IT'S TRENDY, IT'S TECHIE, IT'S SLEEK, IT'S CLEVER...

By Kristi McKee



Vanessa Sorenson '10 had no idea she would eventually be on the cutting edge of technology when she arrived at Purchase in 2006, before "social media" was a household term and when Twitter was a burgeoning service. Originally from Milwaukee, she transferred from the University of Wisconsin to pursue journalism at Purchase. After one semester, she began to reevaluate her choice, questioning whether she wanted to "report news" for the rest of her life. She switched to the new media major at Purchase in the winter of 2007. "It felt edgy and cool to be at the forefront of technology," Sorenson says.

The new media program at Purchase is an interdisciplinary exploration and experience of art, intellect, and technology—a way to consider, question, and create messages with purpose, essentially turning out the next generation of thinkers who make messages, and message-makers who think. It's an art-based program intentionally housed in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences—a program of study meant to integrate art, technology, and the intellectual experience of the liberal arts and sciences.

For her senior project, Sorenson created a garment called the TweetSleeve. "I was doing wearable tech before it was cool, as it is now," she says. (Think iWatch.) She spent nine months engineering an ordinary sweatshirt into one with a sleeve that changed color in response to the mood of her Twitter feed. She sewed LED lights into one sleeve using conductive thread, and a programmed microprocessor into the back of the shirt. Multiple issues arose, leading Sorenson to wonder whether she would succeed. The sewing presented an electrical engineering challenge when she discovered that crossing the threads would break the circuit. At the time, the API (application programming interface) for Twitter was closed, meaning the technical language that was needed to make the entire project work was unavailable. With third-party software and the constant support of her advisor, Joe McKay, assistant professor of new media, she prevailed. Not only did the sleeve respond—so did the blogosphere. The blog she kept to track her progress went



viral. Sorenson is currently a senior product marketing manager at MediaMath, a global digital marketing platform.

Her project and the accompanying research explored not only how someone's digital and physical identities might differ, but also the psychology behind why someone might choose to be more open in the global "reality" of social media than in real life.

"Students must love their computers, mobile devices, and social media, but we're a liberal arts school, so we encourage new media students to question that technology," explains McKay. "Learning the tool is the easy part. What's the context? Let's think critically about the medium we're using, the theories behind it, and the way media culture affects our lives."

Steve Lambert, associate professor of new media since 2009, explains how the program goes deeper than learning software, building websites, and mastering other media tools. "We want the students to use technology to communicate meaningful ideas in the world—to develop some mastery over these tools so they can not only reflect on the world, but also envision how the world could be better."

Helena Jaramillo '14 agrees. "A lot of students come into the program thinking they'll learn Photoshop or some other software, but it's much more interesting than that. From the start, we are asked to think about concepts at a much higher level." A native of Ecuador, Jaramillo transferred to Purchase from a community college near her home in upstate New York. She's currently living in Zurich, Switzerland, and employed as an interaction designer at Google, but she sees herself using her knowledge of design and technology for the social good someday. "I see my role as imagining what the future might look like and how that will impact us."



## NEW MEDIA LECTURE SERIES

Presented in conjunction with the Neuberger Museum of Art each semester since 2001, the New Media Lecture Series has welcomed more than 40 accomplished artists, technologists, and theorists in the field of new media to campus, providing the opportunity for students to hear from and speak with new media pioneers and visionaries. Speakers this fall include Damon Rich, Douglas Rushkoff, and Liz Magic Laser.

Check out the new media blog at [newmedia.purchase.edu](http://newmedia.purchase.edu) for more information about the lecture series and all things new media.

# THE COOL BEEK

IT'S THE CENTER OF EVERYONE'S ATTENTION.

## FOUNDATION / THEN FREEDOM

The structure of the new media program at Purchase has taken shape in the past five years, and is based on a foundation of eight required courses during the freshman and sophomore years that range from photography, design, sound, and video art to computer programming, media studies, and technoculture. Following the successful completion of the foundation courses, students create portfolios and apply for advanced standing. Once this approval is given, upper-class students are free to choose their own pathways, to customize their programs based on unique skill sets and objectives. "New media is flexible, and you can run with it. The program is set up so you can explore what elements of the major you're really passionate about," Sorenson says.

## WHEN NEW MEDIA HAS NEW

First offered in 1999, and originally housed in the School of Natural and Social Sciences, new media was the brainchild of the late Peter Ohring, a professor of math and computer science, who passed away unexpectedly in 2013. The program later shifted to become one of four majors offered in the School of Film and Media Studies, formed following the restructuring of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Conservatory of Theatre Arts in 2010.

New media's first professors were not only from math and computer science, but also from the School of Art+Design and the Conservatory of Music. "The program's founders were really prescient in seeing a trend and understanding that this was a new discipline, even though it was, and remains today, incredibly interdisciplinary," Brooke Singer explains. Singer, associate professor of new media and the Juanita and Joseph Leff Distinguished Professor, arrived at Purchase in 2003 to become the first full-time new media professor. Under her influence, the program became more focused on art-making. "What we're really doing is media arts, with a bent toward emerging media and technology," she says.

Singer is a visual artist who engages technology to create works in a variety of media with social change as a subtext. With funding from George Soros' Open Societies Foundation, she's updating and relaunching her 2007 data-visualization website, which addresses federal Superfund sites.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY THINKING

Zack Brady '12 came to Purchase with a mild interest in programming and the Web, and a passion for video art. He was thrilled to discover the new media program, which aligned perfectly with his interests. Brady registered late for fall classes sophomore year and found the foundation class he hoped to take already filled, which would prove serendipitous. He enrolled in the only course available—computer programming, taught by mathematics and comput-

## THE NEXT BIG THING: CMFT TO OPEN IN 2017

The construction of the new Center for Media, Film, and Technology (CMFT) building is exciting news for the new media program. Brooke Singer and Paul Thayer, a technician for new media, were heavily involved in the design process. New media currently operates in old physics and chemistry labs in the Natural Sciences Building, so Singer eagerly awaits the spaces designed specifically for the program's needs, such as a wood shop, a fabrication lab, new editing suites, and classrooms that support a multimodal teaching style. Joe McKay looks forward to the senior studio, a space that will provide a desk for each senior to call his or her own for the entire year, which will, he hopes, build a sense of community within the department. "It will help foster the idea of students feeding off each other. Groups of seniors will be working on their projects, hanging out together, having coffee, and talking about their work," McKay says, which should also benefit the sophomores and juniors as they look ahead. Construction is under way on the CMFT, which will also serve as a new pedestrian entrance to the campus from the primary public parking lot (W1). Its location cuts into the mall surrounding the Performing Arts Center and the Bookstore building.

er science lecturer Irina Shablinsky. "Almost instantly, I realized I would probably end up programming for the rest of my life," Brady recalls.

"My focus was still on performance and video art at that time, so I took what I was learning from programming and geared my focus to making programs that were performative." Brady gravitated toward classes such as Hacking the Everyday and Physical Computing, taught by Joe McKay. In Hacking the Everyday, McKay gives each student an inkjet printer intercepted en route to the recycling center with a single instruction—the only thing it may not be turned into is an inkjet printer. "They're harvesting the printers for parts and making their own sculptures out of them," McKay explains. Brady describes his project as a little dark. "It slowly cut its power cord until it turned off. I was into ascribing emotion to machines at that time," he explains. Brady became McKay's teaching assistant the following semester.

Brady believes his greatest takeaway from Purchase is the ability to think across disciplines. He's currently a partner and director of technology at the Web design and digital marketing firm Suits & Sandals, a company formed at Purchase. "I took creative writing classes, and they helped me understand how content needs to be set up. The Web is an interdisciplinary medium, so going at it from one discipline won't cut it," he explains.





Miles Roxas '12, Zack Brady '12, Nick Dank '12

## SUITS & SANDALS

Suits & Sandals is truly a Purchase success story. Originally from Long Island, Miles Roxas '12 started building websites as a freelancer as soon as he learned how to create Web docs during his sophomore year. He took on a project beyond his scope and looked to Nick Dank '12 for help. Dank, a native of Philadelphia, was also doing freelance work but brought a different perspective and skill set. It was a good fit.

The pair met in a design class taught by Sarah Foley, a part-time lecturer in the School of Art+Design. Both students disliked the class at first, but admit it made a lasting impression. "I honestly hated it. But now, looking back, there was so much I learned that directly impacted my professional career," Dank says. Roxas adds, "We consider it the class that changed our lives. Some of the best practices and things we learned in that class we still reference to this day."

Dank and Roxas began picking up small clients from the surrounding community. After six months, realizing that they needed some heavy programming support, they reached out to Brady. "He was the top of the class and known to be the best programmer," Roxas says. Brady agreed to help and eventually became an equal partner.

They opened an office in Mt. Kisco, NY, before they graduated, and what started as a small Web-design company has now grown into a full-service digital creative agency based in Brooklyn. They've recently hired two more Purchase alums, Mike Curley '12 (music performance: jazz studies) and Jackson Cook '11 (graphic design).

As musicians themselves, they're drawn to clients in the music industry. The legendary Electric Lady Studios is an account they're particularly proud to maintain, not only for the work Suits & Sandals has done, but also for the networking opportunities the relationship has provided. It was the Purchase network that helped them land the account in the first place—the assistant director there is Vira Byramji '11 (studio production).

The firm also leveraged the Purchase network to perform considerable work for BorsaWallace, a visual communications firm founded by Frank Borsa '84 (sociology) and Jeffrey Wallace '86 (visual arts). The pair was on campus to deliver a talk to new media students in 2012 when they visited the new media senior show in the Passage Gallery. Struck by Brady's senior project, "A Portrait of Love, Family, and Relationships," which Brady describes as "an interactive, nonlinear documentary" based on some personal struggles, Borsa and Wallace asked to meet with Brady to discuss working together. Suits & Sandals now collaborates with the firm on a regular basis, building websites and consulting on adapting designs to work with responsive Web-development practices.

## FROM PURCHASE TO EYEBEAM

An avid photographer in high school, Peter Kaiser '13 visited Purchase to learn about its photography program. He had doubts about devoting four years to a single craft, so the Jericho, VT, native turned to new media, which allowed him to pursue photography in addition to many other subjects. The major's theoretical background resonated most strongly for him, in particular the media, society, and the arts foundation requirements. Drawn to the theory of how technology affects human behavior, Kaiser became interested in anthropology, especially queer studies and gender studies, which became his minor. The new media major also allowed him the freedom to tackle subjects in a hands-on way as opposed to merely writing about them—his senior project was a documentary film exploring the world of missed connections on Craigslist.



Peter Kaiser '13

In April 2014, Kaiser became the communications director for Eyebeam, a renowned media-arts organization dedicated to supporting artists working at the intersection of art and technology and exposing audiences to experimental and interdisciplinary work. He oversees Eyebeam's internal and external communications. Using video skills honed at Purchase, Kaiser initiated a project currently under way to make videos documenting the artists' residencies. "The best skill that I took away from the new media program, besides the focus on video, was the anthropological perspective—how to talk with people, talk with artists, especially about what they're doing," he explains.

## IGNITING AWARENESS

Lambert's Tactical Practical class invites students to combine sociological research, communications strategies, technological methods, and artistic tactics to plan effective social interventions. For one project, each student raises \$100 on his or her own; they then pool the money and decide together how to spend it.

A recent class collaborated with Port Chester's Don Bosco Workers, an organization that advocates for undocumented workers. One spring day, Lambert's students gathered in a Port Chester, NY, park after "hiring" five day-laborers—all undocumented immigrants and former victims of wage theft. Much to the workers' surprise,



New media students hosted One Fair Day, a picnic for victims of wage theft.

however, it was not a job that awaited them, but a barbecue picnic organized by the students and paid for with funds they had raised. Each laborer also received cash, essentially earning a day's wage for taking the day off. The students interviewed the workers on camera and wove their stories into a short video called "One Fair Day," not only documenting the project but raising awareness of the plight of undocumented immigrants in the workplace.



The lessons Corey Tegeler '15 learned in Lambert's Tactical Practical class ended up, in his view, being the most enlightening. Originally from Kingston, NY, Tegeler transferred to Purchase from a graphic-design program that he found too stagnant. With an interest in creative coding, he chose new media. He understood little else about the major, but the challenge of the unknown was part of its appeal.

His Tactical Practical class collaborated on a project called *freakart*, which Tegeler describes as a "music-playing, flag-flying, bike-towed cart," from which the students distributed pounds of fresh fruit, home-brewed coffee, and baked goods to students, faculty, and staff during finals week. The cart remains on campus for students to borrow, with the stipulation that it be used only to hand out items for free.



Students distribute free food and refreshments during finals week from the *freakart*.



The *freakart* flag flies proudly.

"Steve Lambert led me to realize that the knowledge, experience, creativity, and connections that we gain at school have value other than their financial worth," Tegeler says.

Following graduation last May, Tegeler and a friend traveled to Vietnam on a WWOOFing trip (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), where they volunteered in exchange for food and lodging. He spent this past summer freelancing, purposely keeping his options open as he searches for work that not only stimulates him, but also solves problems and has a beneficial impact on society.

## THE POWER OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE CHANGE

Singer loves to teach Community-Centered Media, in which students work with local nonprofits that lack the resources to implement their own initiatives. Students immerse themselves in the missions of and challenges facing these organizations, and brainstorm ways they can improve their function using new tools, technology, and media. "The students use their skills and realize how powerful they are and how important they are in real-world applications," Singer says. Recent examples include videos made for the Food Bank of Westchester by Alexa Espinale '14 (new

### THE ROCKET DATA-VISUALIZATION PROJECT

Corey Tegeler collaborated this summer with Brooke Singer and a friend, current student Danny Fabricant '16, on a data-visualization project. Chartwell's, the dining vendor on campus, happens to record the volume of food waste Purchase produces. The team used the data to render visually the volume of food scraps that are diverted from landfills and instead processed by the Rocket composter. "The data and their visualization will change over time as more of Purchase's food waste is composted for our on-campus garden," as opposed to producing harmful greenhouse gases as it rots in landfills, says Tegeler. They expect the project to be online in early 2016.





Video still from a project created by students from the class Community-Centered Media.



Steve Lambert and the Center for Artistic Activism fight for affordable medicine in Barcelona, Spain, through creative and interactive means.

media), Qadira Farrington '14 (visual arts), and Bonnie Moncada '14 (visual arts), and a garden sign for the White Plains Youth Bureau designed and produced by Maria Galeano '13 (new media) and Molly Sidney '13 (photography).

Lambert started a nonprofit called the Center for Artistic Activism, an organization seeking to "make more-creative activists and more-effective artists," according to its mission statement. He's traveled the world to enact change—in Spain he helped devise plans to fight pharmaceutical companies in an effort to make access to medicines for hepatitis and AIDS easier and more affordable. In Macedonia he worked with the LGBT community, and in South Africa, he helped sex workers advocate for health and safety. Lambert is working on a book about these and many other efforts—experiences he brings to the classroom at Purchase.



Steve Lambert and the Center for Artistic Activism advocate for sex workers in South Africa.

"I show my students that what they're learning about art and technology actually can be put to use making HIV medicine more affordable, as opposed to them just becoming programmers at some big corporation. Having a job is not a guarantee that your life has meaning or purpose," Lambert explains.

McKay believes one of new media's greatest strengths is the contact students have with professors and their personal work. All seven full-time new media professors maintain their own art and technology practices and all teach freshmen and sophomores in foundation courses, unlike in larger schools, where those classes are often taught by teachers' assistants. "In small-class settings, students get to see the sort of passion and drive that we have as a faculty. They get to see that on their first day at Purchase. They don't have to wait until they're two-thirds of the way through the major to get that experience," McKay says. His own art practice involves playable, game-based art that he shows in galleries, upending the rules that typically govern both gallery-viewing and game-playing experiences.

## BUILDING FUTURES

The new media program at Purchase is clearly not vocational—which is precisely why it's valuable and unique. Singer understands the pressure and anxiety students feel to secure jobs when they graduate, but the preparation they receive goes far beyond job training. Because students forge their own paths through the major, they come to understand that there is a whole range of ways they can apply the skills and knowledge they've acquired. "When they leave, they are so well prepared because they have such a huge range of skills, not only in terms of hardware and software; they're creative, and they're makers, and they have amazing presentation and critical-thinking skills, and a really strong grounding in media and art history," Singer says.

Nick Dank attributes his success to the emphasis on both interdisciplinary learning and self-motivation. "I don't think it was necessarily the actual lessons or homework in those classes that taught me the most. It was the encouragement to learn on my own, to experiment, and to think conceptually and theoretically that really had the greatest impact on me," he says.

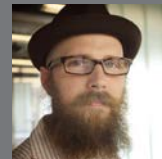
## NEW MEDIA FACULTY



**Michael Bell-Smith** / Assistant Professor of NM ...uses digital forms to explore contemporary visual culture and how it is mediated through popular technologies. A former resident artist at Eyebeam, Bell-Smith has had his work shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; and many other venues internationally.



**Tega Brain** / Visiting Assistant Professor of NM ...is an artist and environmental engineer from Sydney, Australia, working at the intersection of art, ecology, and engineering. She was a speaker at TEDx in Sydney and a resident artist at Eyebeam, and has shown her work internationally.



**Steve Lambert** / Associate Professor of NM ...believes art is a bridge that connects uncommon, idealistic, and even radical ideas with everyday life and uses humor to initiate meaningful dialogues in and out of the gallery. He's been an Eyebeam fellow and had work in group shows internationally. His *Capitalism Works for Me! True/False* project, which asks viewers to pull a lever in response to the title statement, has been on view in Times Square, at the San Diego Museum of Art, and in London.



**Joseph McKay** / Assistant Professor of NM ...describes his work as a willfully hands-on mash-up of technology, using physical computing, coding, game design, and strategies culled from hacking. He is a former resident artist at Eyebeam, and his pieces *Light Wave* and *Tweetagraph* were recently on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and other venues nationally.



**Nontsikelelo Mutiti** / Assistant Professor of NM ...is a Zimbabwean-born artist and educator who crosses disciplines to produce work that occupies the forms of fine art, design, and social practice. She is co-founder of the Zimbabwe Cultural Centre in Detroit.



**Brooke Singer** / Associate Professor of NM ...engages technoscience as an artist, educator, and collaborator. Her websites, workshops, photographs, maps, installations, public art, and performances often involve participation in pursuit of social change. She's a former fellow at Eyebeam; co-founder of the art, technology, and activist group Preemptive Media; and co-founder of La Casita Verde, a GreenThumb NYC Parks community garden in South Williamsburg, Brooklyn.



**Hakan Topal** / Assistant Professor of NM and Art+Design...is an artist and scholar and a co-founder of xurban\_collective, an international art collective, and has exhibited extensively at such venues as the eighth and ninth Istanbul Biennials, apexart in New York, and MoMA PS1. He also has represented Turkey in various international exhibitions, including the 49th Venice Biennial.

The goal of the new media program is to provide a set of skills that last forever. "They may use the skills they've learned in new media to get that job right out of school, but that's not the one we're focused on. We're interested in the bigger, broader ideas. We're preparing them for the job they'll get ten or twenty years from now," McKay explains.

Singer is proud of what the program has become in the past ten years—a solid program serving the roughly 165 students currently enrolled in the major. "I think what we've built is a really strong major that is right in tune with the artistic and activist character of Purchase."



Students show off their senior projects in the new media senior show, *Other Customers Also Bought*, on view in the Passage Gallery in April 2015.



# PURCHASE COLLEGE TAKES MANHATTAN

## 350+ Grads Attend First-Ever Heliotrope & Puce Alumni Ball

heliotrope  
and puce  
alumni  
ball

was a popular destination as friends old and new posed for the camera and showed their class pride.

Purchase College painted New York City heliotrope and puce on Friday, April 17, 2015, when four decades of alumni came together at Gotham Hall for the first-ever all-alumni reunion.

Organized by the Office of Institutional Advancement, the event welcomed nearly 350 graduates from the 70s, 80s, 90s, and the 21st century for an evening of meeting, mingling, and reconnecting with former classmates. The photo booth

Master of ceremonies actor Steven Weber '83 provided color commentary and a steady stream of college trivia throughout the evening while DJ Big Des (aka Desmond Dawkins '99) kept the music pumping. Special guest and former New York Yankee Bernie Williams '08-'09 took center stage to deliver a musical performance of jazz, rock, and tropical rhythms.

Expert mixologists poured Heliotrope Crush and Puce Paloma cocktails while guests traveled back in culinary time to sample popular foods from each decade. And for those with a competitive streak, there were opportunities to take on Pac Man, shoot a few hoops, or become a pinball wizard.

The H&P Alumni Ball kicked off a festive alumni weekend that included the annual After Picnic on campus.



Planning is under way for an encore of the Heliotrope & Puce Alumni Ball in spring 2016. Watch the Purchase College Alumni Association's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/PurchaseAlumni](http://www.facebook.com/PurchaseAlumni)) for dates and details.



# Purchase Humor:

## From Whip-Smart to Weird



IT'S JUST FUNNY



By Kristi McKee

Scientists and philosophers have debated for centuries about the purpose of humor in the human experience. There will be no discussion of that here. As E. B. White famously said, “Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it.” 🐸

Those who have left Purchase and ventured into the world of comedy and humor run the gamut from traditional comedians to artists who inject humor into a variety of forms. Whether they engage in stand-up comedy, writing, improvisation, cartooning, podcasting, or video production, they all have one thing in common: their craft was either formed or nurtured on a campus where collaboration with artists and thinkers of all stripes was commonplace and the freedom to experiment without judgment was the norm.

You may be familiar with some Purchase comedic stars who’ve risen high, such as Susie Essman ’77 (urban studies) and Parker Posey ’87–’91 (acting); we invite you to meet some others below whose passion drives them to create content through a variety of means to serve comedic ends.



Amanda Seales ’03

*Humor is a rubber sword—it allows you to make a point without drawing blood. —Mary Hirsch*

**AMANDA SEALES ’03**  
(African American studies and visual and performing arts)

Amanda Seales stepped onto the stage in the basement of an East Village bar last August and killed it. She opened with a hilarious take on the gentrification of her Harlem neighborhood. Seales unabashedly tackles divisive topics and pokes political correctness right in the eye. It’s for good reason, though. She’s using the power of her wit to create a dialogue about serious social issues—to open people up, and then make them think.

She describes herself as a “multifaceted unicorn”—a comedian, producer, director, DJ, screenwriter, and recording artist. She was a regular on VH1’s *Best Week Ever* and a VJ on MTV2. On BET.com she does *Funny Style* segments, and Elle.com features her in a segment called *What the What?* She’s not discussing mascara; she humorously tackled the controversy over the Confederate flag in a Fourth of July segment, for instance. Seales has written and performed one-woman comedy shows, and her weekly Web series, *Things I Learned This Week*, uses monologues and sketch comedy to lambaste current events and pop culture as they relate to the black community. The one constant is always her humor.

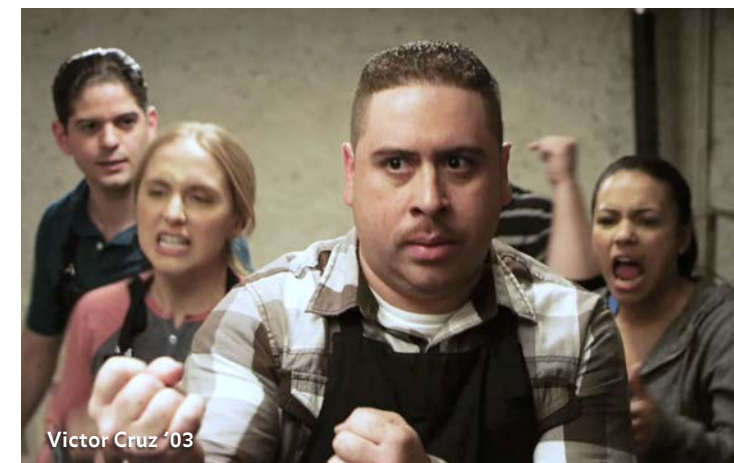
Because she is known as a sharp cultural critic (she earned an MA in African American studies from Columbia University), news programs often call on her to provide commentary. Most notably, she went head-to-head with an author who was defending catcalling on CNN. Discharging an effective mix of humor and information, she deftly deflated his arguments. That interaction inspired her to create *Side-Eye Seminars*. She visits college campuses to discuss rape culture and sexism, using humor as an entrée to open up the audience. The seminars have so far been well received—and not just by women. “It was amazing to see how many guys got the point. And they were able to receive it because it was delivered in a way that was real and didn’t attack them,” Seales explains.

Seales just signed with the Creative Artists Agency and has moved to Los Angeles to take her career to the next level. On Oct. 7, her scripted Web series, *Get. Your. Life.*, debuted on Issa Rae’s YouTube platform. (Rae caused a sensation with her own Web series, *Awkward Black Girl*.) Seales’ career goal is to create television content in her distinct voice, without compromise.

She’s been pressured to appeal to a “mainstream” audience in the past, but the result always felt inauthentic. She’s convinced that if her content is funny, it will break through. “Did black people watch *Friends*? *Friends* didn’t have shit to do with black people, but of course we watched it. If it’s good, it’s good, and that’s always been the bottom line,” she says. It’s also one of the reasons she loves to perform stand-up. “I love the meritocracy of it. At the end of the day, you’ve got to be funny. You can only get so far if you’re not.”

*The best way to make your audience laugh is to start laughing yourself. —Oliver Goldsmith*

**VICTOR CRUZ ’03**  
(acting)



Victor Cruz ’03



Movie poster for Victor Cruz’s film *The Stockroom*.

Everyone in Victor Cruz’s family was always cracking jokes. He grew up in the South Bronx without a lot of money and learned early that his sense of humor was a great defense. “If you didn’t have the coolest sneakers or clothes, you would get snapped on by the kids in the neighborhood, so comedy was a way of getting by; it was like a weapon of survival,” he says.

At age 16, he stepped onto the stage for his first stand-up routine during an amateur night at the now-defunct Boston Comedy Club in Greenwich Village. After high school, Cruz took a year off to pursue acting, but soon realized that his technique needed work. He came to Purchase with little understanding of just how demanding the acting program would be, but found it life-changing. “It instilled discipline, and focus, and exposed me to playwrights and stories and worlds I never knew,” he says.

He is now in the midst of releasing his first feature film, *The Stockroom*, a comedy that he wrote, directed, produced, and starred in, has been screened in several film festivals this fall. (His main antagonist is played by Luis Antonio Ramos ’81 [acting].)

Cruz has been working consistently as an actor since 2003 on shows from *Law & Order* to *House of Cards* to *Blue Bloods*, but what he finds most rewarding is the creative process: writing, developing, and producing. His production company, Victor Cruz Entertainment, seeks to share positive messages and educate audiences through stories told in a variety of genres. “The strong need and desire to tell stories, to want to play characters; it’s what I wake up thinking about and it’s what I go to sleep thinking about. It’s honestly my truest love,” he says.

So how does it feel to share a name with the renowned New York Giants’ wide receiver? “When I make a reservation at a restaurant and I show up, they always have the best table ready...with an ice sculpture of a football,” he says.



*This whole world is wild at heart and weird on top.*  
—David Lynch

WHAM CITY COMEDY

BEN O'BRIEN '06 (visual arts)

ALAN RESNICK '08 (visual arts)

DINA KELBERMAN '03 (visual arts)



Wham City Comedy’s website and social media pages are filled with content that is equal parts funny, satirical, and downright bizarre. The comedy and video collective is making waves with live shows, an annual comedy tour, and viral videos. Wham City Comedy is Ben O’Brien ’06, Alan Resnick ’08, and non-alumnus Robby Rackleff, “who is sick of hearing about Purchase,” says Dina Kelberman ’03, a longtime collaborator.

The team turned a skit created by Resnick for the comedy tour *Live Forever as You Are Now with Alan Resnick* into a video that aired on the Cartoon Network as part of its Adult Swim programming—the block of adult comedy that is broadcast from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. It’s a spoof on self-help lectures and infomercials in which Resnick promises to create digital duplicates of human beings. It’s funny, compelling, and strange.

Asked to create another fake infomercial as a follow-up, the group decided against making a satirical one and focused on the 4 a.m. slot, a time when viewers might stumble upon their video rather than watching by conscious choice. *Unedited Footage of a Bear* begins as a nature documentary might, then becomes a realistic, but fake, commercial for an allergy medicine. The music stops and it finally morphs into a horror story where a woman is tormented by her evil doppelganger. The group created a horror video for a comedy network—precisely why it’s funny to them. “We wanted to make something within that context that had no jokes in it. We took it very seriously and we thought that was kind of the whole joke,” Resnick explains. It has had more than 1.7 million views on YouTube.



Ben O'Brien '06 in character as Earth Universe, a mock spiritual guru.

Wham City Comedy is an offshoot of Wham City Collective, a group of artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers—largely Purchase alumni—based in Baltimore. Since 2005, they’ve produced live shows of music, experimental theatre, sketch comedy, stand-up, and videos to critical acclaim, often with an absurdist sense of humor as the through line.

Kelberman, a founding member of Wham City, remembers being lured to Baltimore after graduation by the promise of low rent and huge warehouse spaces in which to live. Five or six friends moved initially, followed by a slow trickle of others as they graduated. The Wham City moniker came from Dan Deacon ’04 (music), another founding member, who infamously trashed the flyers announcing the new name for a Purchase dormitory, the Outback, and replaced them with signs and posters announcing that the winning name was actually Wham City.



Still from Live Forever as You Are Now with Alan Resnick.



Still from Unedited Footage of a Bear.

Kelberman is a digital artist and a freelance Web designer who just ended a six-year stint as a weekly cartoonist for the *Baltimore City Paper*.

O’Brien first tried comedy during secret open mic nights at Purchase, in an event called “The Cave.” He remembers, “It was a really safe space to start trying comedy. There was very bizarre and weird stuff happening.” Obsessed as a child with Steve Martin, O’Brien created the stage and online character Earth Universe, a mock spiritual guru who became enlightened by reading the text on a bottle of Dr. Bronner’s soap and now thinks he’s the reincarnation of the late soap-maker turned New Age proselytizer. “Earth Universe espouses philosophies that are takes on the hypocrisies or silly things about New Age culture that I’ve observed by being into New Age culture for so long,” he says. O’Brien also teaches filmmaking at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Wham City Comedy mounts monthly showcases in Baltimore and performs every other month at the Annoyance Theater in Brooklyn. The troupe is currently working on another project for Adult Swim as well as a sketch comedy pilot for a production company that’s an offshoot of Fox. Stay tuned.



Wham City Comedy members O'Brien, Resnick, and Rackleff, in character.

*It’s always funny until someone gets hurt. Then it’s just hilarious.* —Bill Hicks

MELODY (FENSTER) FITZGERALD '96  
(drama studies)



Accountant by day, comedian by night, Melody Fitzgerald takes the stage and announces, “I’ve decided that 2015 is the year I get in shape...and the shape that I’ve chosen is a pear.” The audience bursts out laughing. “You don’t have to work that hard,” she adds.

Fitzgerald comes from a family whose members all have a sardonic, sarcastic wit. She was drawn to comedy from the time she was a child. She once put makeup on her younger brother, dressed him up, and changed his name to Josephine for laughs. “I basically made my brother into a drag queen,” she says.

The Rockland County native worked as an actor and stand-up comedian in New York after graduation, and then moved to Los Angeles in 2002 to be a drummer and singer in a ska/punk band. When the band broke up, Fitzgerald was itching to do something creative again. She turned back to comedy. She jokes that it was to avoid the hassle of lugging equipment as a member of a band, but it’s the audience reaction to comedy that’s the real draw. “When a joke hits and you make the audience laugh, there is nothing like it,” she says. So what about when a joke bombs? “It’s the worst thing in the world. And you can’t wait to go up and try it again.”

Her favorite comedian is the late Bill Hicks, whom she admired for his fearlessness and passion. For her, comedy is also about truth and honesty—and she feels it’s a requirement for all. “Satire and humor are necessary for a well-rounded society,” she says. “Satire—we didn’t get that from *Saturday Night Live*; we got that from the Greeks. The basis of storytelling is still rooted in what the Greeks gave us thousands of years ago,” she says. “It’s unfortunate they’re now known for their high debt, but at one point, they gave us great theatre.”



With improv, it’s a combination of listening and not trying to be funny. —Kristen Wiig

WE HATE MOVIES

- CHRIS CABIN ’05 (dramatic writing)
- ANDREW JUPIN ’06 (cinema studies)
- STEPHEN SAJDAK ’06 (creative writing)
- ERIC SZYSZKA ’06 (cinema studies)



Tune into any *We Hate Movies* podcast and a genuine sense of camaraderie and familiarity quickly emerges. It’s natural, since Chris Cabin, Andrew Jupin, Stephen Sajdak, and Eric Szyszka have been watching movies, and humorously criticizing them, since their

days at Purchase. “We would get together in our dorm and watch bad Charles Bronson movies and just make fun of them out loud,” Jupin recalls.

*We Hate Movies* is a weekly podcast that lam-bastes, mostly without exception, “bad” movies that are at least ten years old. Since 2010, the group has released more than 200 episodes, and last spring Sideshow Network added *We Hate Movies* to its roster of podcasts. The opportunity resulted in a wide-ranging interview with legendary comedian Gilbert Gottfried.

*We Hate Movies* is an offshoot of Private Cabin, a comedy collective whose members all met at Purchase and who describe themselves as “comedians, writers, critics, and guys who thought watching movies as a college education wasn’t a waste of money.” They’ve produced Web series, short videos, and live, staged comedy shows, and their work has been featured on Cracked.com and FunnyorDie.com.

Along with Justin J. Case ’05 (dramatic writing), Adam Schulmerich ’05 (dramatic writing), and Sean Weiner ’05 (cinema studies), the group began writing together and performing shows on campus in the Humanities Theatre in 2005 and 2006. Jupin got his start after he took a comedic role in a one-act-play festival put on by the dramatic-writing program. He was hooked. Sajdak had always been drawn to humor. “I used it as a way of not being so terribly awkward and unconvincing as a person,” he says. An outburst of laughter follows before he adds, “It’s always been a crutch, and so it worked out for me.”

Jupin and Sajdak both trained at New York City’s Upright Citizens Brigade and the Magnet Theater, groups renowned for developing improvisational comedy. In addition to working with Jupin, Sajdak formed an improv group called Swartzlander, which performs monthly in Brooklyn and at theatres and festivals along the East Coast.



The Pros and Cons of the Interwebs

How does the digital age affect creative people working in comedy? The form taken by a comedic presence in 2015 could hardly have been imagined even 10 years ago. As with anything reliant on technology, there are pros and cons.

Andrew Jupin concedes that *We Hate Movies* wouldn’t have an audience outside the five boroughs if it weren’t for social media and the Internet. The group has pockets of fans in Brazil, Ireland, and the U.K. But its members also have to work harder, since podcasts are experiencing a wave of popularity and many more people are producing them.

Is technology a double-edged sword? Ben O’Brien says, “It’s more just like a sword.” He has an on-again, off-again relationship with social media. What he dislikes most is the obsession with “likes” and “views.” After *Unedited Footage of a Bear* went viral, he took it for granted. “I didn’t feel as if I witnessed a million people see it.” He misses the personal connection. “We do three-week tours of comedy and we don’t end up playing in front of a thousand people. When a video gets 5,000 views, it should be amazing. But then a video of a baboon peeing into its mouth gets 30 million views. You end up quantifying everything and objectifying viewership in this way that sucks the life out of it.”

Dani Michaeli appreciates how accessible the digital world

makes people, and encourages students to use social media channels to connect to writers and producers working behind the scenes, even on famous shows. “The people behind the scenes aren’t that famous and if you take an interest in them, they’re typically flattered,” he says.

For Amanda Seales, the digital world and social media have allowed her to connect with niche audiences, a critical component in rising above the content din. But she readily admits that she’s not a digital marketer, and the urgency takes its toll: “In this day and age on the Web, things don’t operate in tomorrows, they operate in now. Everything is now, now, now.”

The social media world was instrumental in helping Victor Cruz raise funds to support his new film. As an actor, he found it challenging at first to accept that content might never be viewed anywhere but on mobile devices or computers, but as a content creator he’s happy to share his material with as many people as possible.

Stephen Sajdak explains how he and Eric Szyszka would “sock-puppet,” or pretend to be others online, to spread the word about their podcast in the early days. “Sometimes we got called out for being jerks, but most times people would check it out. It spreads, not like wildfire, but like house fire,” Sajdak says. “One structure at a time,” Szyszka adds. Another benefit for Sajdak: “I’m a lot more handsome over the air than I am on stage.”



Chris Cabin, Andrew Jupin, Eric Szyszka, and Stephen Sajdak of the *We Hate Movies* podcast.

Their improvisational training is put to use whether they’re live on stage or recording a podcast in their living rooms. “It’s still all about listening to what other people are saying and expounding on a point someone made or building on the seed of a joke someone planted,” Jupin explains.

Szyszka doesn’t do improv, but has worked full time in television since he graduated. He’s currently at the cable network Showtime in operations and movie acquisition. Jupin is a film programmer at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville, NY, and an adjunct lecturer in Purchase’s School of Film and Media Studies, and Sajdak works in print production at Marvel Comics. A writer, editor, and critic, Cabin is currently an associate editor at Collider.com and on the staff of SlantMagazine.com.

Even though they all hold “day jobs,” they treat *We Hate Movies* as a second job, not as a hobby. That seriousness has resulted in a steadily increasing listenership. “It’s grown quite a bit from where it started. We’re lucky,” Jupin says. Without missing a beat, Sajdak adds, “It started with my mom, and Andrew’s mom. Eric’s mom wasn’t on board and Chris doesn’t speak to his mother.”

Private Cabin ventured into the feature-film world last year with *We Are Strangers*, an entirely improvised film about old relationships ending and new ones beginning. It was an official selection of the New Filmmakers New York 2014 festival and premiered at Anthology Film Archives. The group’s second feature is in postproduction.

The members have been in talks about television projects, but nothing has materialized yet. For now, they’d like to take *We Hate Movies* on the road, do more live shows, and keep expanding what they’re doing.

The secret to humor is surprise. —Aristotle

You don’t need a license to drive a sandwich. —Spongebob Squarepants

DANI MICHAELI ’93 (film)

Rochester native Dani Michaeli decided on the film program at Purchase at the suggestion of his best friend. They’d grown up together watching movies and making their own with Super 8 and home video. That friend is Tom Cross ’93, who won an Oscar in 2015 for editing the film *Whiplash*. For Michaeli, his path has led to a successful career writing for hit children’s cartoons, a tale he recounts with heavy doses of self-deprecating humor that belie his accomplishments.



Top: *Hamsters with Moustaches* created by Dani Michaeli ’93; Nickelodeon’s *Harvey Beaks*.

Michaeli pictured himself as a writer/director when he graduated, but after holding several jobs in the film industry, he felt he lacked the personality required to be a director. Unsure of his next move, he turned to a friend who worked at *South Park*. While Michaeli doesn’t recommend this approach, he bugged his friend until Michaeli got a meeting with the cartoon’s writing team. “The meeting went terribly,” he recalls. A year later, he was invited to join the staff after the same friend showed a short film of Michaeli’s during a writers’ meeting. Michaeli lasted there for half a season, “which I’m told is a lot longer than some people,” he says.

Believing the *South Park* credit was his best to date, he overhauled his résumé and landed a writing job on *Spongebob Squarepants*, a position he held for more than five years. Since he felt as if he got the job “by the skin of his teeth,” he immersed himself in learning all he could about Spongebob, Nickelodeon, TV animation, and writing scripts for shows. “I went from being unqualified to slightly more qualified,” he says.

He’s now head writer on Nickelodeon’s new hit show *Harvey Beaks*. He’d like to develop an animated television show of his own someday, but in the meantime, a series he created, *Hamsters with Moustaches*, is available on the YouTube channel DreamworksTV.

Michaeli never considered himself funny—just eccentric. He hopes his eccentricity will lead him to jokes that haven’t been told before or gags that no one is expecting. “I’m hoping it helps that I’m kind of a weirdo because maybe that’s something I can deliver,” he says.

He believes it’s a great time to be working in television, as networks, producers, and studios are allowing creative people more input. “They’re treating it more like an art form,” he says. “You can bring your pet project to a network and tell very personal stories. It’s fantastic.”

Editor’s note: Space prohibits our featuring all the Purchase alumni who have ventured into comedy and humor. However, please share your own story or those of others for possible use in future articles: alumni@purchase.edu.



■ FOUR MUSICIANS NAMED MOODY SCHOLARS



Beatriz Martin-Ruiz, Ravi Rajan, Malik McLaurine, Nicole Davis, Alex Hamburger, Andrew Latona, Pete Malinverni

Last April, four Conservatory of Music students were honored as recipients of the James Moody Scholarship for 2015–16: Nicole Davis, trumpet; Alex Hamburger, flute, saxophone, and voice; Andrew Latona, guitar; and Malik McLaurine, bass.

To become a James Moody Scholar at Purchase, a student must excel in scholastic achievement, community leadership, and musical aptitude.

National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master James Moody and his wife, Linda, established the James Moody Scholarship Endowed Fund in 2005. They had long dreamed of helping young jazz musicians expand their career development through college educations, and chose Purchase College as the home for the scholarship.

■ SUNY CHANCELLOR’S AWARD FOR STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Steven Brown (arts management, history), Anna Krol (Latin American studies, sociology), and Tyler Madell (environmental studies, political science) were the class of 2015 winners of the Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence. A special recognition ceremony took place in Albany on April 2, 2015.



Nancy Zimpher and Anna Krol ‘15

The Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence honors State University of New York students who have best demonstrated and been recognized for their integration of academic excellence with other aspects of their lives, which may include leadership, campus involvement, athletics, career achievement, community service, or creative and performing arts.

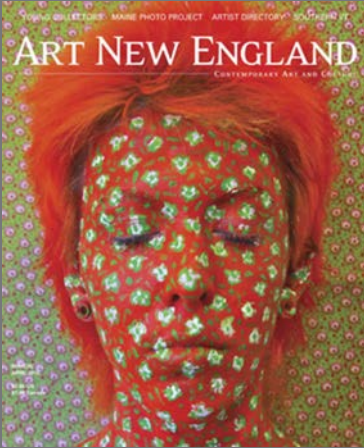
■ SUNY ANNOUNCES SCHOLAR ATHLETES

Elizabeth Osowiecki ‘16 (journalism) and Samantha Rich ‘16 (sociology) were named recipients of the 2014–15 Scholar Athlete Award, which recognizes outstanding academic excellence and athletic achievement. For the women’s basketball team, Osowiecki averaged 15.4 points per game this season. Rich led the women’s lacrosse team to the Skyline Conference semifinals following an 11-win season.

■ TWO WINNERS IN SUNY-WIDE FILM FESTIVAL

The SUNY-Wide Film Festival took place in April 2015 and two Purchase film majors scored top honors. *Luna and the Tide* by Benjamin Davis ‘17 won first place in the Fiction category and *How to Breathe Underwater* by Jennifer McCabe ‘15 took first place in the Experimental category.

■ ART NEW ENGLAND COVER FEATURES WORK BY ART+DESIGN STUDENT



Lauryn Welch ‘15 (BFA, painting) had her work featured at Vermont’s Brattleboro Art Museum in the *Portraits, Expanded* exhibition last winter, which led *Art New England* magazine to feature her image *Camouflage for the Colorblind 6*, 2012, on the cover of its March/April 2015 issue.

*Art New England* cover features work by Lauryn Welch ‘15: *Camouflage for the Colorblind 6*, 2012, photographic self-portrait with acrylic body paint and textile backdrop, 36 x 36 in.

■ PURCHASE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PLAYED WITH NATALIE MERCHANT

Last March, famed singer/songwriter Natalie Merchant performed an orchestral concert of her best-known music accompanied by the Purchase Symphony Orchestra (PSO) at the Performing Arts Center. The PSO is made up of 42 students from the School of the Arts’ Conservatory of Music.

Director of the Performing Arts Center Harry McFadden conceived of pairing Merchant with the PSO after speaking with her representatives. Merchant had recently performed orchestral versions of her music with orchestras across the country.

The students rehearsed a list of possible songs for months leading up to the show; then Merchant rehearsed with the PSO throughout the afternoon prior to the performance to determine the set list for that night.

Merchant rose to prominence as lead singer of 10,000 Maniacs, but enjoyed even greater success as a solo artist beginning in the 1990s.

■ PURCHASE DANCE COMPANY AT NEW YORK LIVE ARTS

The Purchase Dance Company, the performing company of the Conservatory of Dance, presented a spring concert at Manhattan’s New York Live Arts last May.

The professional-caliber students performed in two exciting programs of contemporary and classically based works by acclaimed choreographers and talented newcomers, including works by the popular modern-dance choreographers Doug Varone ‘78, Azure Barton, and Sarah Mettin ‘11.

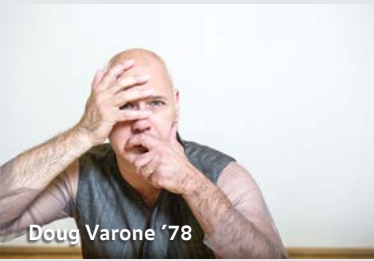


Shannon Gillen’s *Sieland*

Christopher Duggan

■ DANCE ALUMNI HONORED

DOUG VARONE RECEIVES DORIS DUKE AWARD



Phil Knot

Doug Varone ‘78

have proven their artistic vitality and commitment to their field.

Award-winning choreographer and director Varone works in dance, theatre, opera, film, and fashion. He is a passionate educator and articulate advocate for dance. His New York City–based group, Doug Varone and Dancers, has won commissions from and its presentations have received critical acclaim at leading international venues for close to three decades. Varone is currently a lecturer in the Conservatory of Dance and received the President’s Distinguished Alumni Award from Purchase College in 2007.

KYLE ABRAHAM EARNS PRINCESS GRACE FOUNDATION AWARD

The Princess Grace Foundation announced its 2015 award winners in August, and choreographer and dancer Kyle Abraham ‘00 was given a Special Project Award.

Special Project Awards nurture the talent of past Princess Grace Award recipients by giving them the opportunity to return with project-specific funding requests. Abraham received a Dance-Choreography Fellowship in 2010. He was on campus this fall rehearsing a piece for the Conservatory of Dance’s spring 2016 concert.



Kyle Abraham ‘00

■ GENE O’DONOVAN HONORED AS BACKSTAGE LEGEND



Dan Hanessian (left) with Gene O’Donovan

In April 2015, one of Broadway’s most respected and successful theatre technicians took center stage to receive the fourth Backstage Legends and Masters Award, presented by the Broadway Technical Theatre History Project at Purchase College. Gene O’Donovan, a distinguished theatre technician, has been a leader on Broadway for more than 40 years.

His technical expertise has directly enhanced a host of legendary Broadway productions, including *The Wiz*, *42nd Street*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Who’s Tommy*, *Master Class*, *Titanic*, *Spamalot*, *Frost/Nixon*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Matilda*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

O’Donovan was the founder of one of the most influential scene shops of the past 30-plus years (Hudson Scenic Studio). He then founded Aurora Productions, which has supervised more than 200 Broadway shows and many off-Broadway shows, tours, and inter-

national productions in London’s West End, Europe, and Australia. He helped reshape how production management for Broadway is handled to this day.

“There are others who have had remarkable careers in this industry, but you would be hard pressed to find someone else with Gene’s range, depth, and legacy,” says Dan Hanessian, associate professor at Purchase, who launched the Broadway Technical Theatre History Project in 2011 to spotlight individuals who have been central to the realization of Broadway productions for many years, but are not typically provided recognition through the Tony or Drama Desk Awards.

■ SO GREEN

PURCHASE RECOGNIZED FOR ITS COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



(L to R) Marsha Gordon, president/CEO, the Business Council of Westchester; Dani Glaser, founder/CEO, Green Team Spirit & Westchester Green Business Challenge; Tom Kelly, senior energy manager, Purchase College; Rob Astorino, Westchester County executive.

On June 4, 2015, the Westchester Green Business Challenge recognized Purchase College with an award in the category of Outstanding Achievement—Land Use & Water Resources. Westchester County Executive Rob P. Astorino and Marsha Gordon, CEO of the Business Council of

Westchester, hosted the event. Two major green infrastructure projects to manage stormwater runoff—porous pavers and bioretention swales—led to the acknowledgment. The bioretention swales will divert water away from the hardscape, while the porous pavers allow it to permeate the surface instead of going down the storm drains.

PURCHASE JOINS THE WORKPLACE CHARGING CHALLENGE

Purchase College is proud to support the development of the national plug-in electric vehicle charging infrastructure by joining the U.S. Department of Energy’s Workplace Charging Challenge—a national partnership program that aims to increase the number of employers offering workplace charging to 500 by 2018. Purchase is the third organization in Westchester County to join the growing list of employers (now numbering nearly 200) offering charging stations nationwide, and is the second SUNY campus to join the effort.

■ PURCHASE RANKED TIER 1 BY U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT AND MORE

The 2016 edition of *U.S. News & World Report’s Best Colleges* ranks Purchase College as one of the “Top 10 Public Liberal Arts Colleges” in the nation and a “Tier 1 National Liberal Arts College.”

“We’re proud that once again Purchase has been nationally recognized for its commitment to academic excellence,” says President Thomas J. Schwarz. “We remain dedicated to providing the highest-quality education in the liberal arts, sciences, and performing and visual arts. We are proud to provide an affordable and accessible experience, while nurturing the creative process and open-minded engagement that are the hallmarks of a Purchase education.”



In addition to the *U.S. News & World Report* recognition, Purchase has been included on a number of other highly significant college-ranking lists:

- The Princeton Review named Purchase College to its *Best 380 Colleges, 2016 Edition*.
- Purchase was named one of the best colleges in the Northeast by the Princeton Review on its Web feature *The 2016 Best Colleges: Region by Region*, which saluted 649 colleges in four regions of the country—Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and West—that were considered academically outstanding and well worth consideration in the college search.
- *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* named Purchase College to its list of "Best College Values, 2015." Purchase also was included on the list of the "Top 30 Best Values in Small Colleges."

### ■ GUERRILLA STREET SIGNS MADE ON CAMPUS ON VIEW IN MANHATTAN

Last spring, students came together from across campus to participate in a guerrilla street-sign workshop, which yielded the design and production of official-looking directional signage, but with messages meant to address systemic racism. "White Guilt Is Complacency" and "Warning: When Being Racist, Please Be Sure to Use the Appropriate Language" were some of the messages. The signs were mounted and hung in the Student Services Building. In October, they found a larger audience. As part of the Art in Odd Places public-art project, they were posted in Manhattan along 14th Street from Avenue A to Avenue C from Oct. 7 through Oct. 11, 2015.

Assistant professor of Art+Design Christopher Robbins ran the Black Lives Matter Guerrilla Street-Sign Workshop in conjunction with Ghana Think Tank, the organization he co-founded. Curator Sara Reisman, who had been on campus teaching Art as Service, a contemporary art theory seminar, invited Ghana Think Tank to participate in an accompanying exhibition she curated in the Maass Gallery, *I Serve Art*.

### ■ WELCOME TO GIRLS IN SMARTECH STEM CAMP

Sixteen seventh- and eighth-grade girls from throughout Westchester came to campus for SMARTech, a two-week STEM camp, in July 2015. The program was organized through a partnership with Girls Inc. of Westchester County, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young girls through comprehensive educational programs and resources. SMARTech camp introduced the middle-school girls, who came from a variety of backgrounds, to the exciting possibilities available in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and gave them the confidence and support they need to pursue those subjects.

The students spent time in the college's state-of-the-art labs and met with women working in STEM fields, including



Assistant Professor Elizabeth Middleton, with whom the campers did a chemistry experiment, and Jeanine Meyer, professor of mathematics and computer science, who answered questions during "Snack with a Scientist."

### ■ NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA RESIDES ON CAMPUS

Once again, the National Youth Orchestra (NYO) of the United States—composed of 122 extraordinary musicians from across the country, ages 16 to 19—came to Purchase for a two-week residency and then gave its premiere performance at the Performing Arts Center in July before embarking on a seven-city tour of China. The musicians performed under the baton of the great conductor Charles Dutoit and were joined by China's superstar pianist Li Yundi. The NYO-USA is a program run by Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute.

### ■ COMMENCEMENT 2015

The 43rd annual commencement ceremony was held on Friday, May 15, 2015, at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, NY. Degrees were conferred upon the class of more than 1,100 graduating scholars and artists representing dozens of majors and 14 countries. This year's honorees included Barnard College president Debora Spar, playwright David Henry Hwang, and PepsiCo chair and CEO Indra Nooyi. Sound artist Stephen Vitiello '86 received the Distinguished Alumni Award. Philosophy major Angélica Pilar Piña Alcantara represented the senior class and spoke movingly about her struggles to attend college as an immigrant. Purchase faculty member Joe Ferry and the Big Ska Band continued the tradition of performing. Senator Charles E. Schumer congratulated the class and called Purchase College "one of the best institutions of higher learning in the country." All of the speakers touched upon the day's theme of service and activism and encouraged the graduates to become involved in their communities.

### ■ RUTH WILSON GILMORE NAMED FIRST EUGENE GRANT DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR

Ruth Wilson Gilmore has been chosen from a competitive field of nominated scholars as the inaugural Eugene Grant Distinguished Scholar. Eugene and Emily Grant created the prize to promote academic excellence and student success at Purchase College.

Gilmore, a professor of geography at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, will contribute to the college's mission of



(L to R) President Schwarz with honorary-degree recipients Debora Spar, president of Barnard College; playwright David Henry Hwang; and Indra Nooyi, chair and chief executive officer of PepsiCo.

Photos: Bob Luckey

social activism and community engagement through her innovative work on the environment. Inspired by Gilmore's work, Purchase students in areas such as environmental studies, sociology, economics, visual arts, and new media will use water as a lens to investigate the price of food, medical conditions, housing quality, land displacement, and other issues related to differential access to resources.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore serves as a professor of geography in the doctoral program in earth and environmental sciences and as director of the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics at the Graduate Center. Her wide-ranging research interests include revolution and reform, environments and movements, prisons, urban-rural continuities, and the African diaspora. From 2010 to 2011, she was president of the American Studies Association (ASA), the nation's oldest and largest association devoted to the interdisciplinary study of American culture and history.

In 2012, the ASA honored Gilmore with its Angela Davis Award for Public Scholarship, an award that recognizes scholars who have used their scholarship for the "public good." Her first book, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, has won many awards. Gilmore lectures widely, works regularly with grassroots organizations, and is known for the broad accessibility of her research. She holds a Ph.D. in economic geography and social theory from Rutgers University.

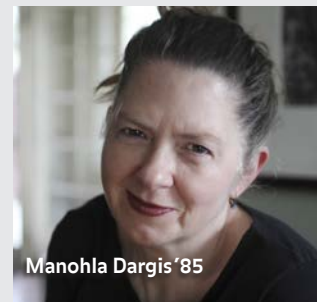
### ■ DURST DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

The Durst Distinguished Lecture Series brings renowned authors and critics to campus for compelling and timely discussions. On Sept. 28, 2015, Manohla Dargis '85 (literature), co-chief film critic of the *New York Times* and 2015–16 Durst Distinguished Writer in Residence, moderated a panel discussion with Wesley Morris, staff writer for *Grantland*, Emily Nussbaum, television critic at the *New Yorker*, and Amy Taubin, film critic and contributing editor at *Film Comment* and *Sight and Sound*.

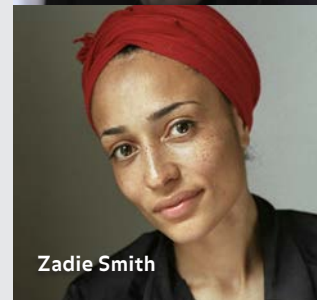
Zadie Smith spoke on Oct. 7. She's the prizewinning author of four novels: *White Teeth* (2000), *The Autograph Man* (2002), *On Beauty* (2005), and *NW* (2012), named as one of the *New York Times*' "Ten Best Books of the Year," as well as numerous essays and reviews. Born in London, Smith currently teaches creative writing at NYU.

Finally, Nov. 4 brought Tracy K. Smith to campus. She has published three award-winning books of poetry: *The Body's Question* (2003), *Duende* (2007), and *Life on Mars* (2011), which won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Her most recent book is the acclaimed memoir *Ordinary Light* (2015). She teaches at Princeton University.

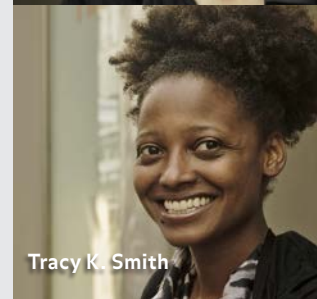
The Durst Distinguished Lecture Series is made possible by the Roy and Shirley Durst Distinguished Chair in Literature Endowment.



Manohla Dargis '85



Zadie Smith



Tracy K. Smith

### ■ PHOTO BY DANIEL NEWMAN '14 EMERGES AS BEST IN NIKON CONTEST

A captivating photograph by Daniel Newman '14 (mathematics/computer science) rose to the top of Nikon's "I Am Next Contest," emerging from 14,000 entries in the company's search for the "next great visual storyteller."

In Newman's photograph, his brother Eric is receiving a nerve-block procedure. Certainly the image resonated with voters, but it was the story behind it that really struck a chord. His brother has battled debilitating side effects from multiple concussions, and Newman hopes to raise awareness and educate others about the serious impact they have on athletes and their families.

"Daniel's expression of his brother's struggle and his own passion for educating others about the dangers of concussions is a perfect example of the spirit of Generation Image, exemplified through his stunning yet moving contest-winning image," says Lisa Baxt, associate general manager of communications at Nikon Inc.

Newman had a longtime interest in photography, but had been working in computer programming when he transferred to Purchase to complete his bachelor's degree. He enrolled in a photojournalism class with adjunct lecturer and photographer Robert Sabo and found the experience transforming—and a mentor in Sabo.

"There was something that clicked for Daniel when he took my photojournalism class. I'd like to think I made some contribution but really it was his own doing. He fell in love with photography and this love showed up in his images. He has since used this passion and enthusiasm to excel and make even better pictures," Sabo writes.

Newman is currently attending Indiana University to earn his master's degree in human-computer interaction.

### ■ THE HAMLET PROJECT

A group of ambitious Purchase students spent last summer living in Saigon, Vietnam, working on the Hamlet Project (hamletprojectvietnam.com), a multidisciplinary art project that aims to strengthen social and cultural ties among members of the millennial generation in the United States and Vietnam.

"The Hamlet Project is designed to shed a new light on Vietnamese art practices that have previously been undiscovered and unrepresented in the Western arts community, and to utilize the universal language of the arts as a tool to find a common ground for communication and growth," according to its website.



(L to R) The Hamlet Project students Gabby Carr, Max Mooney, Daniel Croix Henderson, William D. Miller, Aidan Macaluso, and Emily Kessler.





The Hamlet Project.

The group spent two and a half months producing the first theatrical collaboration between New York City and Saigon-based artists in the history of theatre: an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Set in a concrete room converted into a theatre, the production featured an all-Vietnamese cast of actors and dancers, removed all spoken language, and used the human body and a continuous soundscape to let the narrative unfold.

Described as “bold,” “riveting,” and “vibrant,” the production received rave reviews, and has captured the attention of the National Theatre and other international theatre companies and publications. And what’s more, the Hamlet Project raised 12 million VND (about \$550 in U.S. dollars) for the Saigon Children’s Charity. The group plans to release a short film documenting its journey in the coming months.

The following Purchase students are members of the Hamlet Project team: artistic director Daniel Croix Henderson ’17 (acting), choreographer Emily Kessler ’17 (dance), lighting designer Aidan Macaluso ’17 (film), scenic designer William D. Miller ’17 (film), and documentary director Maxwell Mooney ’17 (film).

■ PURCHASE MUSIC CAPTURES ATTENTION AT SXSW

Musical acts hailing from Purchase impressed audiences at SXSW last March and critics noticed. The renowned annual festival in Austin, TX, showcases the leading edge of music, film, and emerging technologies and featured more than 2,000 musical acts in 2015. WIRED.com placed not one, but two acts hailing from Purchase on its top-10 list in a story called “Trust Us, These 10 Bands at SXSW are About to Blow Up.” Field Mouse is a band founded by Purchase alumni Rachel Browne ’09 and Andrew Futral ’04, and Vérité is Kelsey Byrne ’12.



Dear Alumni and Friends:

After serving on the Alumni Association board since 2010, I’m really excited to write you as its new president. I’m so proud to be a graduate of Purchase. We all know there are few colleges quite like this one and while everyone’s experience may have been different, the culture and traditions unique to Purchase will bind us all forever.

It’s now my job to get all of you excited and engaged, whether you graduated in the seventies, nineties, or in 2015. I’d also like to work with current students to ease their transition from life at Purchase to life as alumni. As a millennial, I hope my perspective will bring a new voice and fresh ideas to the table.

Many of you have expressed an interest in giving back to Purchase, but aren’t quite sure how to get started. So here are two ideas. The first is to donate whatever amount you can to the Purchase Fund, a critical source of unrestricted funds for the College that directly fulfills the most urgent needs of current students and faculty. Look for the Giving menu on purchase.edu to discover the different ways you can help and the link to donate online.

The second is to get involved in the planning of next year’s Heliotrope & Puce All-Alumni Ball, scheduled for the spring of 2016. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard, “I wish I had gone,” since last April. For those of you who did attend the H&P event, you’ll remember how great it was to connect with alumni from all decades and with faculty and staff members who may have had an impact during your time at Purchase.

Don’t miss out again. Be sure to get tickets for the next one. It was a fantastic party and it’s a fun way to support Purchase. To get involved in the planning, contact alumni@purchase.edu.

Finally, I’d like to thank Jeffrey Putman for his many years of service and for showing me the ropes.

Sincerely,

Kevin Collymore ’10  
kevin.collymore@purchase.edu

Kevin Collymore currently works in higher education as academic counselor, collegiate programs, at Barnard College/Columbia University. He graduated from Purchase with a major in political science and a minor in economics.

In Memoriam

**Vivien Eng** ’85 (dance) died on Sept. 3, 2015, from injuries she suffered when a fire swept through her Hell’s Kitchen apartment. The 51-year-old was once a member of the famed Martha Graham Dance Company. She appeared on Broadway in a 1996 revival of *The King and I* and on regional stages in musical ensembles. Eng played a nurse in Lee Daniels’ 2009 breakout film *Precious* and was an extra on television’s *Law & Order*.

**Jeanne Mischo** ’85 (visual arts) passed away on July 27, 2015, following a five-year battle with ovarian cancer. Mischo had earned a master of social work degree at Hunter College and was employed by Housing Works and Bellevue Hospital, helping homeless AIDS patients. She continued to produce her brilliant paintings, drawings, and photographs even during her last weeks.

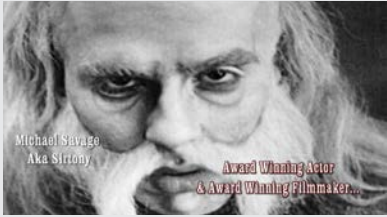
**Jennifer Lewis Catalanello** ’90 (history), of Mount Kisco, NY, died suddenly on Aug. 18, 2015. Lewis Catalanello, who would have been 47 on Aug. 20, was the chief development officer for Burke Rehabilitation Hospital in White Plains, NY, for the past five years.

**Donald Mulvaney** ’93 (MFA, music composition), an accomplished composer, drummer, and musician, passed away on Sept. 14, 2015, when he succumbed to injuries resulting from an Aug. 15 automobile accident that took the lives of his wife, Ledell Mulvaney, and his daughter, Katherine Mulvaney. He was 63.

ALUMNI | in Action

1976

**Jay O. Sanders** (acting) wrote and directed *Unexplored Interior*, an epic play about the madness and majesty of Rwanda, which had its world premiere during the inaugural season of the new Mosaic Theater in Washington, DC.



**Michael Savage** (acting) checked in to say, “Well... time goes by and I realized I needed to write a book that would help all souls who are thinking about becoming actors, and those who already are. The book, *Acting: Everything You Need to Know and How to Do It in Two Hours*, will be released this Christmas or New Year’s; Purchase College and many historic mentors, such as Joe Anthony and Alan Schneider, are included!”

**Bonita Weisman** (literature) writes, “I am still dancing (wherever they let me! Teaching improvisation in the BFA program at the University of Hartford). I own West Hartford Massage Therapy and I am witnessing the awesome lives of my sons Daniel and Zach.”

1977

**Jessica Hentoff** (sociology) had a book, *Watch Out for Flying Kids: How Two Circuses, Two Countries, and Nine Kids Confront Conflict and Build Community*, published this summer. The book is about the partnership between her St. Louis–based youth circus troupe and the Jewish/Arab Galilee Circus in Israel, and it is available from Amazon. Hentoff, who studied circus arts at Purchase, started a Peace through Pyramids partnership with children from Ferguson, MO, and an affluent Jewish day school. Learn more at www.circusharmony.org.

1978

**Tony Castrigno** (acting) has been working on design installations at corporate headquarters buildings, doing some creative projects with former alumni, and continuing his work in corporate theatre with programs for IBM, CVS Health, Novartis, and others. In recent years, members of his studio, including Purchase alumna Christina Fremgen ’13, have completed a number of projects for Heineken, such as a para-holographic projection of the new Heineken bottle and turning the Brown Theater at the Houston Opera into a giant “earth harp.”



1979

**Peter Kurz** (political science) sent along a note: “Having started with the ‘Burnouts’ softball team my freshman year at Purchase in 1975, I today volunteer as president of the Israel Association of Baseball, which has reached #21 in the World Baseball rankings and is steadily moving up. Anyone interested in learning more can go to the website, www.baseball.org.il, or catch us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.”

1979

**Leigh Dillon** (acting), who was known as Lisa Diton while a student at Purchase, was the dialect coach for Clive Owen and Juliet Rylance on *The Knick* for Cinemax (director: Steven Soderbergh). Recent credits include serving as the dialect coach for Julianne Moore and Ellen Page on *Freeheld*, Moore on *Maggie’s Plan* (director: Rebecca Miller), *Show Me a Hero* (director: Paul Haggis for HBO), and *Red Band Society* (ABC Studios). Dillon was the dialect and Russian coach for the cast, including Denzel Washington, on *The Equalizer* (director: Antoine Fuqua).

**Lisan (Sieroty) Lema** (literature) writes, “Earlier this year I opened my own antique shop, Plumed Serpent Vintage, here in Albuquerque, featuring cool midcentury collectibles with an emphasis on old Mexico, while still working at my fine-jewelry job to pay the bills!”



On the front steps of St. Paul’s on the Green Episcopal Church in Norwalk, CT (L to R): Audrey Cozzarin ’79, Rosemary (Mecca) Dellinger ’78, Rev. Elizabeth (Harris) Skaleski (attended Purchase ’76–’78), and Natalie Kikkenborg ’05, MFA ’07. In back: Henry Rapp III, DMD ’89.

Birds of a Feather Worship Together

By Audrey Cozzarin, former president, Purchase Alumni Association

Five Purchase College alumni discovered each other this past year at St. Paul’s on the Green Episcopal Church in Norwalk, CT, agreeing that St. Paul’s embodies the vision and atmosphere of their alma mater: Freedom to be who you are without judgment. St. Paul’s extends a “radical welcome” to seekers on their journey of faith, and all are welcome to God’s table no matter their sexual orientation or religious tradition. The LGBT community in particular feels welcome at St. Paul’s—an active, creative, and bright congregation that “feels” like Purchase.

Audrey (graphic designer/yoga teacher), Rosemary (bassoonist/Spanish teacher), Liz (ordained Episcopal deacon), Natalie (choral and opera singer), and Henry (dentist) are thrilled that fellow Purchase alumni have found their way to a sacred place, a church that celebrates people for who they are. It’s natural that they flocked to St. Paul’s.

1980

**Terry McCarthy** (acting) has written *Words in Music*, which was presented by Artists without Walls starting Nov. 15, 2015, at the Cell Theater in New York City. Many of the singer/songwriter’s original songs are performed by his band, accompanied by strings and spoken-word artists.



**Robyn (Tanzman) Ochs** (language and culture) coedited a new anthology, *Recognize: The Voices of Bisexual Men*, which was named Best Anthology and Best Nonfiction by the Bisexual Book Awards. The book also was a finalist for a 2015 Lambda Literary Award.

1981

**Julie Eigenberg** (liberal arts) reports that she is “still doing great” and that she won a Grammy Award for songwriting for “Why Not!” in 1983.

1982

**Marissa Chibas** (acting) received a 2015 TCG Fox Foundation Actor Fellowship for Distinguished Achievement. She heads the bilingual initiative Duende Calarts, which collaborates with innovative Latino and Latina artists to make adventurous theatre. For Duende her next project is *Shelter*, which was performed in Los Angeles in the autumn of 2015; it has received grants from the National Education Association’s Art Works program and the Theatre Communications Group. Her solo show *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary* will be presented at Arts Emerson in the spring of 2016.

**J. D. Zeik** (literature), an alumnus and a professor at Purchase, has written a “digital first” series, *The Analyst*, which he is producing with **Karol Martesko-Fenster** ’83 (history). Along with their producing partner, Barbara DeFina (*Goodfellas*, *Casino*), they are working with the New York–based company cinelan.com on preparing this production for the late fall of 2015 or the early spring of 2016.

1984

**Jeffrey M. Markowitz** (design technology) has been working as a show caller at the Pan American Games in Toronto and for many corporate shows; a television stage manager for the Victoria’s Secret fashion show, *America’s Got Talent*, and the Tony Awards; a production supervisor for *Lord of the Rings* in Concert, the *Concert for Havana* with Lang Lang and Chucho Valdes, and the La Masters Equestrian Competition; and a general manager/producer for Madison Square Garden ice skating performances at Rangers games and a new play by Alain Boublil coming soon to off-Broadway.

**Mitchell Zeidwig** (music) performed a Tchaikovsky concerto with the Boston Pops in Symphony Hall.





Send your news, updates, and high-res digital photos to [alumni@purchase.edu](mailto:alumni@purchase.edu). Remember to include your class year and major, and please keep content under 50 words.

1986

**Deirdre (Imershein) Haj** (acting) has relocated to Minneapolis. Her husband, Joseph, is the new artistic director of the Guthrie Theater. Haj continues to direct the Full-Frame Documentary Film Festival, will deliver the keynote speech at the Flyway Film Festival, and recently served as an adjudicator on the Cine Awards and on a National Endowment of the Arts grant panel.

**Alison Kaplan** (literature) was sworn in as a New York attorney last October. She is currently a staff attorney at the Vera Institute’s Guardianship Project. She graduated from Pace School of Law in May 2013. Kaplan continues to serve on the Purchase Alumni Board.

1988

**Regina Curro Gelfer** (visual arts) has completed the illustrations for a young-adult novel, *Sorrow Cave*. The book, written by Deborah E. Bogosian, became available by late November. It contains 41 of Curro Gelfer’s illustrations, which she created using a combination of digital and traditional methods. Curro Gelfer also illustrated the recently published book *There’s No Place Like Home for Sex Education*, a book for parents, by Mary Gossart.

**Lauren Gregg Szekely** (music) will be inducted into the Maryland Entertainment Hall of Fame, in recognition of her many years of musical contributions to and performances on the Maryland music scene. Szekely has been performing professionally in Maryland since moving back home in 1998. From 2000 to 2012, she was the lead singer with the band Paradise. Since 2010, she has been performing as part of the professional music duo Lauren and Rusty. Visit [MarylandParty.com](http://MarylandParty.com).

1991

**Debra Whitman** (music) has led an active musical career as a private piano teacher, professional harpist, and teaching artist. In 1999, she created the Classical Kids Music program to promote music appreciation in children in grades pre-K through 5. Her music-appreciation coloring book, *Composer Celebration*, is available online. She maintains a home studio in Larchmont, NY, with her husband and 10-year-old daughter. For more information, visit [www.debrawhitmanmusic.com](http://www.debrawhitmanmusic.com).

1992

**Mark Viniello** (liberal arts) has used the way he entertained his daughters with stories about mermaids to develop a fantasy brand. When his oldest daughter fell in love with the idea of being a mermaid, Viniello (a 20-year veteran of the Hollywood special-effects industry) fashioned a mermaid tail for her. This led him to create the Enchantails property and the first patented mermaid sleeping bag.

1993

**Charles Luke Brussel** (visual arts) joined First Data as vice president and global head of anticorruption in August 2015. Previously, he led GE Capital’s global anticorruption group and was chief compliance officer of Cengage Learning. Brussel specializes in preventing and detecting corruption and speaks frequently on the subject, most recently

with FBI director Robert Mueller at the Harvard Club in New York.

**Jeff Croiter** (design tech) designed the Broadway productions of *Penn & Teller* and *Something Rotten* and national tours of *Newsies* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*. He recently worked with choreographer Jennifer Muller on her spring season in New York, continuing a 20-plus-year collaboration that began while Croiter was a student at Purchase. He also designed the lighting for the ballet *Dakini*, featured in the television show *Flesh and Bone*.

1994

**Emily E. Axelrod** (literature) currently teaches writing at Montclair State University and Kean University, and works as a private English tutor. In 2014, Axelrod’s book of poetry, *Minor Injuries*, was published by Writers Ink Press. Axelrod lives in Parsippany, NJ, with her husband and son.

**Gillian Lynn Katz** (literature) has written extensively on growing up during the apartheid era in South Africa and immigrating to the USA as a white, Jewish teenager in the 1960s. Her new website, <http://gillianlynnkatz.net>, features all of her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction writing. She received a master of arts in writing from Manhattanville College, and a certificate in screenwriting from UCLA in 2006.

1995

**Marcia Neblett** (visual arts) had a solo exhibition of drawings and prints, *Hybrids*, at the A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, NY, in June 2015.



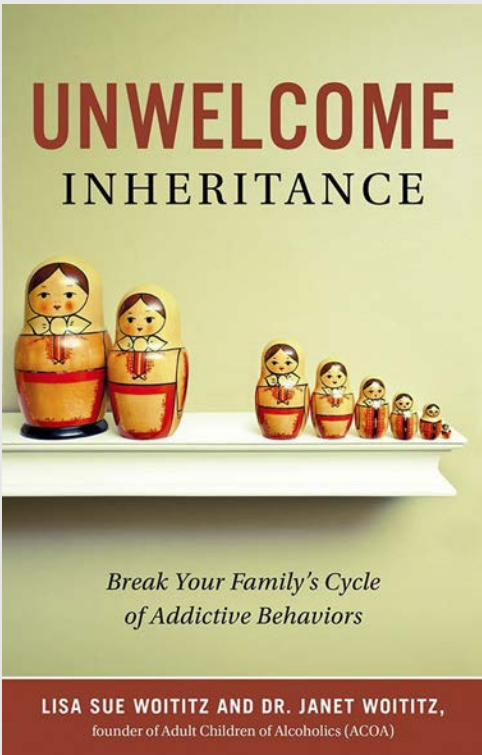
1996

**Eric Rivera** (MFA, dance) is the new assistant professor of dance at Virginia Commonwealth University. He and his family are expecting their second daughter.



1997

**Lisa Woititz** (social sciences) has written a book, *Unwelcome Inheritance: Break Your Family’s Cycle of Addictive Behaviors*. It was published by the Hazelden/Betty Ford Foundation in June 2015.



1998

**Ed Silano** (environmental science) recently accepted a position as an environmental, health, and safety manager for Valero. Silano is regarded as an expert in helping corporations comply with Environmental Protection Agency and Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations.

2001

**Rich Esposito** (liberal studies) credits the understanding of human behavior through film and literature that he gained at Purchase with having helped him pursue a career in teaching and counseling, both in an institutional setting and in his own private practice.



2002

**Kevin Doyle** (drama studies) received a Saari Fellowship Award from the Kone Foundation (Finland). Doyle had playwriting residencies at Playa in Oregon, Willapa Bay AiR in Washington State, and Escape to Create in Florida. He had a Director’s Project Residency at the Drama League of New York and was a writer in residence at the Monty Kulturfaktorij (Belgium). Doyle is currently working to support the creation of *THE ARTS*, a new work of interdisciplinary theatre examining the history of public funding for the arts.

**Jamie London** (drama studies and literature) is currently a Web designer and a freelance writer of business articles, fiction, and poetry. She’s currently attending Trident University for an MBA, which will most likely be in finance. She lives in the



Chelsea section of Manhattan with her boyfriend and their lovely bird, Coco, who is their mascot.

2003

**Tiffany Rea-Fisher** (dance) is the newly appointed artistic director of Elisa Monte Dance.

2004

**Kate Maroney** (music) is recognized for versatile singing in works ranging from the Renaissance to contemporary composers. She has been featured worldwide in over 75 performances of Philip Glass’ *Einstein on the Beach*, and performed in Julia Wolfe’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anthracite Fields*. Maroney appears frequently at such venues as Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, as well as on recordings on Albany Records and New Amsterdam Records. She teaches at the New School (Mannes) and lives in Brooklyn with her jazz-musician husband, Red Wierenga (and two cats, Misha and Ayler). Visit [www.katemaroney.com](http://www.katemaroney.com).

2006

**Cashel Campbell** (liberal studies) recently graduated from Pratt Institute with a master of science in dance/movement therapy. She is a dance artist as well, specializing in raqs sharqui (belly dance) and feminine-empowered movement.

**Emily O’Leary** (art history) was promoted to associate curator at the Derfner Judaica Museum and the Art Collection at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale after nine years. Her exhibition *Vincent Hložník: Between War and Dream* (March 29–Aug. 16, 2015) featured 20 linocut prints from 1962 by Slovak master Vincent Hložník; it was the first time the artist’s work had been shown in the U.S. The exhibition will travel to the consulate general of the Slovak Republic in New York.

**Emily (Stewart) Stoermer** (history) joined BackBay Communications in Boston as a senior account executive after working for seven years in journalism and more recently in marketing. She and her husband live in Lexington, MA, and celebrated their one-year anniversary in August 2015.

2007

**Jared Albert** (journalism) was recently selected by *Adweek* as one of the “PR Industry’s 30 under 30” for 2015. The “30 under 30” list showcases the field’s emerging communication leaders. Albert is currently a senior publicist at Animal Planet.

**Amanda L. Ramharack** (liberal studies) became engaged to Devendra Bachan on May 16, 2015. Their wedding is planned for the fall of 2017.



2008

**Helayna A. Herschkorn** (psychology) completed her PsyD dissertation in September 2014: *Basic Relational Concept Acquisition among Children with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder*. She received her master’s degree in 2011 and her doctorate in 2015 from St. John’s University. Herschkorn was a presenter at the American Psychological Association’s 2015 convention, the National Association of School Psychologists’ 2009 and 2014 conventions, and the Student Affiliates in School Psychology meeting in 2013. She is the school psychologist at Whisconier Middle School in the Brookfield, CT, school district.



2009

**Joel Neville Anderson** (film) programmed Japan Cuts: Festival of New Japanese Film, held in July 2015 at the Japan Society in New York City. The *New York Times* called the festival “a cinematic cornucopia,” and *Time Out New York* said it was a “peerlessly insightful look at the current state of Japanese cinema.” The largest showcase of its kind in North America, Japan Cuts presented a slate of blockbusters and independent features, inaugurating new sections for documentaries, avant-garde films, and restorations, with more guests than ever.





**Sam Newsome** (master of music), a saxophonist and professor of jazz studies at Long Island University (Brooklyn campus), released a book of personal essays, *Life Lessons from the Horn: Essays on Jazz, Originality, and Being a Working Musician* (Some New Press).

2010

**Lauren Chimento** (literature) lives in Philadelphia and works as an editor for the National Board of Medical Examiners. She plays folk music in the band Snagwing, whose music can be heard at snagwing.bandcamp.com. She also has a solo project, Renbird, and her music can be heard at soundcloud.com/renbird.

**Kieran Hartley** (political science) graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law and became an attorney licensed to practice in California. Currently, Hartley is serving as a law clerk for a United States bankruptcy judge in the Southern District of Texas.

2011

**Jonas Borra** (liberal studies), **Michael Curley ’12** (music), **Miller Lulow ’13** (music), and **Garrett DeTemple** (who attended Purchase until 2009) met at Purchase and have formed the band Young Bora. The band is getting a lot of attention; listen to its song “Surround Sound” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B25RWaB9J1E>.

2012

**Matthew Sekellick** (drama studies) received a master of arts in theatre & performance from the University at Buffalo in June. While there, Matthew worked for the Techne Institute for Arts and Emerging Technologies. In June 2013, he trained with the SIT Company at Skidmore College. He is currently an independent theatre artist and has created work for Buffalo’s City of Night and Torn Space Theater.



**Cynthia Stewart** (literature) just completed a year teaching English in an elementary school in the Gangwon Province of South Korea. Previously, she was the festival director for the 2014 Beltane Festival in Rosendale, NY. She also co-hosted the Thru Hiker Prom at the Trail Days Festival in Damascus, VA, for Appalachian Trail hikers. Her travel writing has appeared on appalachiantrails.com. She traveled next to New Zealand on a working holiday visa in November 2015.

2013

**John A. Delgado** (environmental studies) has been working for the Prospect Park Alliance in Brooklyn as a volunteer coordinator. He works with community groups around the city who want to volunteer at Prospect Park, and plans productive projects that satisfy multiple stakeholders. Some of his bigger projects



include creating a management plan designed for urban forest stewardship and a curriculum to engage teens to use their local green spaces in a positive way.

**Molly Pelavin** (film) is producing and directing a new documentary film called *Faith*, which explores same-sex families and LGBTQ rights. Visit [facebook.com/FaithDocumentary](https://facebook.com/FaithDocumentary).

2014

**Bogumila Backiel** (environmental studies) finished an AmeriCorps position at the American Conservation Experience, working on restoration and conservation projects in national parks in the American Southwest. She’s attending graduate school this fall for a master’s degree in environmental conservation at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.



**Dianamarie Graham** (liberal studies) was accepted into the mental health counseling program at Manhattan College. She began her classes this fall.

**Chris Murphy** (film) went to Europe to master the art of romantic interaction and gain an intuitive understanding of the female mind. Now located in London, Murphy gives weekly dating advice seminars and regularly coaches men with low self-esteem on how to spontaneously mastermind *natural* interactions with women. His website is [www.thechrismurphy.com](http://www.thechrismurphy.com).

CORRECTION

PURCHASE magazine, Summer/Fall 2015

We hope you enjoyed the previous issue of PURCHASE magazine. While we work hard to present the facts accurately, we sometimes make mistakes. Fortunately, we have engaged alumni who are willing to provide their stories to help us set the record straight. So thanks to Paul Lehrman ’75, who sent us this regarding our story on the Conservatory of Music:

“The music department first accepted students not in 1973, but in 1972, when there were no dorms on campus and students had to live at Maritime College in the shadow of the Throgs Neck Bridge in the Bronx. Jonathan Lipton was among those first students, and he did indeed graduate in 1976, among the first music students to spend four years at what was then known as SUNY Purchase.

“But there was an earlier graduating class from the music program. In 1973, the Purchase music department started accepting transfer students who already had one or more years of college credit. These transfers came from schools such as Juilliard, Curtis, Columbia, SUNY Potsdam, University of South Dakota, University of Regina, Boston College, and USC.

“The first of these students graduated in 1975. There were eight, and they included Jean Kopperud, now a world-renowned clarinetist and performance artist and professor at SUNY Buffalo; Jill Jaffe, one of the most in-demand violists in New York; Mei Mei Meng, pianist, now on the faculties of both Mannes and Curtis; Larry Blackman, violist and former personnel manager for the Vancouver Symphony; and me, director of the music engineering program at Tufts University. (Those whom I’ve not named should get in touch!)

“Michael Hammond, then dean of music, told us that none of us would be graduated with honors, because ‘It was honor enough to graduate from Purchase.’ He was right.”

We apologize and always welcome your input at [alumni@purchase.edu](mailto:alumni@purchase.edu).

Neuberger Museum of Art

What’s Neu?

For the past two decades, Liza Lou has been challenging traditional definitions of painting, sculpture, and craft through her dazzling installations made almost entirely of glass beads. Measuring approximately 1,400 square feet, *Color Field* is a monumental, shimmering work that blankets the Theatre Gallery floor. Five hundred volunteers worked to assemble this piece composed of stainless steel wires strung with more than two million beads of various color inserted into approximately 1,000 tiles. This exhibition also includes Lou’s *Solid Grey* canvases, a series of woven beaded works in various hues. On view through Feb. 21, 2016.

FREE MEMBERSHIP

Did you know that as an alum you are automatically a member of the Neuberger’s Purchase College Circle of Friends? As a member you get free admission to the museum, all exhibition openings, Neu Nights Out, and our annual Holiday Party. You also get a monthly e-newsletter and 10% off in The Shop. It’s FREE. All you have to do is activate and then annually renew your membership with your current address and email.

Activate or renew TODAY by calling (914) 251-6114.

ON VIEW AND COMING SOON:

**Liza Lou: Color Field and Solid Grey**  
Nov. 8, 2015 – Feb. 21, 2016

**The Instant as Image**  
Jan. 21 – June 26, 2016

**Louise Fishman: A Retrospective**  
April 3 – July 31, 2016

**Landed**  
March 20 – July 3, 2016

**Random Consequences**  
Aug. 28 – Dec. 23, 2016

**Ray Spillenger: Rediscovery of a Black Mountain Painter**  
Sept. 4 – Dec. 23, 2016



THE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Purchase College  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The 2015–2016 season at The Performing Arts Center, Purchase College, continues this winter and spring with its acclaimed roster of world-class artists, renowned dance companies, unique professional theatre, the finest chamber ensembles, contemporary music, comedians, family programs, films, and more.

Winter may be the hottest season at the PAC with the sizzling sounds of the **Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour**, Carlota Santana’s **Flamenco Vivo**, and a live-action graphic novel, *The Intergalactic Nemesis*. The cooler months also include return engagements by the **Martha Graham Dance Company** and the youthful classical music ensemble **Decoda**, as well as the PAC debuts of cellist **Zuill Bailey** and the Montana Repertory Theatre and its explosive production of Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons*.

March, April, and May 2016 will offer returning favorites, including violinist **Eileen Ivers** and singer-guitarist **John Pizzarelli** in a concert featuring the PAC debut of jazz pianist **Ramsey Lewis**. Apollo’s Fire will bring its signature period-instrument approach to Bach’s nearly 300-year-old *St. John Passion*, State Street Ballet offers the classic *Carmen*, and comedians **Colin Mochrie** and **Brad Sherwood** demonstrate their improvisational genius in **Two Man Group**. Other springtime offerings include the fun-for-the-entire family *Clifford the Big Red Dog*.

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center will continue its four-rectal season at the PAC, **Opera at the Cinema** and **National Theatre Live** present high-definition screenings of some of the finest performances from the great stages of the world, and the **Purchase College Conservatories of Music, Dance, and Theatre Arts** continue their seasons of vibrant performances.

For tickets and information, including discounted Create-Your-Own subscription packages, contact The Performing Arts Center’s box office at (914) 251-6200. [www.ArtsCenter.org](http://www.ArtsCenter.org).





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## **Purchase College Alumni Association Board of Directors 2015**

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