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Making Art, Making Life Out West

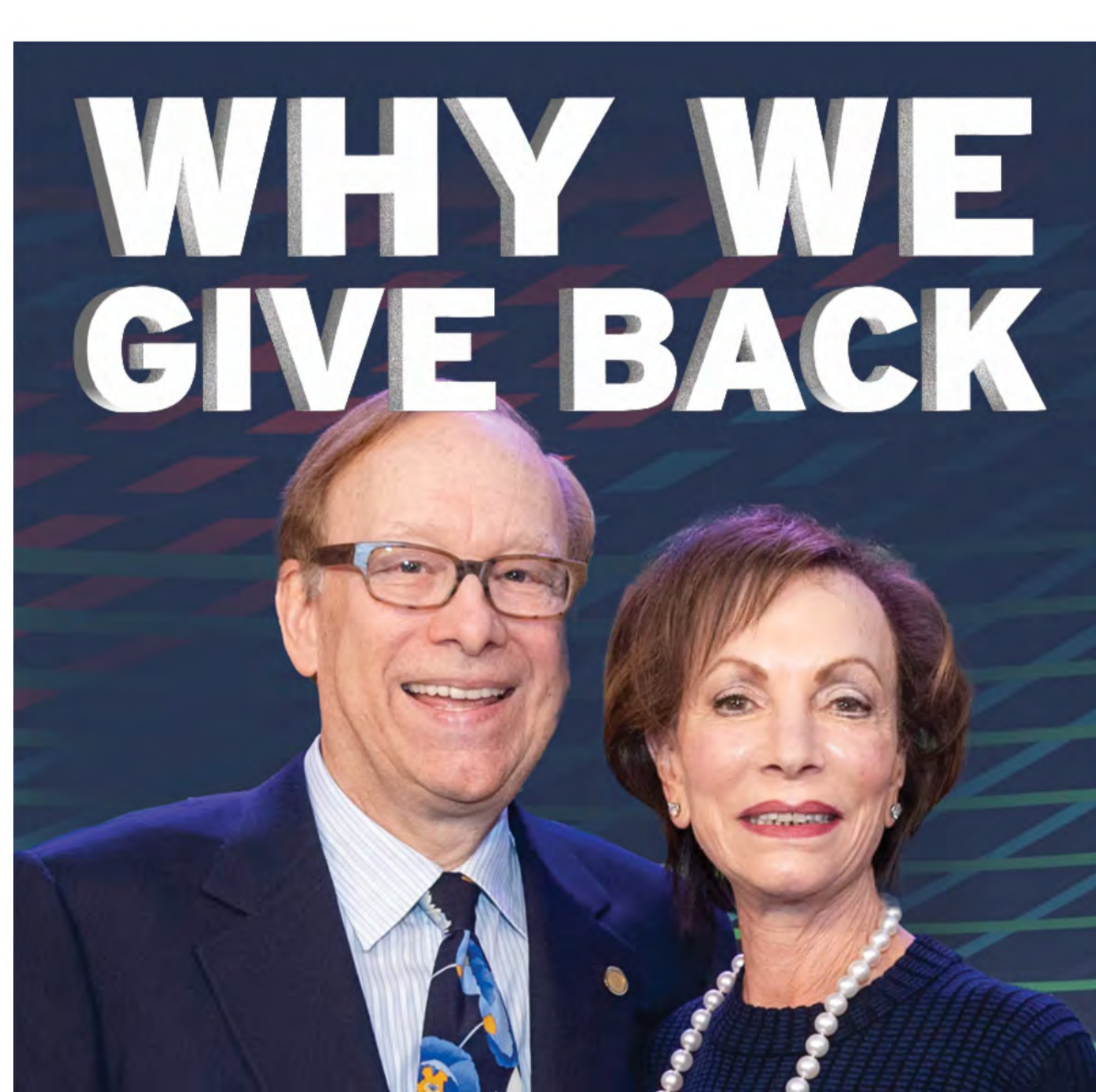
By the time you read this, we will have reconvened as a college after a summer scattered to the four corners of the globe. Bright-eyed first years will have settled into their studios and rehearsal rooms, beginning the process of coalescing as a community. Graduate students will get to know their colleagues and mentors. New tenure track faculty — Alisha Wormsley in Art; Michael McKelvey (musical theatre), Mary Ellen Stebbins (lighting design), and Yong-Suk Yoo (directing) in Drama — will have found their offices, met their classes for the first time and begun to figure out CMU and its quirky folkways.

This issue focuses primarily on our amazing alumni, with a geographical focus on those making art and life on the West Coast. A conversation with CFA's Associate Dean for DEI, Dr. Angelica Perez-Johnston, demystifies and makes concrete the many contributions her office makes to a healthy and productive artistic community, in an era of nonstop uninformed attacks on DEI externally.

When I meet a stranger and they ask what I do, their kneejerk reaction ("cool!") is sometimes followed by something like, "That must involve managing some gigantic egos!" Somehow — I blame the 19th century, tbh — we artists acquired a reputation for solipsism. And certainly the drive and focus required to make art can sometimes look like selfishness from the outside. But reading the words of our alumni, I'm struck by the humility that exists alongside the high levels of craft and ambition. They are explorers, collaborators, the helpers Mister Rogers told us to seek. Through their extraordinary abilities they are determined to make the world a better place.

That spirit drew me to CMU, and it keeps me here.

 | Dean Mary Ellen Poole



MAKE A GIFT



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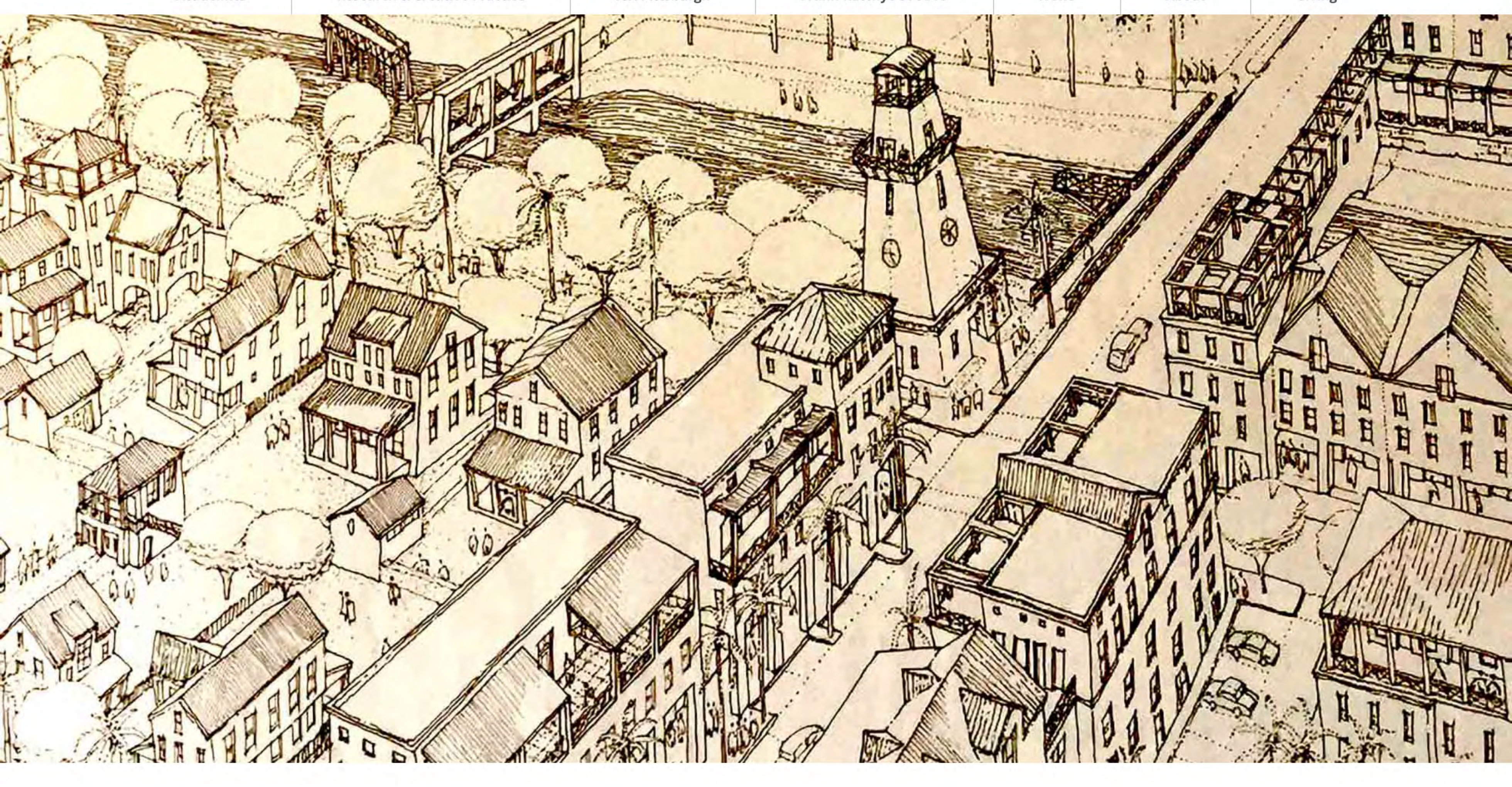
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Putting Residents First

From Urban Settings to Rural Destinations, CFA Alumni Are Fostering Equitable, Ecological and Economically Diverse Communities

School of Architecture

written by
Pam Wigley

Neighborhoods are nothing without their people, but the design of communities gives greater meaning to people's lives. So, planning them will not be successful without first considering what's important to residents, whether those residents are part of an urban cityscape or a rural town or village.

Few know better than David Kunselman and Laurence Qamar, both graduates of the Carnegie Mellon [School of Architecture](#). Kunselman (B.Arch. 1990) is the director of capital development for the City of Seattle, and Qamar (B.Arch. 1985) owns and operates his own architecture and urbanism firm in Portland, Ore. Although they have different types of jobs, they share a common goal when building communities: You must value the residents who will live there, as well as the local culture, heritage and natural environment. Below is how both are making their mark within the industry.

Designing Communities ... Not Only Constructing Buildings

Laurence Qamar, CNU-A, architect and town planner, came to Carnegie Mellon University in the early 1980s to become an architect. He achieved his goal, graduating in 1985 and following his undergrad with a master's in architecture and town planning from the University of Miami in 1994. Given his studies, one may think that Qamar settled into the typical architect's role of designing and constructing buildings, but that's not the case. Qamar found his own unique way and pursued his personal passion.

"I found the design and construction of individual buildings often limiting compared to the broader social and environmental qualities of towns and cities," he said. "So, I went the route of urban design and walkable mixed-use planning."

It was a good choice for him, and it opened his eyes to how his studies in the School of Architecture allowed him to tailor his interests to his strengths. Just being in Pittsburgh was a bonus, too, he said, because the neighborhoods surrounding CMU's campus helped him to determine that he wanted to focus his life's work on designing cities, towns, villages and neighborhoods.

Qamar was introduced to designing and planning cities from two pivotal classes taught by [Stefani Ledowitz \(now Danes\)](#), who he said "opened my eyes to the art and structure behind a community." At that time, a new era of reviving traditional urban design was just emerging out of the ashes of a post-war, Modernist assault upon city centers, combined with the auto-dominated sprawl of suburbs surrounding most American cities. Danes referred her students to two important books, among others, that influence Qamar in particular: "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" by Jane Jacobs and "A Pattern Language" by Christopher Alexander. Their bookwork moved to footwork when the class set out to Pittsburgh neighborhoods like Polish Hill so they could study how the layout of the community met residents' needs.

[Doug Cooper](#) was another of Qamar's influences and, coincidentally, also was drawn to studying Pittsburgh neighborhoods such as the Polish Hill community.

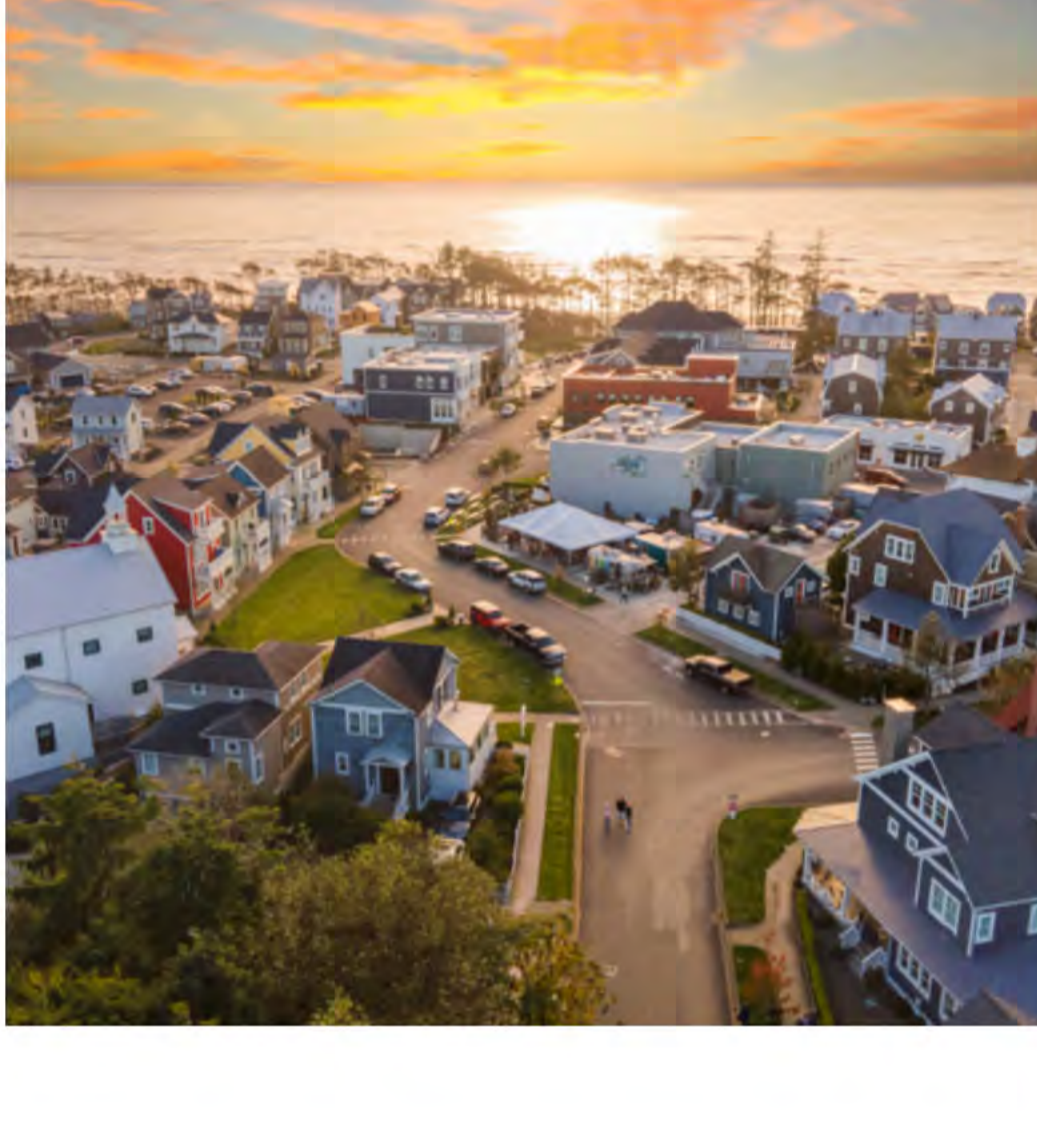
"Doug taught us new ways to see and represent the world around us through the practice of drawing," Qamar said. "He taught us to perceive the volume of space, not only the solidity of form. It was a way to open our eyes and minds [to something] that was completely new to me."

Qamar met his future wife, Geraldine "Geri" Ondrizek, when she was interning her school year in one of the top floors of the College of Fine Arts Building. She an art major who earned her BFA in 1985, Ondrizek was living with a group of architects; she and Qamar became good friends. They reconnected several years after graduating and their friendship blossomed. They married in 1996.

Following his graduation from CMU, Qamar followed his dream of creating sustainable communities after working in various design and project management roles in multiple cities — from New York City, to Aspen, followed by his graduate degree in Miami, and eventual move to Portland.

After working for his grad school professors, Duany-Plater-Zyberk in Miami, and their associates in Portland over an eight-year period, he founded and became principal of Qamar & Associates in Portland in 2002. He and his team dedicate their talents to the design and implementation of "vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities." Since its founding in 1994, he has been an ongoing active member of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU).

"I plan and design new villages, towns and neighborhoods, as well as [create] revitalization plans for old downtowns and retrofitting of suburban areas into walkable, bikeable and transit-oriented neighborhoods," Qamar said.



"The primary objective is to create walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods in which residents can live, work, shop, learn and recreate — all within a 5–10-minute walking time."

Laurence Qamar



This way of living, Qamar said, harkens back to how humans lived for millennia, but that way of life was cut short in the era of cars and Modernist city planning. His goal is to create living communities where people can walk, bike and take transit in addition to driving. In this way, people can engage with their neighbors and fellow community members. [Seabrook](#) is one exemplary community conceptualized and brought to reality by Qamar and his colleagues.

Founded in 2004 by Casey and Laura Roloff, Seabrook is Washington state's most beloved "beach town," overlooking the Pacific Ocean from a beautiful scenic bluff. The community features craftsman-style houses in nine small neighborhoods and boasts year-round residents, renters and vacationers. It's heralded by many as the perfect seaside town.

Through Seabrook and his firm's other projects, Qamar focused on what community residents need and where people can "experience the difference between late 20th Century suburban auto-oriented sprawl and compact, healthy, sustainable communities," he said. "There's still too much low-density suburban sprawl being built globally, and we need to curb that trend."

Kunselman Makes City Planning Personal



It all started with Sleeping Bag Weekend, an activity David Kunselman participated in at Carnegie Mellon when he was considering colleges. Immersing himself in the campus and activities that weekend, Kunselman didn't need to look further. CMU was his choice and his only college application.

The middle of three children from rural Fenelon, Pa., Kunselman had a strong interest in math and science and looked for creative outlets growing up. Those talents would come in handy as he pursued his studies in architecture at CMU. He said he found great support in the teaching staff and faculty, but there was one particularly influential person in the School of Architecture main office.

"Judy Kampert made it happen," he said, smiling as he thought about her. "She knew all the behind-the-scenes connections to everyone and everything. Plus, she really taught all of us students how important it is to build relationships in whatever we do."

He also gives a nod to his fellow students as inspiration in his own education. Classmates would share advice and experience with each other, and Kunselman found it beneficial and eye-opening. The curriculum in the School of Architecture made a lasting impression on Kunselman, too, particularly learning about the ability to understand the design process and synthesize information, keeping the community close to mind when working on a project of any type.

"It's an inherent part of my education," Kunselman said. "I use that approach and thought process all the time in my work."

Another fond Pittsburgh memory involved seeing his childhood idol, Fred Rogers, walking across campus. A friend had access to WQED, where the show was taped, and took Kunselman to the set of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." The experience was a good distraction from the architecture studios and remains one of the highlights of his time at CMU.

Kunselman became president of the American Institute of Architects Student Chapter while at CMU and, later, rose to national vice president of that organization. During his time in Washington, D.C., and with travel experiences as part of that role, Kunselman made contacts from across the U.S. and was drawn to people from the Pacific Northwest. He targeted Seattle as a place to settle and begin his career, continuing his education by studying construction management at the University of Washington and passing the Architect Registration Examination to earn his architecture license.

Kunselman worked his way upward through a variety of roles in Seattle and the surrounding metro region, each one representing the public client. He began working for the City of Seattle in 2007 as the manager of a levy program that upgraded or replaced all the city's fire stations. Kunselman has managed many civic projects since then and currently serves as director of capital development for the City of Seattle.

Regardless of the projects before him, Kunselman said he returns to the principles he learned at the School of Architecture — namely, keeping the impacts of each project on community residents in mind. Every undertaking, he said, is an extension of people in their community. For instance, Kunselman has designed many neighborhood libraries while representing the King County Library System and Seattle Public Library. Even before putting pencil to paper for sketching, he does his homework.



"Just visiting the neighborhood is helpful," he said. "We hold listening sessions and public meetings, as well, to talk with residents about what they truly need. You must ask yourself, 'What does the library actually mean to this community?' Designing a library is like designing a living room for a neighborhood."

David Kunselman

It's evident when Kunselman talks about his work that he is still excited to approach new challenges.

"Every project is very different," he said. "So, it never gets old. It's always a challenge. What changes is the client and that client's needs. Listen to them and learn from them."

read more:

[about Gerri Ondrizek, Qamar's wife, also featured in this issue](#)

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Making Art Through Science

Research-based Artist Geraldine Ondrizek Expresses Life Through Craft

School of Art

written by
Pam Wigley

There was no other path but art for Geraldine “Gerri” Ondrizek. The Allison Park, Pa., native believed from a very early age that she was an artist and would one day teach others to express themselves through art. From the time she earned her BFA from Carnegie Mellon’s [School of Art](#) in 1985, Ondrizek has made good on her beliefs.

Choosing CMU was relatively easy, Ondrizek said. She spent the school year and in the summers from 10th–12th grade in the School of Art’s Pre-College Program. Just before entering her senior year of high school, she submitted a portfolio to the school and was accepted into the program with a full scholarship. She embraced the curriculum and the faculty who helped to guide her.

“I had the most amazing professors,” Ondrizek said. “Diane Samuels was my mentor and friend. She taught fiber-paper making, weaving, and installation and was a progressive thinker. As a result, she helped me to more fully understand thinking and making.”

Samuels believed in taking her students out of the classroom to experience art within Pittsburgh. On one field trip, she took her classes to the Mattress Factory on Pittsburgh’s North Side, and Ondrizek was struck by the unconventional art forms she saw there. She absorbed all she could outside and inside the classroom, and she found another positive influence in faculty member Ed Eberle, who taught her “ceramics, sculpture and life.”

Both professors taught Ondrizek a philosophy she learned to live by:

“Art and life are not separate. Don’t be narrow in your thinking.”

Gerri Ondrizek

For Ondrizek, that meant seeing all possibilities in the world as open to her, and she was again influenced by Samuels.

“I was influenced by teachers like Diane, who told me that I can do whatever I want to do.”



Ondrizek didn’t give up on her art or building a family. By chance, she met a School of Architecture student one day while sculpting in the basement of Doherty Hall. He knew some of her roommates, who were fellow architecture students, and they struck up a friendship. Several years later, she reconnected with her old friend, Laurence Qamar (B. Arch ’85). They ended up marrying and successfully balancing professional and personal lives.

While at CMU, Ondrizek was an assistant teacher at the CMU Children’s School and, later, was hired as a K-12 teacher at Winchester Thurston School near the CMU campus. In 1994, she earned her MFA from the University of Washington in Seattle. Ondrizek then joined the faculty at Reed College in Portland, Ore., and has served as professor of art there for 30 years.

Continuing to pursue her art, Ondrizek began incorporating scientific research into her works about 25 years ago. She created architectural installations and artist books based on medical and genetic information that explores personal and political issues. To make it all happen, Ondrizek works closely with scientists and medical researchers to create art that incorporates — and comments on — medicine, genetics and ethics.

For example, she has created exhibitions filled with colorful chromosome strands and genetic composition, among other subjects. Her work is featured on the [Reed College](#) website.



“I have been making works about in-vitro fertilization, early-stage cell development, and the dynamics of cellular division over the past two years,” Ondrizek said of her 2023 New York exhibition on Germination/Gestation. “I have found that the ability for cells to divide, thrive and make human, animal and plant embryos is nothing short of magic.”

Clearly, she is passionate about creating her own art. She is equally passionate and committed to teaching her Reed students sculpture, architecture, installation and craft. She also instills in them some of the same principles she learned at CMU.

“As a teacher, I teach in the way I was taught,” Ondrizek said. “Be present, teach process not product, and think of this as a life practice rather than a career.”

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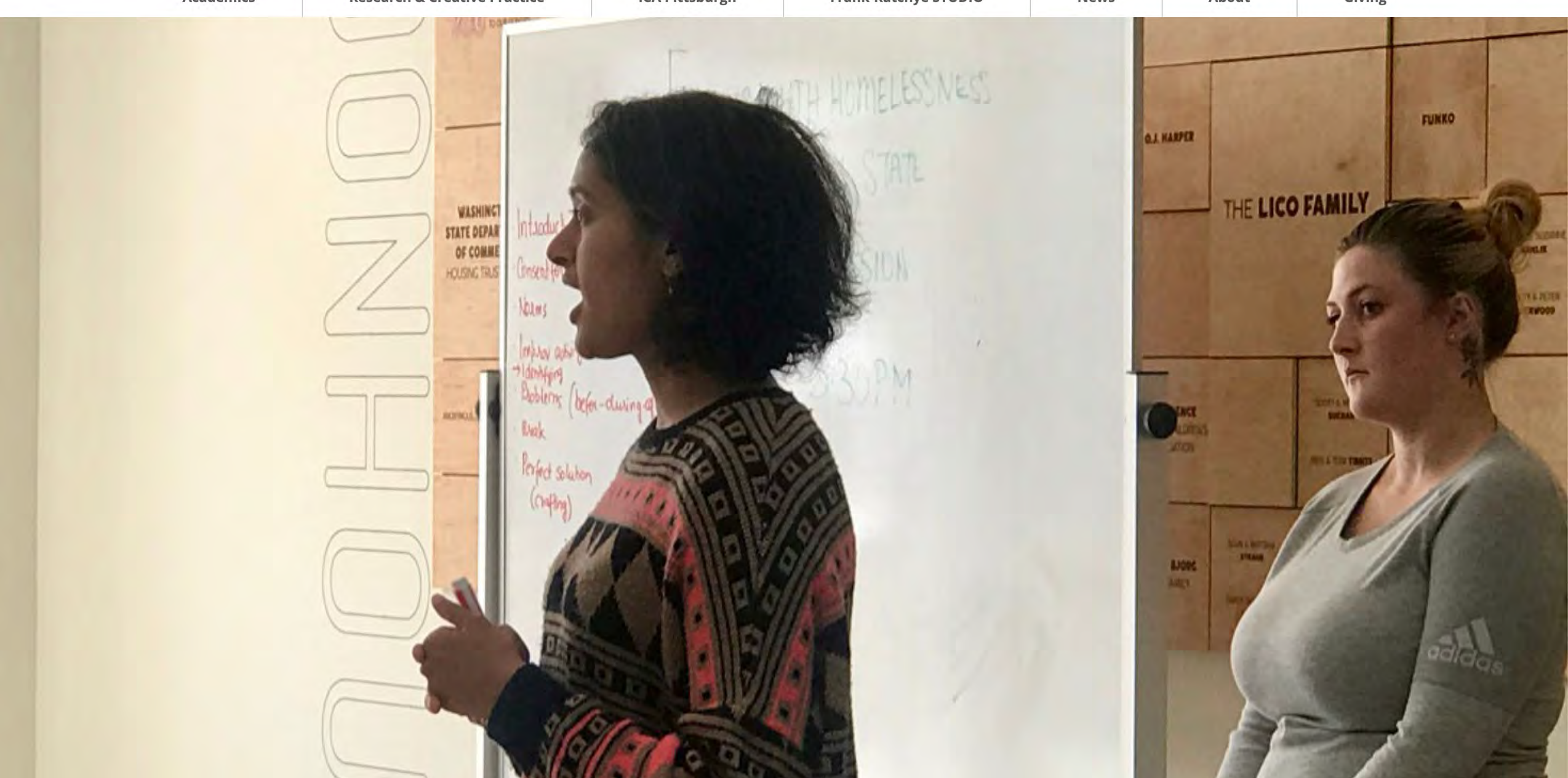
artwork by Gerri Ondrizek

read more:

[about Laurence Qamar, Ondrizek’s husband, in this issue](#)

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Designing Change for the Future

CFA Alumna SL Rao is Creating Societal Change with a Focus on Youth

School of Design

written by
Pam Wigley

Pick up any technology magazine or admission booklet for colleges and universities, and chances are you'll read about the intersection of technology and the arts. Shree Lakshmi Rao chooses, instead, to work at the intersection of technology and human beings. With those interests foremost in mind, Rao is making positive changes that affect our world.

With a lifelong interest in math and the arts, Rao pursued her bachelor's degree in electrical, electronics and communications, earning her degree from Nitte Meenakshi Institute of Technology in her homeland, India. She also pursued theater on the side. That experience led her to investigate how humans interacted with technology on an emotional level. She combined her interests in her first job at a small art and robotics company and soon decided she wanted to work toward her master's degree.

Carnegie Mellon University [School of Design](#) landed on her radar because its curriculum focused on deepening design practice while centering human behavior and needs. Rao saw that as an extension of her interests.

"At grad school at CMU, the blocks fell into place," Rao said. "Working through and learning about the design process allowed me to see how I could combine my interests to solve problems for the things I saw around me in India."

The changes Rao wanted to implement were twofold: Moving society toward more equitable outcomes and continuing to push and extend design and research methods to be applicable in the social sector.

To accomplish her goals, Rao spent a significant amount of time volunteering with different non-profit organizations and engaging in design-led projects locally in Seattle, a city she still calls "home" after completing a summer internship with Microsoft. She ran the local chapter of Interaction Design Association, worked on projects with non-profits such as Downtown Emergency Service Center.



After stints at The Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon and Microsoft, Rao worked as a Global Health Fellow at the Gates Foundation and as a strategist at the Washington State Department of Commerce. She began a role as principal service designer for Substantial, Inc. in 2021 and rose to her current job as VP of Design Research + Strategy in the Optimistic Design subdivision in December 2023. Optimistic Design is a design agency focused on equity centered design in the social sector.

While at the Department of Commerce, Rao co-created public policy with young people experiencing housing insecurity and with their caregivers to identify opportunities for prevention of youth homelessness. Through her efforts, many changes in the state's youth homelessness system have been implemented. It's gratifying, Rao said, to see the results of the work done by young people. But she didn't stop there. Rao continued to mentor young people in the Seattle area through an organization called Community for Youth, also joining its board of directors in 2020.

Her clients include Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other non-profits and venture capitalist funds that focus on social impact or on improving outcomes for marginalized students in the education system. Rao said she's "in a good place now, building strong talent" within her team. And, despite a full schedule, she still finds time to share her expertise through volunteering.

Rao joined the CFA Dean's Council in 2023 after meeting with senior director of CFA Advancement, Rebecca Abrams, and Dean Mary Ellen Poole and realized she could contribute her talents of driving change toward her alma mater's mission and goals. Part of her work within CFA is dedicated to supporting current students.

"I want students who want to bring their skills to the social impact space to know that they should be thoughtful about how they approach the work," Rao said. "I want them to recognize themselves more as facilitators and fellow learners rather than experts. As researchers and designers, we have to critically examine our existing biases and perspectives because they seep into the research and design we do. We need to support and shift power to the folks already doing the work and those with lived experiences.

"As designers and researchers, we need to be conscious about who we are and what we bring into the work that we do in the community so that we don't amplify existing systems of harm," she said.

"I want to connect society's dots in a way that leads to effective actions with real meaning."

SL Rao

featuring the following:

photography courtesy of SL Rao

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Setting the Stage

CFA Alumnus Bryan Lane Finds the Right Time and Place through Set Design

School of Drama

written by
Pam Wigley

Bryan Lane remembers attending a pre-admission meeting at Carnegie Mellon University, and he liked what he heard.

"The person conducting the meeting said to all of us, 'When you're accepted to CMU, we will support your journey here.' And they did."

It's been a tremendous journey for the Washington County, Pa., native, who grew up as one of two sons in his Canonsburg family. Lane knew early on that he wanted to "do something creative" with his career. He said he found his inspiration, in part, through a visit to Disney World and by watching television. "Little House on the Prairie" was a particular influence, although he said he didn't sit in front of the TV all day and night.



Instead, he absorbed not only the acting and the programs overall, but also the scenery and the sets on which shows were filmed. Lane took his inspiration and channeled it into designing and building a "Little House" set of his own. Years later, in 1987, he presented the work as part of his portfolio for admission to CMU.

"I had a cousin who went to Carnegie Mellon, and I visited him when I was 15," Lane recalled. "I loved the campus; I felt like it was the place for me to be some day."

Although he admitted that the curriculum was rigorous, he appreciated that the "very professional program" prepared him and his fellow alumni for gainful employment when they graduated. One of his first set designs was for the [School of Drama's](#) production of "Merchant of Venice," and the experience stood out as memorable for Lane. He said he's also grateful for the education and insights he got from the late Cletus and Barbara Anderson, professors who inspired him to push himself and delve into research that would complement his designs.

In spring 1991, Lane accepted an internship at NBC in Burbank, Calif., working on "Days of Our Lives." The experience and exposure to the West Coast helped him decide that the Los Angeles area was where he wanted to be. So, after graduating with his BFA in theatrical design from CMU, he headed west and began to work with fellow alumni John Shaffner and Joe Stewart designing sets. He worked in various TV genres, from live variety shows and commercials, to series — such as two seasons with CBS hit "Criminal Minds," as well as "American Dreams," where he had the opportunity to rebuild the American Bandstand set. He also recreated the set for "The Dick Van Dyke Show" when the cast reunited in 2004.



The latter two projects allowed Lane to showcase his fondness for working on period pieces, particularly those from the 1960s. One of his favorite set design film projects was "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood," which highlighted his talent for researching the time period and applying what he learned to each set he designed.

Lane also designed video games; he earned his union membership in the Set Designers Union with "Wing Commander 4" and entry into the Art Directors Union through his work on "The Nanny." Through his 33-year career, the diversity of his projects has helped him to interact with many different people in the industry, and new roles come to him because of networking and reputation. He moved successfully into the film industry some time ago, designing sets for some of the biggest blockbusters ever produced.

Most recently, he designed the house for lead character Mollie (played by Lily Gladstone) in "Killers of the Flower Moon." He also worked on other set design within the production and said he thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"I got to explore the history of an entire town in Oklahoma and take it back to the 1920s through set design," Lane said of his portion of the project, which began early in 2021 and ran through Labor Day of that year. "When I watch it now, I clearly remember what went into [creating] the actual scenes."

Despite a clearly full schedule, Lane finds time for outside interests. He completely renovated his own home over a five-year period and said if he weren't in the set design business, he might be flipping homes. He also gives back to Carnegie Mellon's next generation of design professionals.

"CMU did me right," Lane said. "I want to give back."

He does so through student support, like campus visits to share his expertise; welcoming students to Los Angeles to learn on-site; and providing scholarships to School of Drama production students.

His advice to them is straightforward:

"Be strong and decisive in your work. You may eventually lead a department. Move around and meet new people. Learn new things and know the latest technology — stay on top of it. You'll be fine."

Bryan Lane

featuring the following:

image of "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" set designed by Bryan Lane

image of "The Dick Van Dyke Show" set designed by Bryan Lane

read more:

[Bryan Lane portfolio site](#)

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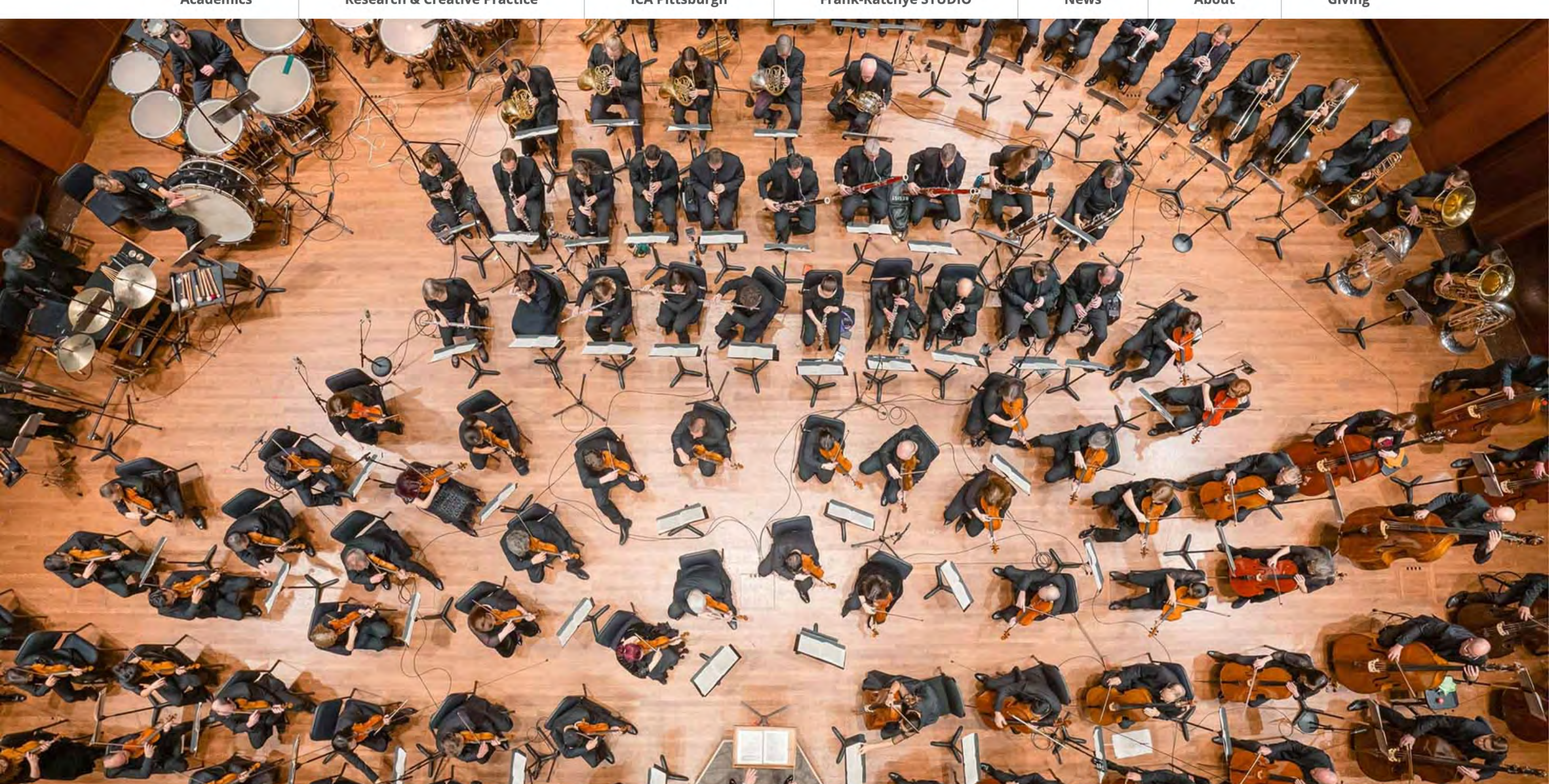
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From Pittsburgh to Seattle

Seattle Symphony Boasts Three CFA Alumni Among Its Ranks

School of Music + Master of Arts Management Program

written by
Pam Wigley

The Pacific Northwest attracts many people for its lush green foliage, bodies of water and exceptional outdoor activities. Seattle, in particular, is home to longtime native residents and transplants alike, all who are drawn to the location and its cultural offerings. The arts scene is thriving in Seattle, and three Carnegie Mellon University alumni proudly call the city and, specifically, the Seattle Symphony, home.

On the Stage: Jeffrey Barker

Growing up in Seattle, Jeffrey Barker always dreamed of joining the Seattle Symphony. His love of music developed early, and he began taking flute lessons in fourth grade. By ninth grade, he was under the tutelage of Zartouhi Dombourian-Eby. His hard work paid off; now associate principal flute in the Seattle Symphony, Barker and his former teacher are colleagues there.

"Seattle was always a goal," he said. "I was delighted to win the position here, and it's been nearly nine years already. When you do something you love, time goes quickly."



Barker earned his undergraduate degree at the Eastman School of Music and his master's degree from Carnegie Mellon [School of Music](#) —under the direction of Professor Emerita Jeanne Baxtresser and Associate Professor Alberto Almarza. He learned about Carnegie Mellon because of Baxtresser.

"She was a well-respected musician, as was Alberto," Barker recalled. "I knew that there was world-class education happening at CMU. Now, not a day goes by without doing daily warmups that I learned there."

His expertise landed him a role as principal flute with the Boise Philharmonic in 2009, until he made the move to Seattle. Barker has also performed with top orchestras across the country and around the world, including the Detroit Symphony, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony and the Singapore Symphony.

In the meantime, Barker uses his spare time to give back to the Seattle community. He received the 2018 Ford Musician Award for Excellence in Community Service for his work with people experiencing homelessness in Seattle via the Seattle Symphony's "Simple Gifts Initiative."

"There are still pieces I want to do, perhaps as a soloist," he said. "We'll see what the future brings."

Managing the People

Liz Kane combined two of her favorite things in her role at the Seattle Symphony: people and music. As the Personnel Manager of the Seattle Symphony, Kane used her expertise as a musician (French horn, which she studied in undergraduate school) and her administrative talents — honed by a series of roles in various arts organizations. Ultimately, Kane earned her master's in arts management in 2018 through CMU's [Master of Arts Management](#) program, a joint offering of Heinz College and the College of Fine Arts.

"I liked the MAM Program because it was a very data-driven education," she said. "Although master's degrees are not a prerequisite in orchestral management, I had some experience in my early jobs that left me wanting a deeper, business-focused education."



She found it in Pittsburgh, which she said offered her the opportunity to see "an arts ecosystem that really supports large, world-class organizations in a city that's shrunk quite a bit in the last century." While serving as a student intern for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Kane also witnessed a work stoppage, and the experience allowed her to see how the staff dealt with that challenging situation.

Just a month after earning her master's degree, Kane was named assistant to the vice president and general manager at the Seattle Symphony. Following the COVID pandemic, she was promoted to her role in Seattle — just at the start of the 2021-2022 season. She found the job to be the perfect blend of her musical and operations strengths.

"I worked with both operations and musicians; Jeffrey and I actually worked very closely together as he is chair of the union," she said. Her role focused on everything from musicians' collective bargaining agreements, managing payroll, settling interpersonal issues, and overseeing audition and probation processes. On the operations side, she ensured the organization was adequately staffed, the schedule was set in a compliant way, programming was feasible, and assisted the general manager in negotiations.

Kane said she felt prepared coming into the organization in large part because of her education at CMU and within the MAM Program, specifically.

"CMU helped me to understand not only what I can contribute to the workplace, but also made me realize the value I bring," she said. "Professor Brett Crawford, my advisor, was an incredible help in showing me what I'm capable of and how I can contribute to arts organizations."

In offering advice to current students or recent alumni, Kane pointed to her own guidelines for success.

"I recommend aiming to be a humble sponge, absorbing all the good and bad information you can, but doing it with humility and understanding that there are many ways to do things ... don't rush the answers to difficult questions. There's almost always more time than you think to think creatively and find options that weren't immediately apparent."

Liz Kane

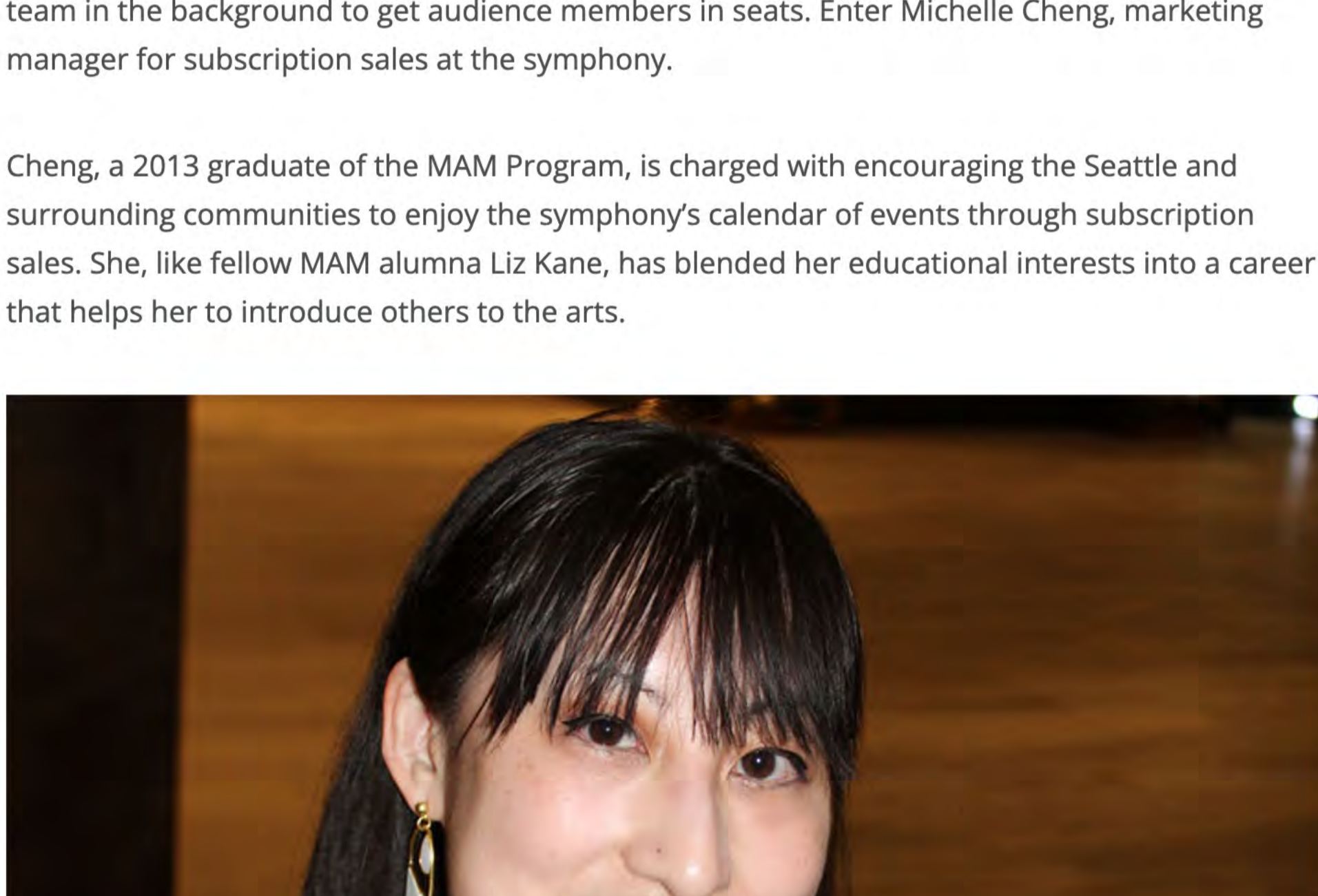
Editor's Note: Liz Kane recently was promoted to a new role as director of artistic operations for the Portland Symphony in Maine. There, she will oversee the personnel manager, librarian, and technical manager. She also will serve as operations lead and, as such, will contract with musicians individually, serve as one of the lead negotiators in contract negotiations, and set budgets for the season. Because the Portland role is with a smaller orchestra, Kane's duties allow her to expand her experience. She will serve as the administrative lead on programming — she said the music director sees the classical programs — but she aligns those choices with strategic plans, equity goals, and budgetary goals, and will lead all the pops booking.

"This was my dream job when I was at CMU," Kane said. "It involves operations and artistic planning, and I am happiest working in both departments. Portland is also the first orchestra I ever worked for, and I know the staff there well. It's also about two hours from where I grew up and where my parents and sisters are located."

Welcoming the Public

Even as great talent takes the stage at Seattle Symphony and is, in itself, a draw, it still takes a team in the background to get audience members in seats. Enter Michelle Cheng, marketing manager for subscription sales at the symphony.

Cheng, a 2013 graduate of the MAM Program, is charged with encouraging the Seattle and surrounding communities to enjoy the symphony's calendar of events through subscription sales. She, like fellow MAM alumna Liz Kane, has blended her educational interests into a career that helps her to introduce others to the arts.



Growing up as an only child in Rockland County, N.Y., Cheng pursued her study of the violin from fourth grade through her undergraduate years at Case Western Reserve University. She graduated with a degree in music history and decided to pursue her master's degree at Carnegie Mellon. She was drawn to the MAM Program because she found during her research that there were a limited number of programs that allowed students to actively participate in studies that had a social impact, as well as vital skills necessary to move into the arena of arts management.

"I wanted a program that provided a solid tech experience, which I found at CMU, and that's helped me tremendously," she said. "I appreciated the rigor of the program and valued the lessons I learned from Kathy Smith regarding finance and Brett Crawford in digital marketing. To this day, I use those skills."

Cheng remembers her time in Pittsburgh fondly, and she named "Future Tenant" and the Cultural District's Gallery Crawl as two of her favorite experiences while at CMU. Future Tenant is a program that gives artists and performers the opportunity to exhibit their work since its founding in 2002. MAM students gain hands-on arts management experience that builds their skills and prepares them for the workforce.

Cheng recommends that current students take advantage of life off campus, including the rich arts scene in Pittsburgh.

"You should experience as much as you can. Keep an open mind as you pursue your education and think about things outside of your training. You have skills that may be transferrable to what you hope to do some day."

Michelle Cheng

In approaching her job on a daily basis, Cheng said she makes it her personal mission to make sure her efforts positively affect people who become subscribers. Cheng said she makes it her personal mission to make sure her efforts positively affect people — from couples on a date to children and families who are attending the symphony for the very first time — and result in a truly memorable experience at Seattle Symphony."

"I focus on flexibility, because everyone has different needs," she said. "We help people create a plan that works for them, and it's rewarding to see how it all comes together when the house fills with enthusiastic guests."

featuring the following:

photography courtesy of Seattle Symphony Orchestra

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A New View Inside the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry

Repairs and Upgrades Honor the Former Library, while Looking Ahead to the Future

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry

written by
Harrison Apple

More than a century after the cork floors, hand-carved plaster ceiling, and hardwood cabinets were placed inside the original CFA Library, Dean Mary Ellen Poole and STUDIO Director Nica Ross have invested in its longevity with repairs and upgrades to serve the entire university community through its current life as the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry.



The "STUDIO" as it's known by faculty, students and staff alike, is a landing pad, a venue, an incubator, and a laboratory for atypical trans-disciplinary research springing from the creative minds in the College of Fine Arts. Of all the many things the STUDIO has been and continues to become, it is a home to nurture the nascent and experimental research that changes the world when leaving CMU. STUDIO-supported projects range from the local to the intergalactic in scope, but they all begin in the former library.

"We're celebrating our new season of courses, grants and events with a newly laid floor, reupholstered seating, and light control to help this inspiring environment last another 110 years," Ross said. "Please visit our website, subscribe to our newsletter, and follow our social channels so you can become part of this exciting transformation."

featuring the following:

photography by Kelsey Stark

photography by Harrison Apple

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Stepping Outside the Boundaries of Traditional Art Education

CFA Alumna Genevieve Tremblay Embraces Her Own Path Forward

School of Art

written by
Pam Wigley

Curiosity drives Genevieve Gaiser Tremblay's life. It certainly contributed to her pursuit of interdisciplinary studies that allowed her to blend her diverse skills and study art outside of what many would consider "traditional." Carnegie Mellon University made it possible, she said.

"The gratitude I feel for my time at Carnegie Mellon University is immense," Tremblay said. "The pioneering spirit and interdisciplinary ethos of CMU have deeply influenced my path and have given me a unique way of thinking, creating, collaborating and contributing."

Tremblay, who earned her bachelor's degree in Intermedia from the College of Fine Arts in 1984, grew up in the Washington, D.C., metro area. When she sought a higher education degree, she said she was drawn to CMU, which met her qualifications of size, university setting, and the depth and breadth of the [School of Art's](#) curriculum.

"I was initially drawn to Carnegie Mellon University for its reputation as a stellar arts school within a university," she said. "I studied with many incredible faculty across disciplines ... Herb Olds (School of Art), Richard Schoenwald (Dietrich College), Stefani Ledewitz (School of Architecture), and many others. But it was Bruce Breland (School of Art), who inspired me to look ahead and embrace the possibilities of interdisciplinary thinking, collaboration and global citizenship."

"Intermedia" was her major at CMU, an innovative concentration that Breland designed, focusing on experimental art, media, performance, technology and telecommunications. "It was one of the very first art + technology programs in the country," Tremblay said. "Although this new major was initially met with skepticism, it turned out to be the perfect open learning platform for curious art students like me."



Stepping outside the boundaries of traditional art education, Tremblay embraced a path that encouraged her to think differently through a more experimental practice. She and her fellow Intermedia students were encouraged to take part in groundbreaking projects like Roy Ascott's 'La Plissure du Texte' — a seminal work in the telematic art movement. Becoming involved in projects like this "broadened our understanding of art's expansive possibilities in the digital age," Tremblay said, especially so because the artists involved were based around the world and [their work] showed her new ways that art and technology could forge global connections.

After graduating in 1984, Tremblay looked for job opportunities that blended art and technology. One of her first jobs was at Colormedia/Sunrise Systems in Massachusetts, where she introduced a simple coding language to create animated programs for LED signage. Sunrise Systems manufactured and programmed the signage systems that new media pioneer Jenny Holzer used in her Boston art installation.

"I had the opportunity to program the electronic signage for Jenny Holzer's city-wide public installation, [SIGNS](#), hosted by the M.I.T. List Visual Art Center. The signs I programmed with her text were placed in public venues throughout Boston," Tremblay said.

"This first-hand experience with pushing the boundaries of technology and moving art from formalized spaces into the public realm expanded my thinking about art and still continues to inform and inspire the work I do."

After finishing graduate school at Massachusetts College of Art, where she earned a degree in Studio for Inter-related Media (SIM), Tremblay found herself drawn to the natural beauty and opportunities in both the art and technology sectors in the Pacific Northwest. She moved to Seattle with her husband to start her family and worked for many years as an artist, interactive media designer and art director and later was hired by fellow CMU alum, Jeff Brice (CFA '80) to teach at Cornish College of the Arts. There, she taught design (Senior Capstone Studio, Motion Design) and developed design and interdisciplinary curriculum for the college.

She continued her art and teaching with a focus on environmental themes and in 2016, Tremblay did an art + science residency at University of Washington's Friday Harbor Marine Lab. There, she was introduced to marine coastal research scientists, including Chilean marine ecologist and artist Fernanda Oyarzún.

"That introduction sparked a dynamic partnership and led to an ongoing collaboration, including co-founding the U.S. Embassy (Chile)-funded art + science diplomacy program, [ASKXXI \(Arts & Science Knowledge Building & Sharing in the XXI\)](#)," Tremblay said. The aim of their joint pilot program was to create a cross-cultural dialogue among artists and scientists across hemispheres to address pressing climate and environmental challenges in both regions.



Tremblay's work creating ASKXXI led to her role as Adjunct Researcher at [SECOS: Coastal Socio-Ecology Millennium Institute](#) in Chile, where she has been part of an interdisciplinary team since 2020. Her efforts include a coastal mural project, which integrates traditional murals with AR, VR, and data visualization to engage coastal communities on sustainability and climate change. This project was featured in an exhibition curated by fellow CMU alum (CFA '85), Geraldine Ondrizek, at the 2022 European Cultural Center's Personal Structures biennale in Venice, Italy.

In addition to her role at SECOS, she is a member of the [Climate Knowledge Collective](#) (CKCollective), a newly formed nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing innovative, women-centered climate change projects through digital narratives that preserve environmental resilience and feminist knowledge.

Genevieve is currently an artist at [SOIL Gallery](#) and Passable Art+Tech Collective and mentors University of Washington graduate students pursuing their Master's of Science in Technology Innovation. She is excited to be serving on Carnegie Mellon's College of Fine Arts Dean's Advisory Council. Her decision to take on that role, she said, is driven by her hope of deepening her connection with the university community.

"Throughout my journey, I've had to expand my definition of being an artist. A broader vision better reflects my multidisciplinary practice and allows me to explore new territories beyond the traditional boundaries of the studio."

Genevieve Tremblay

"I look forward to exploring collaborative opportunities with fellow alumni who share a passion for navigating the intersections of art, technology, research and education on a global scale."

featuring the following:

"Vector Landscape" 2022: laser etching and watercolor on clayboard

mural by Alonzo Salazar, painted by the community of Tubul, Chile

photography courtesy of Genevieve Tremblay

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Think Small, Live Large

CMU Alumni Collaborate to Champion Small House Living in the Pacific Northwest

School of Architecture

written by
Pam Wigley

Eli Green and Adam Friedman, whose friendship began at Carnegie Mellon University in the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity, have come full circle in their careers. Now based in Portland, Ore., their shared journey has led them to make significant strides in promoting sustainable and innovative housing solutions.



Eli Green, a 2000 graduate of the [School of Architecture](#), is the founder and director of [SQFT Studios](#), a firm specializing in custom and prefabricated accessory dwelling units (ADUs), as well as remodeling and custom home building with a strong focus on environmental sustainability. Green's passion for architecture was ignited by his upbringing in both Portland, Ore., and Concord, Mass. He selected Carnegie Mellon not only for its prestigious reputation, but also because of his family ties in Pittsburgh.

At CMU, Green was inspired by urban design luminaries such as Professor David Lewis and Professor Art Lubetz, whose challenging curriculum and critical reviews were instrumental in shaping his approach to architecture. Green's summer construction jobs further enriched his understanding of the building process, solidifying his future work as an architect.

Upon returning to Portland after a stint in New York City, Green saw a pressing need for innovative housing solutions in a market with limited land and high demand. This realization led to the creation of SQFT Studios, aimed at addressing the housing crunch with a sustainable and creative approach.



Enter Adam Friedman, a 1998 [School of Art](#) alumnus and lifelong artist. Friedman's early exposure to art, thanks to his grandmother and family background, shaped his future pursuits. Although he initially ventured into digital asset management in New York City, his move to Portland in 2003 led him to launch [OVENLIGHT](#), a design and marketing agency tailored to small businesses.

Friedman's expertise in branding and marketing became a crucial asset for SQFT Studios. He rebranded the firm with a new logo, website, and a comprehensive marketing strategy. His efforts have helped to educate potential clients and attract the right audience, while Green's personal touch ensures that each client's needs are addressed with professionalism and care.

Together, Green and Friedman have made significant strides with SQFT Studios, transforming small spaces and addressing housing challenges with innovative solutions. Their partnership extends beyond architecture and marketing; they've also ventured into crafting American Single Malt Whiskey with their distillery, The Treasury, further showcasing their diverse talents and entrepreneurial spirit.

Their journey underscores the impact of collaboration and the value of CMU's diverse educational experiences in shaping successful careers.

featuring the following:

photography courtesy of SQFT Studios

read more:

[OVENLIGHT](#)

[SQFT Studios](#)

[The Treasury Distillery](#)

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MEIM Alumnus Blazes Trail in West Coast Entertainment Industry

Yuri Ramondelli is Living His Passion in L.A.

Master of Entertainment Industry Management

written by
Pam Wigley

The entertainment industry always held a special fascination for Yuri Ramondelli. A film fan all his life, he envisioned one day working in Hollywood. Going on 10 years following his graduation from the [Master of Entertainment Industry Management program](#) in 2014, Ramondelli is right where he wants to be, serving as Manager of Creative Content at Warner Bros. Pictures.

An undergraduate of St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pa., where he majored in marketing and international business, Ramondelli sought further education, a program that provided hands-on experience, and a way to help him transition to Los Angeles. He found what he was looking for in the Master of Entertainment Management Program (MEIM), a collaboration of Carnegie Mellon University's College of Fine Arts and the Heinz College. Through experience gained via the MEIM Program, Ramondelli has found a livelihood that suits and fulfills him — and his workplace reaps the positive results. Ramondelli represents the next generation of Hollywood's leaders as he puts his knowledge — and gut instincts — to the test within the thriving film and cable programming industries.



"Having no real connections to the entertainment industry, I wanted a program that would best help me transition to the west coast and set me up for success," he said. "Classes taught by industry veterans, internship exposure, and a community of students that travel west together was all really compelling," he said. "The world-class education was a nice bonus."

He spent his first year in Pittsburgh and then, as all MEIM students do, moved to Los Angeles for the remainder of the program. The faculty members were especially helpful to him because they all have experience in the entertainment business, and they're eager to pass it along.

"When I think of the program, I think of the word 'immersion,'" Ramondelli said. "You're thrust into things immediately, in a good way."

While in MEIM, he explored a few areas of interest via internships, but gravitated toward his original calling of marketing. He interned at Machinima, Inc., a company at the time that was at the forefront of influencer marketing, where he connected brands with influencers and developed content. He also interned in marketing and development at Legendary Pictures, where he worked with people he still works with to this day in his role on the marketing team at Warner Bros. Pictures.

"Those relationships were crucial" he said. "The relationships and work at Machinima led to Legendary, then ultimately to Warner Bros."

Throughout his career, he followed his own advice to network and make contacts. Ramondelli said he was influenced by Bryan O'Connell, a fellow MEIM alum, who works in development at Disney. The two bonded over their similar interests and general passion for the industry. Ramondelli said he also reads as much as possible and stays current on the general happenings in the industry — something he continues to do.

"You have to be passionate about your work; you won't last if you're not. Be sure to do your homework."

Yuri Ramondelli

Staying current and forward-thinking on trends is crucial, he said, because "what's relevant today might feel ancient in a month, let alone when a movie is releasing a year later."

Knowledge is vital, especially as Ramondelli works behind the scenes for Warner Bros. Pictures. His duties vary, from producing first looks at upcoming films, pitching and coordinating advertising concepts, and overseeing Creative Content Day marketing shoots, where he works with talent like Chris Hemsworth or Jason Momoa to film content for social media. He also produces all Home Entertainment "Making-Of" materials for feature films such as "The Batman," "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga," and the upcoming "Joker: Folie à Deux."

He said he is most proud of two projects in which he was involved: "Joker" with Joaquin Phoenix and "The Batman" with Robert Pattinson.

"Growing up a huge fan of those characters, then working on those projects, and both becoming massive financial and critical successes was certainly the highlight of my career thus far," he said. "It was truly a dream come true."

He hopes to one day produce his own I.P.

"I've been extremely fortunate to already work on the projects of my dreams," he said. "I'm hoping to produce some of my own material in the future, or even something like Anthony Bourdain did — traveling and documenting all the incredible corners of the world."

For now, after three years with Warner Bros. Pictures, Ramondelli still feels a thrill when going to work each day.

"I'm so happy to do what I do," he said. "Seeing that water tower still excites me."

featuring the following:

photograph of Warner Bros. Pictures watertower, courtesy of Ramondelli

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Guggenheim Fellows

CFA Faculty and Alumna Named 2024 Guggenheim Fellows

School of Art + BXA Intercollege Degree Programs

written by

Andy Ptaschinski and Pam Wigley

Two members of the Carnegie Mellon University community — Associate Professor Katherine Hubbard and alumna Carrie Schneider — have been announced as 2024 Guggenheim Fellows. The fellowship is awarded to scholars and creators in the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities and creative arts.

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation awarded fellowships this year to 188 American and Canadian scientists, scholars in the social sciences and humanities, and writers and artists of all kinds. Since its establishment in 1925, the foundation has granted over \$400 million in fellowships to over 19,000 individuals, among whom are more than 125 Nobel laureates, members of all the national academies, winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Fields Medal, Turing Award, Bancroft Prize, National Book Award and other internationally recognized honors.

A Guggenheim Fellowship in Photography

The Guggenheim Fellowship provides generous funding for ambitious projects. Among the recipients of the 2024 Guggenheim Fellowships, Hubbard will receive support for her current project, “One Fifty One,” a series of photographs she’s creating with her mother in her mother’s home, as well as a series of darkroom contact prints.

Hubbard’s art practice encompasses photography, writing and performance. She plumbs analog photography’s continuing significance in an image-saturated and digital world. Working with photography as a physical medium — using large-format cameras and cameraless darkroom techniques — Hubbard links the process of analog photography with the human body. Considering this unique relationship, Hubbard’s photographs become a generative space to reexamine sociopolitical histories and narratives.

In 2022, Hubbard’s mother was diagnosed with dementia and LATE, a brain disease that mimics the symptoms of Alzheimer’s. Hubbard became her primary caretaker.

It was shortly before this diagnosis that Hubbard began creating photographs with her mother. Rather than using photography to capture a representation of a moment in time, Hubbard considers the medium as a form of sociality, creating a way to spend time with her mom apart from the difficult daily tasks of caring for her. As her mother’s disease progresses, Hubbard’s work probes the space between a surface physical appearance captured by the camera and the interior person, questioning how an image can create a deeper sense of recognition.



“One Fifty One” also uses a cameraless darkroom technique of contact printing. This method, in which Hubbard uses Vaseline applied to the skin and then pressed on photographic paper, records the movement, texture and other qualities of her and her mother’s skin surface. This physical process, far from the detached, mechanical shutter typically equated with photography, is another means of understanding the medium’s relationship to the human body. Rather than recording a conventional image of Hubbard and her mother, the process captures a different intimacy through the physicality of the photographic paper on their bodies.

Photographs from “One Fifty One” were the subject of a solo exhibition at Company in May 2023. Hubbard’s photography and performances have also appeared at the Brooklyn Museum; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; MoMA PS1; The Kitchen; and The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas; among many others. In 2021, the Whitney Museum of American Art purchased 14 of Hubbard’s works.

“In our image-saturated era, Katherine Hubbard’s slow and deliberate work takes a different approach to photography, demonstrating incredible care and connection,” said Charlie White, head of CMU’s School of Art. “Her work in ‘One Fifty One’ develops beyond the surface image to examine physical and emotional intimacy and the complexity of human relationships. I’m thrilled she will be able to continue to develop this important body of work thanks to this well-deserved Guggenheim Fellowship.”

BXA Alumna Receives Guggenheim

Schneider, who earned a BHA (Bachelor of Humanities and Arts) from Carnegie Mellon University in 2001, was named a 2024 Guggenheim Fellowship recipient in the Fine Arts category. Schneider, who studied fine art and psychology at CMU, works as an artist in Brooklyn and Hudson, New York.

Schneider has presented her photographs and videos at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki; Galeria Alberto Sendros, Buenos Aires; santralistanbul, Istanbul; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; Pérez Art Museum Miami; The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; The Art Institute of Chicago; and The Kitchen, New York. Her work has been reviewed in The New York Times ArtForum, VICE, Modern Painters, and The New Yorker.

In addition to her Guggenheim Fellowship, Schneider has received a Creative Capital Award, a Fulbright Fellowship, and attended the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Independent Study Program and Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture.

“I feel so fortunate to be included among the Guggenheim Foundation’s 2024 Fellows,” Schneider said. “I’m thrilled and humbled, and I’m looking forward to spending a lot of time in the studio this year.”

featuring the following:

photography by Luis Salazar

artwork by Katherine Hubbard

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Equity in Theater and Our Community

A Q&A with Angelica Perez-Johnston, DPA

Office of DEI + School of Drama

written by
Cally Jamis Vennare

CFA Magazine: How do you and your office work towards helping us all understand and move beyond uncertainty to understanding of the sometimes divisive view of DEI?

Dr. APJ: Our office is committed to meeting people where they are in their journey of identity development. We try to contextualize the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion in such a way that it invites opportunities for conversations while doing our best to suspend assumptions and judgment. We welcome anyone from our community to enter a space of discovery and in doing so, encourage growth. That said, we don't shy away from using the words necessary to educate people on the realities of the work that we do.

CFA: You are charged with working with all five schools in CFA. Can you speak about a project or initiative that you have taken on with a school and what you hope to come of it?

Dr. APJ: The [School of Drama](#) has a longstanding and articulated commitment to the work of diversity, equity and inclusion. Their desire for continuous growth and reflection and, in collaboration with the amazing School of Drama leadership team, we have been able to have some very meaningful conversations. We meet on a consistent basis to identify the ways in which we could foster growth while increasing belonging and inclusivity for our students, faculty and staff. As a result, we worked together to develop a pilot of pre-production conversations for students this academic year.

This pilot will address all student groups within a production cohort prior to the first day of rehearsals. This proactive approach provides students with the opportunity to engage in an understanding of a variety of situations that can often arise when working together to produce creative works. We will also develop shared language around understanding bias, culturally responsive approaches to communication, and how to address content that may impact some of our community members.

CFA: What other social dynamics were taken into consideration in the pilot's creation?

Dr. APJ: The School of Drama has always been aware of, and brought attention to, how to work with sensitive content within performances. Expanding upon that work to develop a more proactive approach opens opportunities to frame understanding and developing coping strategies, particularly around topics that folks may have had previous life experience with. I reviewed the scripts and notes from the student pitches and season selection committee for this academic year and what had already been identified as content concerns. The more nuanced situations that a person with expertise such as mine can identify and address, increase the ability to normalize conversations around moments that may cause emotional or physical distress. It's also important to articulate that we will not ever be able to identify all of the situations that may impact an individual based on their life experiences.

The philosophy of our office is that while students have the support systems in place, both within CFA and the university at large, we need to work on preparing them with the necessary coping strategies and tools to work through moments of micro aggressive behavior — experiences that can be impactful from an identity perspective, etc. We can equip them to have more engaged and meaningful conversations.

Because in the reality that will become their world — on Broadway or elsewhere — they might not have this same level of support. I want to make sure we have done enough to prepare them for the mental and physical labor of engaging in topics that are uncomfortable to them.

CFA: This is not a passive approach for DEI, is it?

Dr. APJ: Absolutely not. This is a proactive approach to supporting individuals who are engaging with material on real life topics that relate to diversity, equity and inclusion in a multitude of ways.

I want our office to be the first thought during preparation, not the place to go when it all falls apart. We are working towards shifting away from the reactionary model of DEI practices and into a space that is proactive, welcoming and normalizing of asking for help and having conversations. We equip our students with the knowledge and language to articulate when they may need additional support, no matter what the reason. We also recognize our limitations and certainly provide the necessary referrals to students to our external support providers such as CaPs, etc.

CFA: Will you provide these support tools for CFA faculty and staff?

Dr. APJ: Yes. One hundred and twenty percent! In addition to students, one of our main priorities is to increase the sense of belonging for our entire CFA community. I'm proud to say that while we are enriching students on an individual basis, we are also equipping our faculty and staff to engage in this work more intentionally.

We provide ongoing professional development opportunities as well as individualized support for faculty and staff. We start each academic year with a faculty and staff retreat and provide additional capacity-building workshops throughout the year that are tailored, based on assessment of experiences within the college. This year, we will expand our opportunities to two comprehensive institutes in addition to regular professional development: The Inclusive Leadership Institute in the fall, and the Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Practices Program in the spring. Both learning opportunities are cohort-based and run through the entire semester. Each culminates in a "capstone" project of the participants choosing where they will identify an area within their scope of work to develop an intervention for and implement in the subsequent semester.

CFA: What do you hope will result from your CFA student and faculty DEI programs?

Dr. APJ: I hope students, faculty and staff know that I want to create a space where everyone feels as though they are invited into the conversation and that their contributions matter. DEI goes beyond what is typically defined as race and gender work. We strive to empower our community and ourselves with the capacity to increase equitable practice, question our assumptions and be open to the notion of growth and change.

We have taken the opportunity to acknowledge both student, faculty and staff voices in this process and create something that is structured, meaningful and supportive at CFA. By doing so, we are equipping our community with the tools to not only understand what's occurring right now in the world of identity and marginalization, but also to be able to be vulnerable enough to say: "I'm going to grow with this, learn as things develop and evolve, and acknowledge the basic humanity of each individual."

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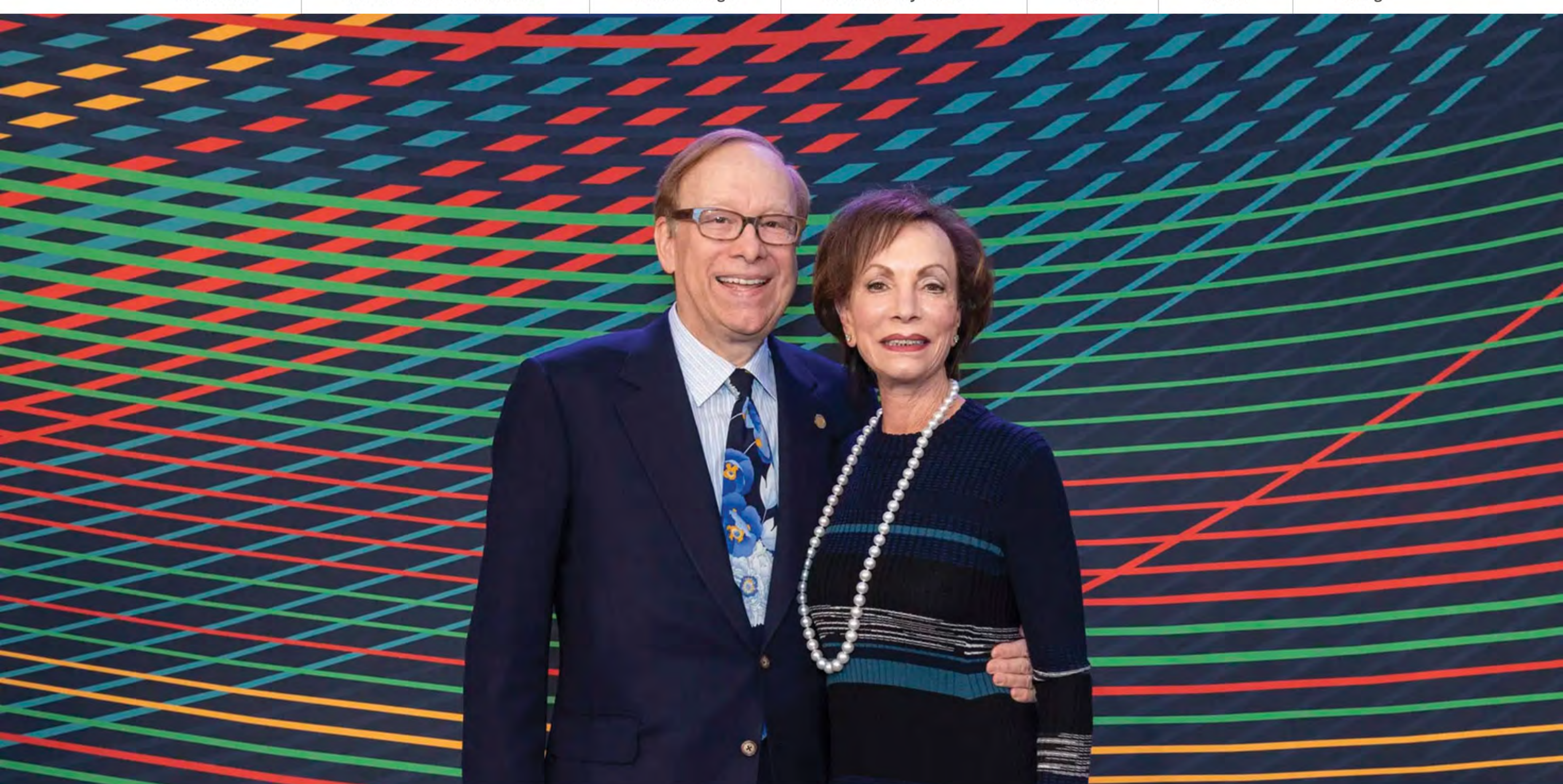
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Why We Give Back

Gift Will Expand Public Art at Carnegie Mellon

Alumni couple to support Institute for Contemporary Art Pittsburgh's new home, endowment for art on campus

written by
Brian Thornton

Inspired by their lifelong passion for art, Carnegie Mellon University alumni Cindy and Tod Johnson have committed \$10 million to support public art on the university's Pittsburgh campus.

Half of the gift will create the Tod and Cindy Johnson Endowment for Public Art, which will provide funding for CMU's public art program as well as its Institute for Contemporary Art Pittsburgh (ICA), including acquisition of new art and support for programming and other strategic priorities. The remaining \$5 million will support the ICA's new and greatly expanded home in the Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences. Carnegie Mellon broke ground for the facility in April.

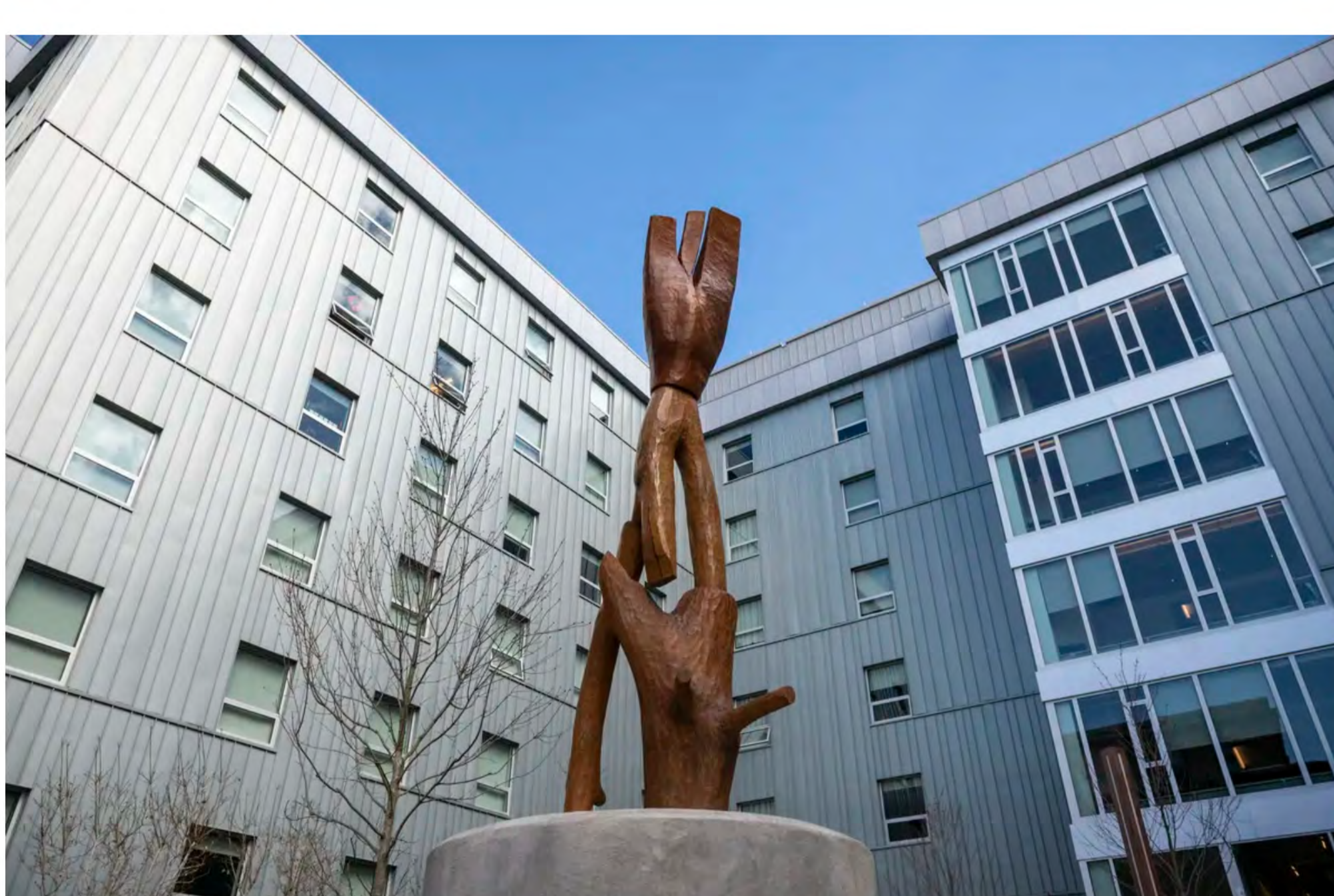
In recognition of the Johnsons' generosity, Carnegie Mellon will name the Johnson Family Public Art Curator. In addition, a gallery in the new ICA Pittsburgh will be named in their honor.

"For decades, Cindy and Tod Johnson have been among Carnegie Mellon University's most visionary and generous supporters," CMU President [Farnam Jahanian](#) said. "Their passion for our mission is matched by their extraordinary love for the arts, and we are grateful that they are cultivating a legacy that will spark discourse, ideas and creativity across our campus for generations to come."



[The ICA Pittsburgh will double its exhibition space when it moves into the Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences.](#) Co-located with facilities for departments from the [Mellon College of Science](#) and [School of Computer Science](#), the ICA Pittsburgh will be the cultural and civic anchor for the innovative, multidisciplinary building. With galleries on two levels and public programming spaces, the ICA Pittsburgh will expand its offerings and contribute to elevating the region in the national and global arts and culture conversation. Its prominent new location adjacent to the renowned Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh will spark expanded collaborations with the institution. Construction on the new building is expected to be complete in 2027.

"Carnegie Mellon has been a special place for Cindy and me since we met as students. In fact, Cindy earned her fine arts degree from what was then Carnegie Tech, deepening our love and appreciation for the arts, which has been a passion throughout our lives," Tod Johnson said. "With this gift, we are thrilled to provide support for the ICA Pittsburgh, which will become a CMU and Pittsburgh focal point for groundbreaking art exhibitions and programming, and more broadly for public art on campus for many years ahead."



CMU has long recognized the value of public art on its campuses. Since 2013, Carnegie Mellon has committed to incorporating public art in all new building construction as part of the [Simonds Commission's principles](#). Recently completed projects include "[Making Way](#)" by Jessica Stockholder at the new Alan Magee Scaife Hall, "[Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds](#)" by Stephanie Dinkins inside TCS Hall, and "[Inverted Dancer](#)" by Thaddeus Mosley in the courtyard at Fifth and Clyde House. The university will soon unveil a new installation of commissioned work by Amanda Ross-Ho at its residence hall on Forbes and Beeler as well as a work by Guadalupe Maravilla at the Highmark Center for Health, Wellness and Athletics.

"Carnegie Mellon's commitment to public art and interdisciplinary collaboration has created a program unique to higher education. This program will be further enhanced by the new ICA Pittsburgh, which will position us to create experiences that promote conversation and bring meaning to our contemporary life like nowhere else," said [Elizabeth Chodos](#), the inaugural Johnson Family Public Art Curator and director of the ICA Pittsburgh. "I am honored to be the first to hold this position and to be able to use these generous resources to advance the arts at CMU, in the Pittsburgh region and beyond."



Cindy and Tod Johnson met and married while they were both students at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. Cindy earned a bachelor's degree in art in 1968, and Tod earned a bachelor's degree in graphic arts management in 1966 and a master's degree in industrial administration in 1967.

Cindy is an arts advocate who has been involved with the Guggenheim Museum and Neuberger Museum of Art. She serves as co-chair of the board of directors for St. Mary's Healthcare System for Children in New York. In 1984, Andy Warhol created a portrait of Cindy in his iconic artistic style; the work is in the collection of the Museum Brandhorst in Munich, Germany.

Since 2022, Tod has been the co-founder and managing director of Duo Partners, a New York-based investment and consulting firm. Previously, he was the executive chairman of The NPD Group, a global market-research firm that he led for 51 years; today he is chair of the Board of Directors for Circana, a company founded by the merger of NPD and IRI in 2023.

An emeritus member of [CMU's Board of Trustees](#) on which he has served for more than four decades, Tod also has held numerous volunteer leadership roles at Carnegie Mellon, including chairing its Centennial Campaign. In 2019, Tod was awarded the university's Founders Medal for Outstanding Achievement. He is the president and chief executive officer of The Metropolitan Opera.

During Make Possible: The Campaign for Carnegie Mellon University, the [Johnsons previously gave \\$50 million for a transformational endowment that supports undergraduate scholarships](#) as well as persistence activities that help students stay on the path to graduation. The contribution was the single largest gift for scholarship support in the university's history. In addition, their previous gifts include the establishment of the Herbert A. Simon Professorship of Economics and Psychology, support for the Tepper Quad and Purnell Center for the Arts, and an endowment for the university's Fifth-Year Scholars Program.

The Johnsons' commitment is the latest transformational gift toward the [Make Possible](#) campaign. CMU's generous community of more than 67,000 donors has given nearly \$2.3 billion to date for critical strategic initiatives, including capital projects like the Hall of Sciences, initiatives across its seven colleges and schools, and endowment support that fuels the work and impact of its exceptional students, faculty and staff.

[Design Unveiled for Expanded Institute for Contemporary Art in Pittsburgh](#)

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ALUMNI NEWS

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Thanks to those of you who sent an alumni news update to us after seeing the new digital CFA Magazine. Although we know that many of you send your news directly to the academic program from which you graduated, we would love for you to [fill out our alumni contact form](#) so we can help to let your classmates know what you've been doing.

Here is one that came through last time!



[School of Music](#) alumna **Jennifer Bouton** (2017) released an album of [Vivaldi Piccolo Concertos](#) May 10 on PARMA/Navona Records. This landmark recording is the first complete recording of the concerti by an American piccoloist and the first in the Western Hemisphere. In collaboration with Jory Vinikour (harpsichord) and musicians of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Bouton presents the concertos in a conductorless chamber music setting. Live video of the concertos also is available on YouTube.

In recording the complete set of works for soprano/flautino on the modern piccolo, Bouton aims to expand the standard canon of solo piccolo repertoire and encourage modern performers to investigate the possibilities of ornamentation that live in each of these sparkling compositions. Expressive, lighthearted, technically elaborate, and strikingly beautiful, this collection of works is a stunning showcase of Vivaldi's colorful concerti, concluding with an exhilarating performance of Paganini's Caprice No. 11 in C Major to round out the program.



In February, **Christopher Pearlberg** became the inaugural director of athletic bands at The Catholic University of America. According to the CUA website, the university's Associate Vice President and Director of Athletics, Kevin Robinson, announced the creation of a pep band dedicated to Catholic University and its athletic programs in October.

"This is an exciting addition to our Catholic University Athletics family," said Robinson. "Chris' passion for music will help us drive the energy and enthusiasm that our pep band will bring as we create the soundtrack for Catholic Athletics."

Pearlberg joins Catholic after spending more than a year as the athletic bands director at St. Mary's College of Maryland. Pearlberg was tasked with the similar role of developing and directing a new college pep band upon his arrival at St. Mary's.

"I am thrilled to join the staff at the Catholic University of America and develop the brand-new pep band," Pearlberg said. "It is an honor to serve in this role; we have exciting plans for creating a thrilling atmosphere both on campus and at athletic events."

Pearlberg holds a bachelor of music/performance degree from Temple University ('12), a master of music/performance degree from Carnegie Mellon University [School of Music](#) ('14), and a doctorate of music, literature and performance degree from Indiana University ('20).

His extensive teaching background includes time spent at St. Mary's Ryken in Leonardtown, Md., and Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, N.H. Pearlberg also has teaching experience at the Luzerne Music Center in Luzerne, N.Y., the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Campbellsville University, and Timberlane Regional School District in Plaistow, N.H.



[BXA](#) alumnus **Stefan Romero** (2019) was named the artistic director of "America's Tapestry," an exhibition celebrating America's 250th Anniversary in 2026. Comprised of 13 embroidered panels, this modern interpretation of Bayeux Tapestry visually narrates stories from America's 13 colonies. Each panel depicts a figure from an historically underrepresented group in each colony who displayed an act of courage or ingenuity during our country's creation.

Romero will design the panels in collaboration with historical organizations representing each of the original 13 colonies — now states. The execution of the embroidery will be completed by needleworkers within each of those states from 2025 to 2026. An appropriate gallery space will be designated to house the completed tapestry in 2026.

Image: representative of what the mural may entail; it was used to help secure funding for the exhibition.

Find out what alumni are doing across the [School of Architecture](#), [School of Art](#), [School of Design](#), [School of Drama](#), [School of Music](#) and [BXA Intercollege Degree Programs](#).

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