

# College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research & Creative Practice

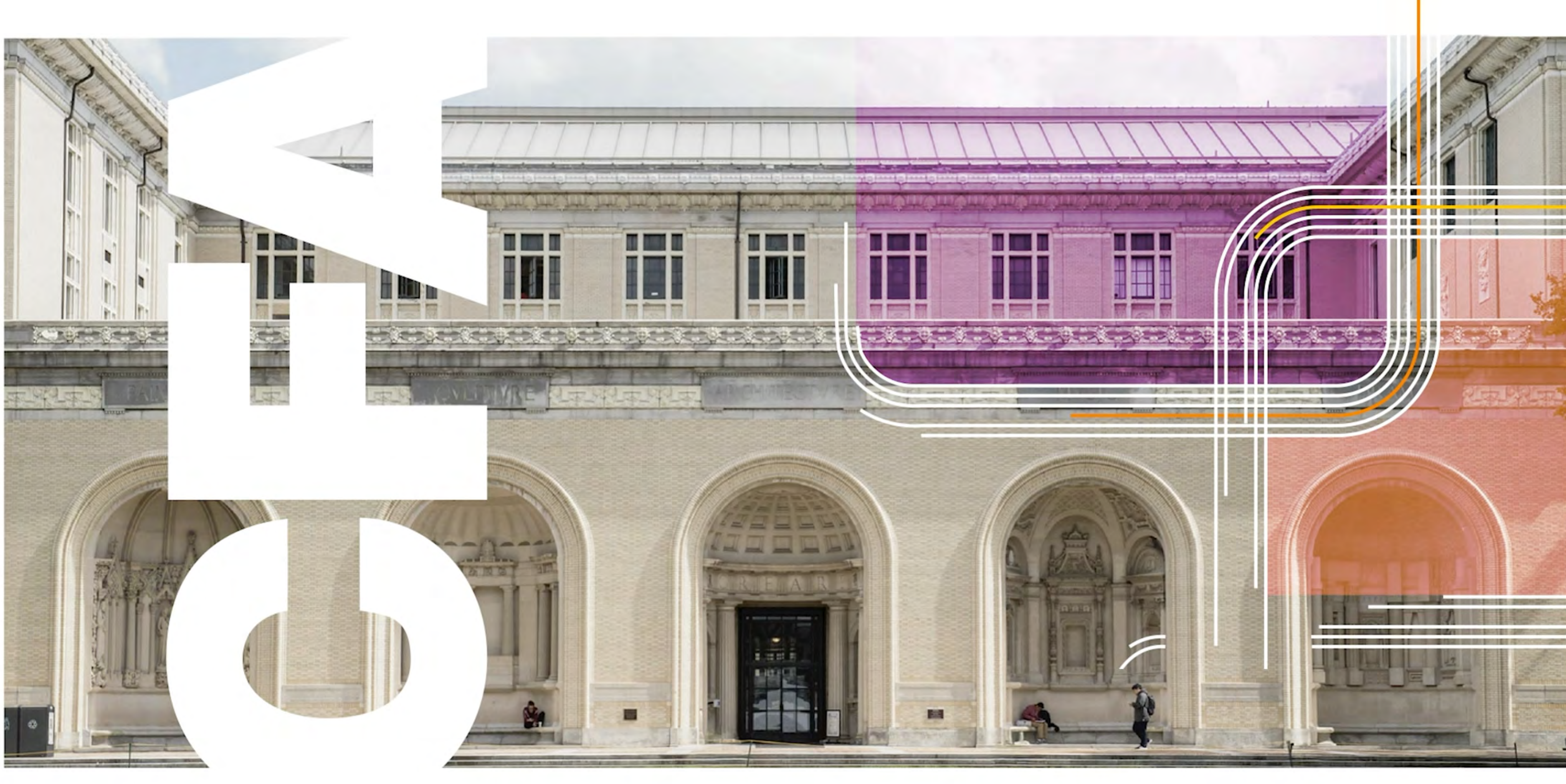
ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving




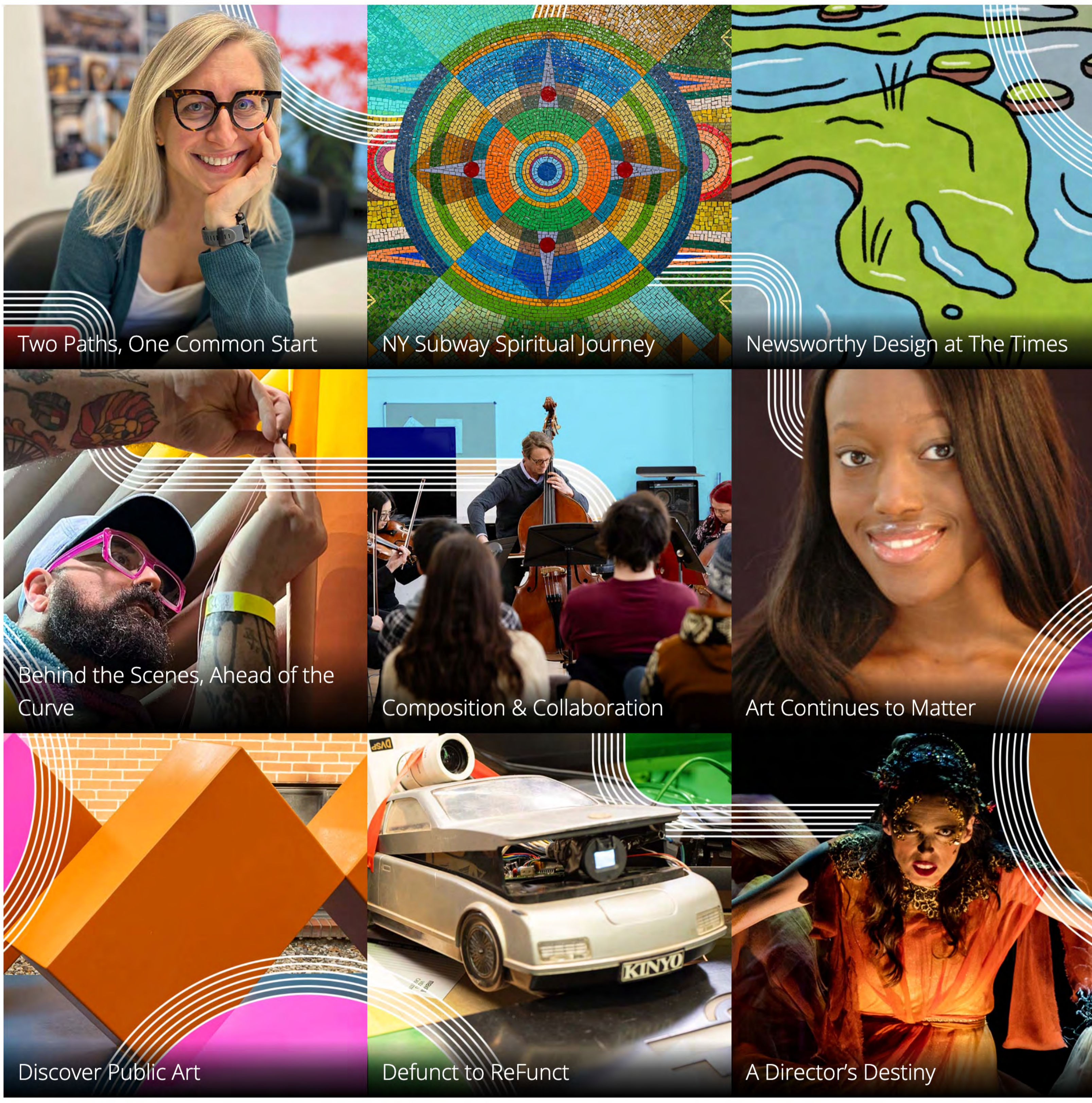
## Rituals, Value and Progress

This fall, the College of Fine Arts will engage in one of the sacred rituals of academia: strategic planning. It turns out we haven't practiced this rite in quite a while, perhaps never (alumni and former faculty, please challenge this assumption!)? Like most sacred rituals, it has its predictable gestures, actions and sequences, as well as a special vocabulary and a priestly caste of consultants — and we are working on costumes. To be perfectly honest, most strategic plans end up looking and sounding quite a bit alike, which can dilute their impact. If you can't articulate what makes your contribution distinctive, what's the point?

Furthermore, we seriously considered cancelling or postponing the exercise given the existential threats — severely curtailed research funding, barriers to international student enrollment and the attempt to erase decades of progress on access and equity — facing CMU and all research universities in the U.S. at this moment. But it occurs to us that now is precisely the time for us to start a conversation about our college and its values of humanity, humility, playfulness, curiosity and connection. It is precisely the moment for us to define, with razor sharp clarity, our value to CMU, to the community, to the world.

As the year progresses, you may hear from us with an invitation to participate in this conversation. The articles in this issue celebrate the contributions of our many brilliant alumni, students, faculty and staff. I hope that the values they illuminate will inspire (and reassure) you.

 | Dean Mary Ellen Poole





Looking for a past version?

You can find past digital and print versions of the magazine, starting with our 2018 inaugural magazine [CFA MAGAZINE ARCHIVE](#) ►

Tell us what you think!

Let us know what you hoped to see — and what you liked! [EMAIL US AT CONTACT-CFA@CMU.EDU](mailto:CONTACT-CFA@CMU.EDU) ►

College of Fine Arts Magazine	Writers	Photography & Illustrations	CFA Leadership
Publisher: Mary Ellen Poole, Dean, CFA Executive Editor: Pam Wigley Editor: Cally Jamis Vennare Editor & Digital Content Designer: Alexis Morrell Design Director: Mark Werle Designers: Rob Azarcon, Kelsey Stark Project Manager: Kara Kessler Animation: Adam Chismar	Harrison Apple Margaret Cox Phillip Crook Dan Fernandez Shannon Musgrave Cally Jamis Vennare Pam Wigley	Aaron Blum Brett Boardman Margaret Cox Etienne Frossard Michael Henninger Tom Little Eden Weingart Pam Wigley Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences University Communications and Marketing	CFA Dean: Mary Ellen Poole, Ph.D. School of Architecture Head: Omar Khan School of Art Head: Charlie White School of Design: Ana Pinto da Silva School of Drama Head: Robert Ramirez School of Music: Milton Rubén Laufer BXA Senior Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary Initiatives: M. Stephanie Murray, Ph.D. ICA Pittsburgh Director: Elizabeth Chodos Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry Director: Nica Ross MAM Program Director: Jessica Bowser Acrie MEIM Program Director: Daniel Green, Ph.D.



Architectural work by Brent Buck.

## Two Paths, One Common Start

Melissa Sarko and Brent Buck Enjoy Industry Success and Recognition

School of Architecture

written by  
Pam Wigley

Melissa Sarko and Brent Buck are both graduates of the Carnegie Mellon University School of Architecture. Both live in New York City, both are enjoying successful careers in the industry, and both have been recognized for their work. For all their similarities, each chose a different focus — one working for a large firm and one who runs his own business. Their stories illustrate how Carnegie Mellon's School of Architecture prepared them to follow their dreams.



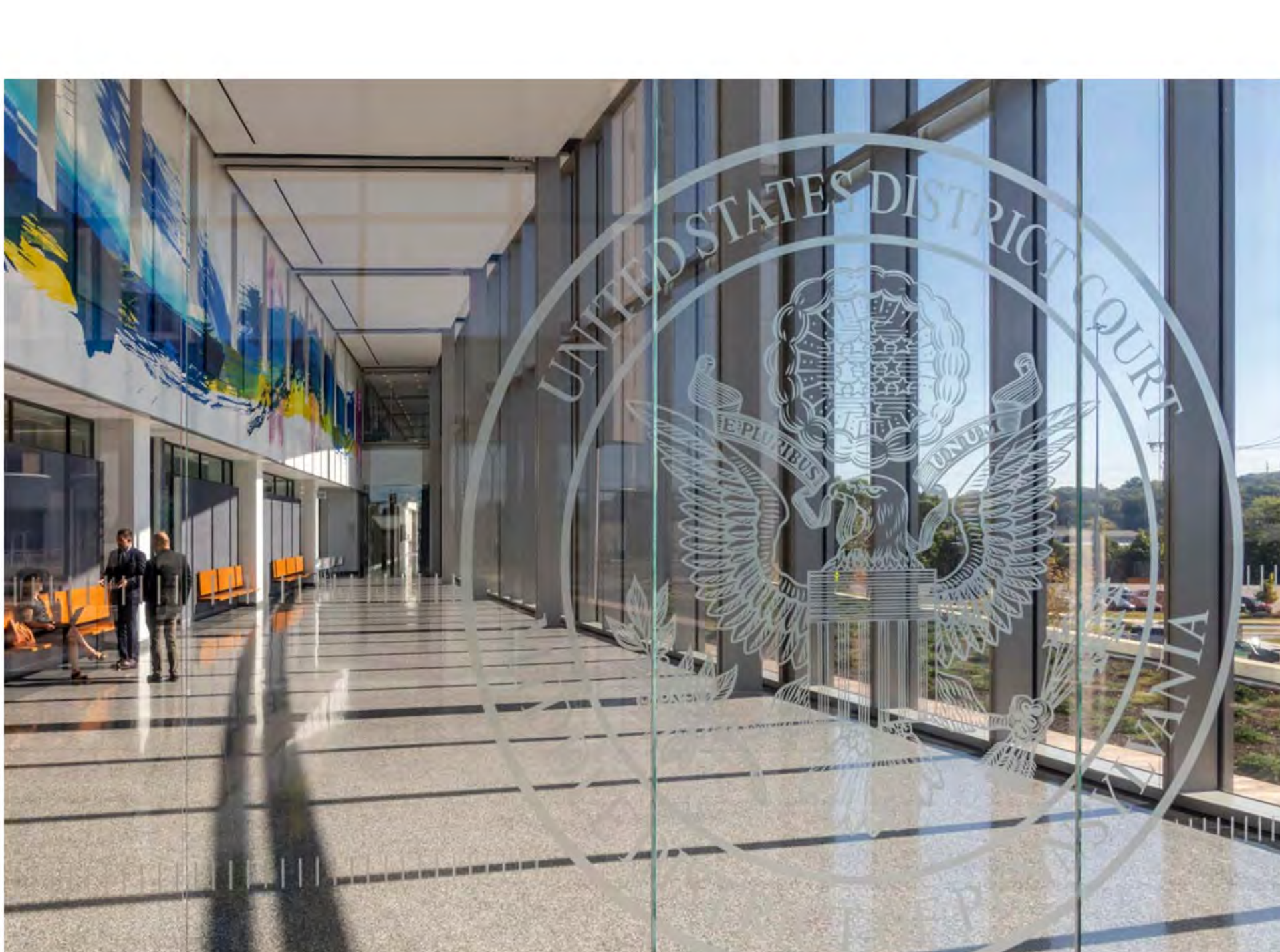
Melissa Sarko

Melissa Sarko (BArch 1997) grew up in Uniontown, Pa., and from an early age showed an affinity for creating art. From drawing pictures of alphabet letters with her mom to taking Saturday morning art classes to winning grade school art competitions, Sarko never lost interest in the creative outlet. In high school, she complemented her love of the arts with her love of math, encouraged by her calculus teacher, Mr. Orlando.

"He suggested that I consider pursuing architecture, which was sort of a blend of both subjects I loved," she said.

Sarko knew CMU had a great program, but she hesitated to enroll because her older sister was already a graphic design student there. Still, she applied and was accepted, and she said she rarely saw her sibling on campus, between a "challenging" first semester and then jumping full throttle into her studies.

Influenced by faculty members Art Lubetz and Laura Lee, Sarko flourished in the program and took away many principles she still uses in her current work.



"I remember two key components that stuck with me: Think about the people who use the building you're designing, and have a strong concept for your project, which brings clarity to decisions and choices."

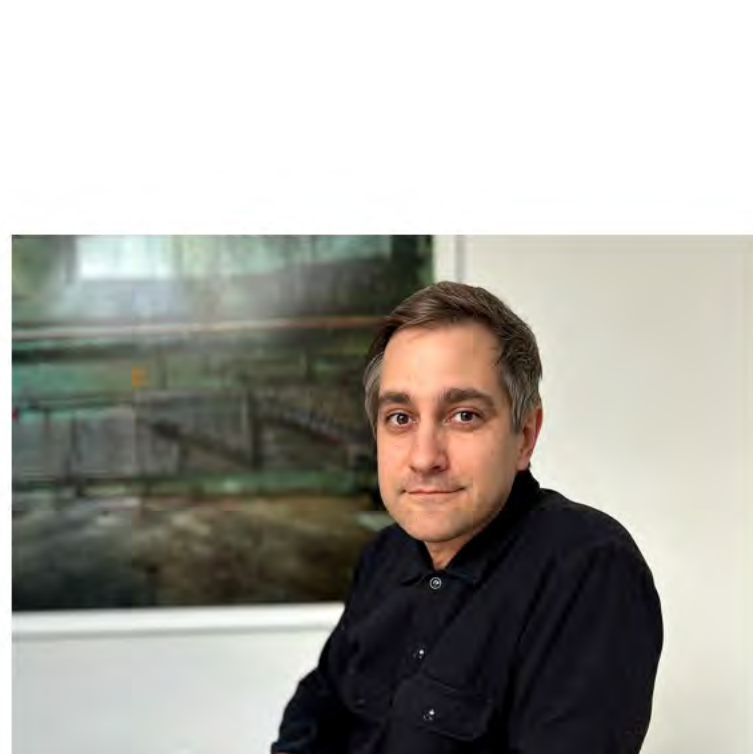
Melissa Sarko

Following stints at firms in the Pittsburgh area, she and her husband decided to move to New York because much of his consulting work was there. "We found our place and our people in New York City, where many of our closest friends are former CMU classmates," she said.

She also found her workplace at [Ennead Architects](#), a firm dedicated to civic architecture across multiple typologies and scales, where she's been for more than 20 years and where she continues to work on exciting projects that she finds fulfilling.

For those currently students and recent alumni from the School of Architecture, she offered advice that has served her well.

"Be open to new ideas and feedback from colleagues," she said. "Remember to enjoy wherever you are, while you're there in the moment. If you're passionate and engaged, you will find your success."



Brent Buck

Brent Buck (BArch 2003) hails from a family of masons and plasterers in Curtice, Ohio. There was something about making things with your hands that fascinated him. His interest in science and math blended with the craftsman in him to lead him to the field of architecture. An experience in Toledo as part of a design competition led by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) led Buck to the summer pre-college program at Carnegie Mellon's School of Architecture, which then culminated in his enrolling in the program.

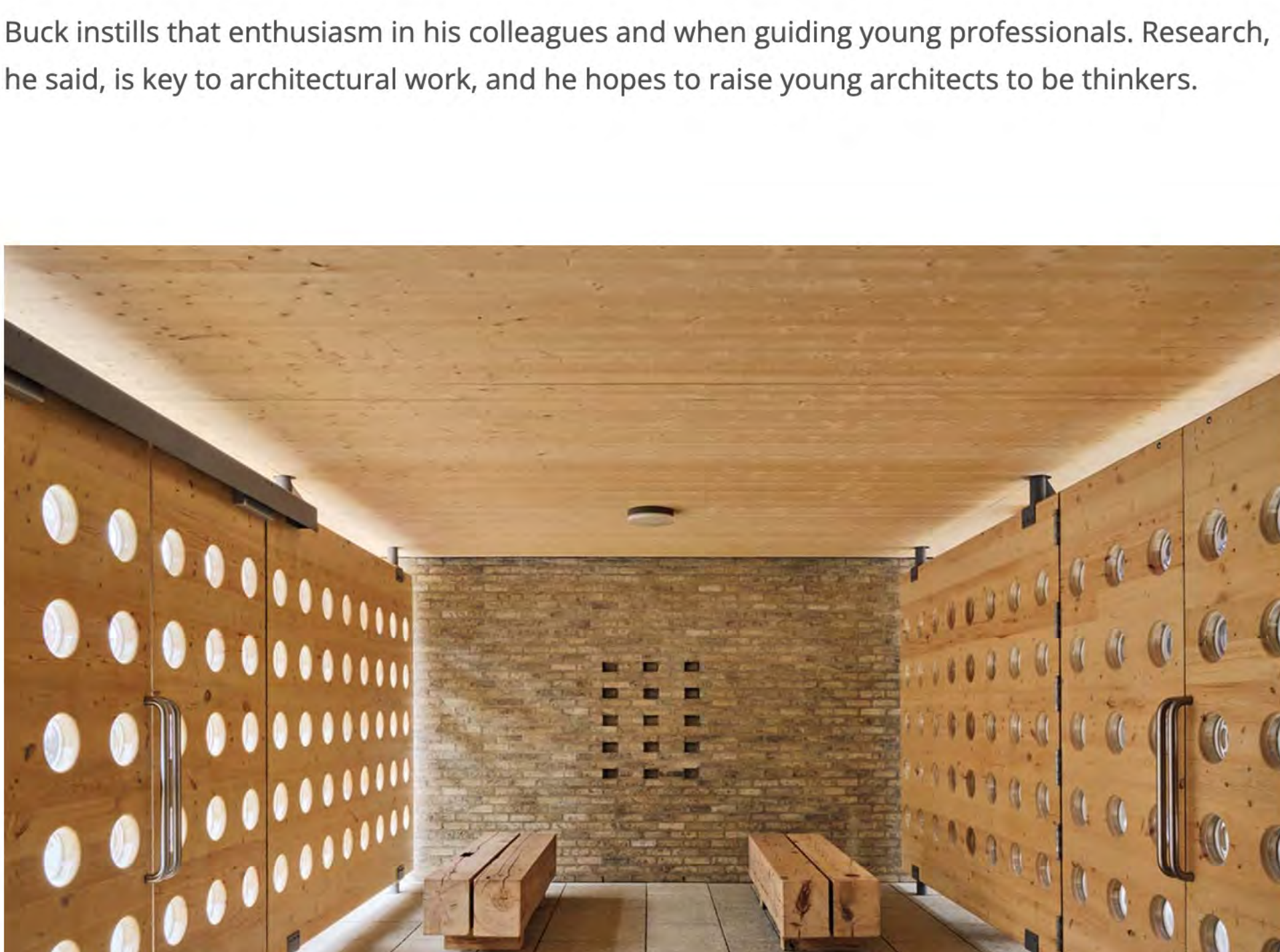
"I found at CMU a holistic approach to architecture," he said. "The course of study wasn't delineated one way or the other. You had the freedom to make choices."

Buck embraced Pittsburgh, especially the neighborhoods surrounding Carnegie Mellon, and enjoyed exploring arts venues like Carnegie Museum and The Mattress Factory. He found inspiration in faculty like Doug Cooper, Gerard Damian and Dutch McDonald, from whom he learned three principles he passes on to young architects today: patience, compromise, humility.

Those ideals guided Buck as he completed his master's degree at Yale and then during a decade of apprenticing for architects in New York. About 10 years ago, he decided to hang out his own shingle, creating [Brent Buck Architects](#). The firm focuses on a variety of project types; no two projects are the same.

"I was humbled to take the next step after my time at CMU, Yale and my work experience," Buck said. "To be able to do this is a gift. It's an amazing, rewarding profession for me."

Buck instills that enthusiasm in his colleagues and when guiding young professionals. Research, he said, is key to architectural work, and he hopes to raise young architects to be thinkers.



"We can solve problems on small and large levels. But to do either, you have to bring humility to your day-to-day process. You have to listen. You learn so much every day, and we're still learning. When clients want certain things, you must understand their needs and their goals, and that often means compromising. It's a collective effort."

Brent Buck

Buck's firm recently was honored by AIA for its work on a Williamsburg (Brooklyn) townhouse project that was built, in part, reusing materials from old buildings in the region. The firm also created New York City's first legal CLT project: an all-wood building in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. CLT is cross-laminated timber, which is considered a sustainable and renewable alternative to materials like concrete and steel, offering a lower carbon footprint.

Buck's approach to all projects, despite their differences, is similar.

"You have to have patience. It's not instant gratification," he said. "It takes time. It's a long game. And there's joy and humility in that."



featuring the following:

images of their work, courtesy of Melissa Sarko and Brent Buck

photography by Pam Wigley

read more:

[Farewell... Alumni Gary Smith and Art Lubetz Leave Lasting Legacies](#)

◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025

## College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research &amp; Creative Practice

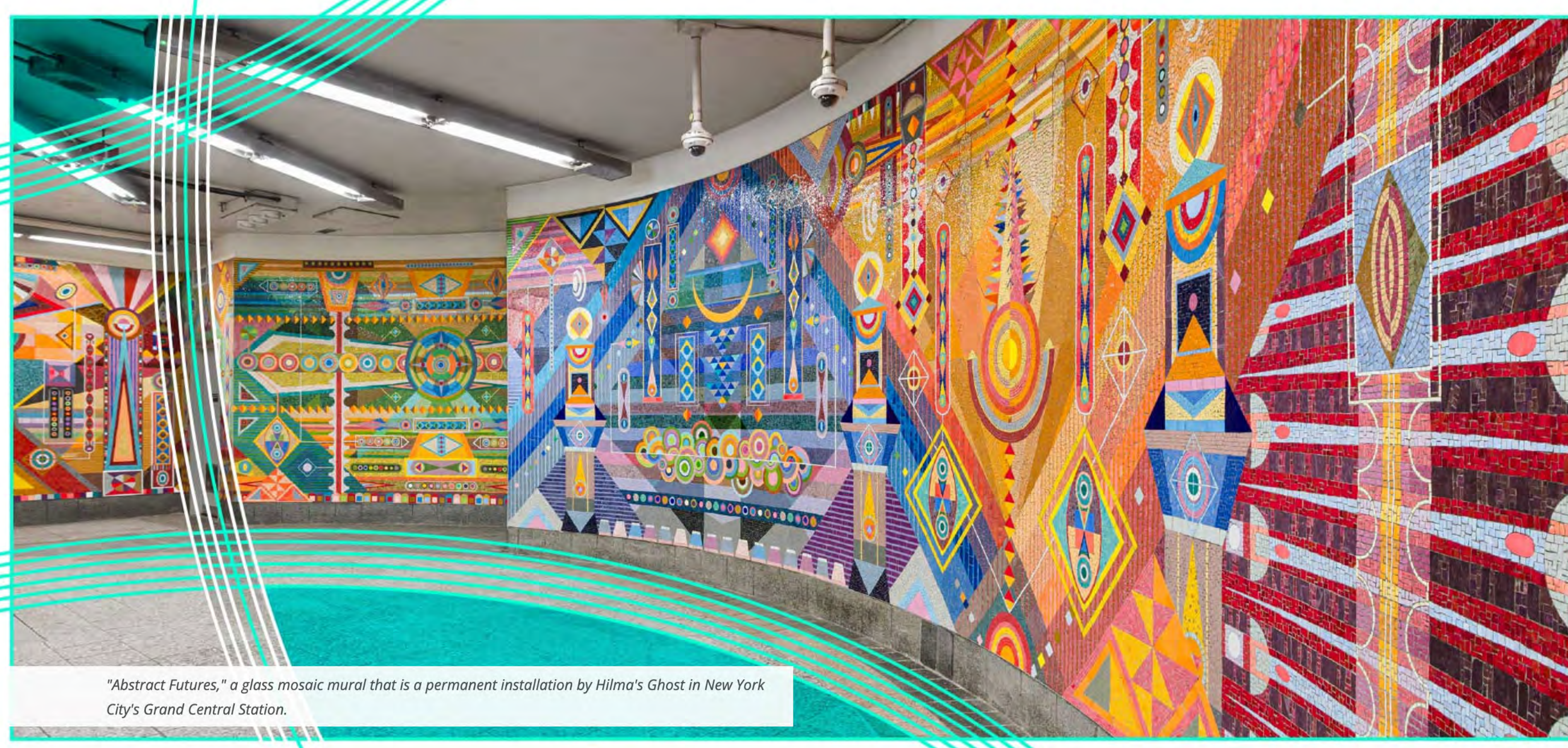
ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving



"Abstract Futures," a glass mosaic mural that is a permanent installation by Hilma's Ghost in New York City's Grand Central Station.

## NY Subway Spiritual Journey

## Sharmistha Ray and Dannielle Tegeger Debut a Permanent Installation in Grand Central Station

School of Art

written by  
Phillip Crook

Amid the rush of commuters streaming into New York City's Grand Central Station, a new kind of arrival took place this April. A previously blank 600-square-foot corridor at the 42nd Street/3rd Avenue entrance to the 7 Train — the city's vital connection between Queens and Manhattan — has been transformed by a monumental glass mosaic mural, *Abstract Futures*. The work marks the first permanent public artwork by [Hilma's Ghost](#), a feminist artist collective co-founded by Sharmistha Ray, Estella Loomis McCandless Assistant Professor of Art at the Carnegie Mellon University School of Art, and artist Dannielle Tegeger.

"It is an altar for us. This piece is an homage to all of our ancestors."

Sharmistha Ray

Estella Loomis McCandless Assistant Professor of Art, School of Art

Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design, the two-year project culminated in an opening ritual where Tegeger walked along the mural ringing a large brass bell, specially acquired for the occasion, in order to cleanse the space. "In many different religions and magic traditions, you cleanse something with sound," Tegeger said. "That connects to everybody, from Catholics to Hindus to witchcraft."



Ray and Tegeger then invited the 30 guests in attendance to whisper into the mosaic the name of a woman artist, mentor or loved one who had shaped their lives, such as the collective's namesake, artist and mystic Hilma af Klint. "It was beautiful just to watch all these people whispering into the wall, charging it," Ray said.

Hilma's Ghost began during the height of the pandemic in 2020, when Ray and Tegeger — both contemporary abstraction painters and, at the time, studio neighbors at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts — began hosting online workshops that celebrated underrepresented spiritual practices in art. Their friendship deepened in part through a shared appreciation for the 2019 landmark exhibition "[Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future](#)" at the Guggenheim Museum. The show spotlighted the visionary work of af Klint, a Swedish painter whose abstract works were deeply influenced by Theosophy, an esoteric late 19th century spiritual movement.

"For so many practices that have been pushed underground, the practitioners were mostly women. Even when they were men, this particular history of spirituality was written out. Look at Vasily Kandinsky — only part of the story is told, because he was extremely influenced by the Theosophical movement, which was started by a woman."

Sharmistha Ray

Estella Loomis McCandless Assistant Professor of Art, School of Art

Over the last five years, Ray and Tegeger's collaboration has expanded into more than 20 projects and 80 public programs, with work presented everywhere from Mexico City to Mumbai to the Guggenheim itself.

Like much of Hilma's Ghost's work, the mural's narrative structure draws from tarot symbolism — *Abstract Futures* is also the name of the collective's limited-edition tarot deck, now in its third edition. Dense with geometric motifs and layered meaning, the mural mirrors the complexity of the MTA transit system itself. Flowing arcs, shifting lines and radiant shapes surround commuters in a fully immersive experience as they ascend from the tunnels up a multi-story escalator. "I think of New York as, in a way, a series of portals," Ray said.



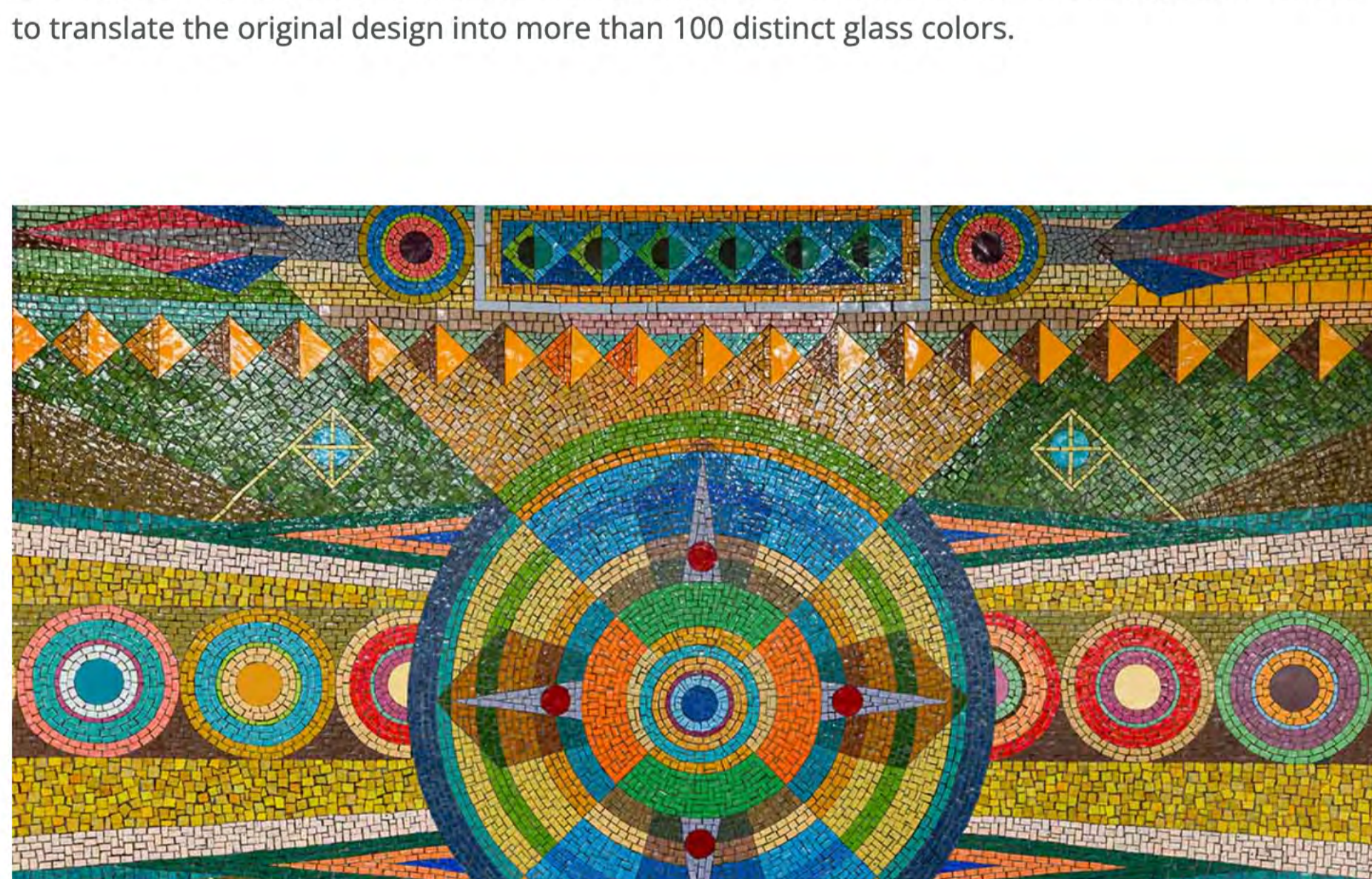
The mural unfolds across three distinct "portals," each representing a stage in the archetypal Heroine's journey in the tarot. The first portal introduces The Fool, rendered in active reds and oranges, leaping into the unknown. "The Fool jumps in, feet first, and just has to survive," Ray explained. The central wall turns to greens and browns, evoking groundedness and struggle through the cyclical patterns of The Wheel of Fortune. "New York is a city that requires a huge amount of hustle," they added. Finally, at the terminal end of the corridor, cool blues and purples culminate in the final portal, The World. "And then you start again," Ray said.

"It's like this beautiful sunrise of hope and optimism," said Bonnie Bertram, who passes through the station on the way to her office at Retro Report, a video journalism nonprofit. Bertram caught glimpses of the in-progress mural, but after a chance encounter with Ray in front of the final artwork, she posted photos in the company's Slack channel, where it became a hot topic. "We were talking about how it totally cheered us up on the way into work," Bertram said. "It was such an empowering thing to see this beautiful artwork that had been commissioned by the MTA, and it really did change our outlook."

[MTA Arts & Design](#) commissions one of the largest and most diverse collections of site-specific public art in the world, with more than 400 works by artists including Yoko Ono, Roy Lichtenstein, Mickalene Thomas, Xenobia Bailey, Sol LeWitt and Alex Katz. For more than 40 years, the MTA's Percent for Art program has brought permanent artworks to subway and rail stations across the city, with artists selected through a competitive panel process.

Stephen Miotto, of [Miotto Mosaic Art Studios](#), led the fabrication and installation for *Abstract Futures*. "This was one of the best locations in the subway to do a mosaic mural," Miotto said. "I love the fact that it completely changed that space. Now it's this magical world that they're walking into." A longtime MTA Arts & Design collaborator, Miotto has produced more than 50 mosaics throughout the subway system. Among them is the 86th Street Station mosaic by another artist from the CMU community, [Joyce Kozloff](#), a 1964 alum of the School of Art and a key figure of the 1970s feminist art and Pattern and Decoration movements.

Working closely with Miotto, Ray and Tegeger guided decisions around color, shape and texture to translate the original design into more than 100 distinct glass colors.



"What you notice are the imperfections in the glass and the texture and how things are cut. You can tell that it was made by hand."

Dannielle Tegeger

The mosaics were fabricated in Miotto's associate studio in Spilimbergo, Italy, where each hand-cut tile was adhered to paper panels with water-soluble glue in a mirror image of the design. "When we got to the job site, we grouted it from the back, placed the mosaic on the wall, then wet the paper to peel it off," Miotto explained. This transfer technique ensured a perfectly flush surface despite the variations in tile thickness, requiring 10 days to complete the installation.

For Ray, who first came to New York as a Pratt Institute graduate student, and Tegeger, who grew up in and around the city, the MTA's public art program is an essential thread in the fabric of New York. That Hilma's Ghost is now woven into that legacy speaks to the collective's mission: to recover and celebrate histories that have long been overlooked. Until this commission, Hilma's Ghost had created paintings for galleries and hosted workshops for intimate audiences, but *Abstract Futures* now lives in one of the busiest public transit systems in the world, an altar for the kinds of rituals and reflections that inspired it.

"Hilma's Ghost has always felt bigger than us," Tegeger said. "I love how it's embedded into the city permanently."

Ray added: "It's a magical place down there. You really feel like, more than anywhere else in New York, you're connected to something much larger than yourself through these invisible connections to people."



featuring the following:

photography by Etienne Frossard

[◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025](#)

## College of Fine Arts

[Academics](#)[Research & Creative Practice](#)[ICA Pittsburgh](#)[Frank-Ratchye STUDIO](#)[News](#)[About](#)[Giving](#)

Illustration by Eden Weingart for The New York Times.

## Newsworthy Design at The Times

## Eden Weingart and Her Designs Thrive at The New York Times

School of Design

written by  
Pam Wigley

Eden Weingart is happily working in a job that she didn't even know existed when she was an undergraduate in the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University. The 2014 BFA grad just followed her interests and, with faculty who encouraged her work, steered a path toward a fulfilling career.



The Atlanta native is now a New Yorker, working at one of the most prestigious news outlets in the world: *The New York Times*. Although Weingart didn't hail from a creative family, she was drawn to creating illustrations and became interested in digital drawing around 12 years old.

"I would scan my drawings and then color them," she remembered. "When I was in high school, I was part of a magnet program where I focused on visual arts. That's when I found out you could have a career in design."

On her own, she began investigating colleges and universities that offered design majors. In Carnegie Mellon, she said, she found not only an excellent design curriculum, but also other areas of study that appealed to her. Once she visited campus, her decision was made.



Illustration by Eden Weingart for The New York Times.

Her first two years were "an intense experience," Weingart said, and she allowed herself time to explore beyond design after that. Part of that exploration involved the CMU radio station, WRCT, where Weingart hosted "Garden Party with Eden," featuring indie music from 2010–2014.

"I ended up doing design work for the station," she said. "But hosting WRCT dance parties helped me to meet students outside the School of Design."

In the classroom, she found inspiration in her classes and the faculty who led them. Dan Boyarski was "a huge inspiration; I was lucky to have him," and Dylan Vitone "pushed me to develop my ideas."

In 2014, as she prepared to graduate, Weingart's ideas focused on motion graphics, blending motion and design to create her work. She found herself returning to her love of animation as she worked on her final project, which brought key scenes from Joseph Heller's novel "Catch-22" to life. After graduation, she went to work at agency Wieden+Kennedy's New York office, where she had interned the summer of her junior year.

After working there three years designing ads for various brands, Weingart began to network as she sought a new role. It paid off; the *Times* called. They were looking to extend their reach to a younger audience on new platforms like Snapchat. Weingart found the work was invigorating her interest in news and delivering it to the target audience. After the Snapchat project, she joined Digital News Design, a team of designers in the newsroom who develop new formats for digital stories.

"It was great to work with a team of designers, developers, illustrators and others to find the best way to tell a news story. I used what I learned at CMU to do the work — this time with reporters and editors, asking, 'What is your purpose? What are you trying to solve? How can we get there?'"

Eden Weingart

Weingart works with several CMU alumni in her role at the *Times*, and she still finds her work fulfilling. For those new alumni and students who are soon about to enter the workforce, she reminded them that it may take some time to get where they want to be.

"When you're looking for the perfect job, you may have to do a lot of different kinds of work and gain experience so that you bring a fresh perspective to your role," she said. "Your first job may not be your first choice, but if you get into a workplace you're interested in, you can possibly grow into the role you really want."

"Remember that your training at CMU prepared you, and you will ultimately find the right fit."



featuring the following:

illustrations by Eden Weingart

[◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025](#)
[Faculty & Staff Resources](#)[Contact](#)

CFA



## College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research &amp; Creative Practice

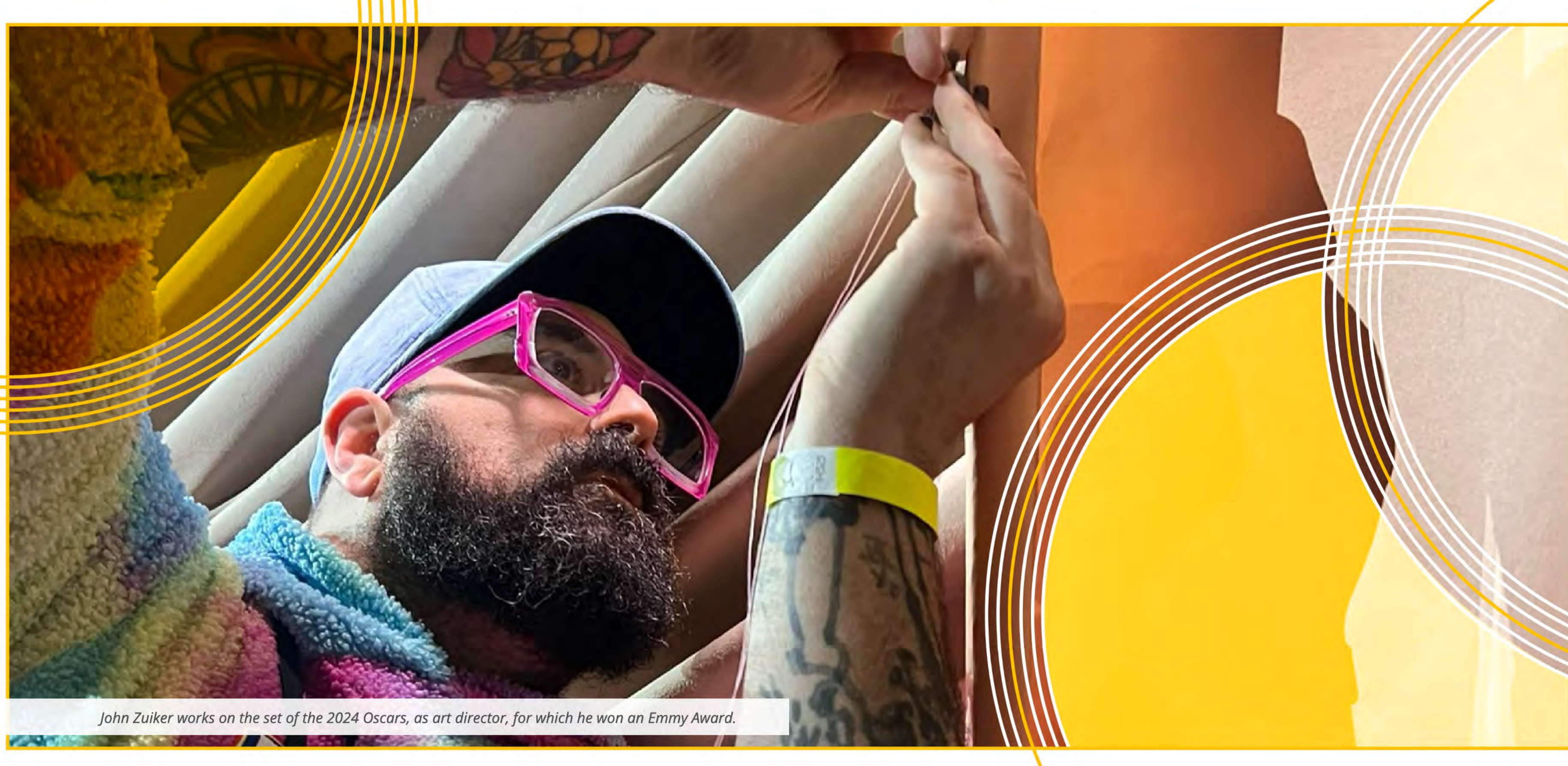
ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving



John Zuiker works on the set of the 2024 Oscars, as art director, for which he won an Emmy Award.

## Behind the Scenes, Ahead of the Curve

CMU Drama Alumni Build Creative Careers — and Community — on the West Coast

School of Drama

written by  
Shannon Musgrave

While Carnegie Mellon School of Drama is renowned for launching countless careers on Broadway, an impressive number of its alumni have found dynamic, behind-the-scenes success on the West Coast — shaping film, television and live entertainment through cutting-edge design and production work. Armed with rigorous training and a collaborative spirit, CMU alumni bring artistry and precision to high-profile projects across Hollywood and beyond. But what truly sets them apart is the close network they form — supporting each other professionally and personally, and ensuring that each new wave of graduates is met with open doors, practical guidance and a strong sense of community.

Alumni like [John Shaffner](#) and [Joe Stewart](#) set the stage (literally). After graduating in the late 1970s and giving New York City a try, the couple decided to make the trek west and launched prolific careers in production design and art direction. Together, they created the now legendary set of the hit TV show “Friends,” and designed numerous other television and awards shows. They forged a path that many Tartans have since taken, creating vibrant careers on the West Coast.



Alana Billingsley on the set of the 2024 Oscars, which she won an Emmy Award for her production design.

Fellow scenic design alums Alana Billingsley and Kristen Merlino followed suit. They were a year apart during their time at CMU, but Billingsley said from their very first production assignment together, she could see Merlino’s diligence and attention to detail. Merlino agrees that the two share a similar work ethic and creative philosophy. They both moved to LA following graduation, and after 10 years of independent careers in art direction, the two joined forces to create Paperweight Inc. — an art department collaborative with a unique focus on well-managed project execution.

Billingsley described the venture as a daydream come true.

“We imagined having a shared studio with an office assistant eager to learn the ropes, a research library and a room full of material samples — many of the things we loved about college! In 2017, after a few years of casual collaboration and with the support of a few key mentors in the business, we officially joined forces. Our first hire was an eager young CMU grad who still works with us to this day.”

“We were excited to create something larger than what either of us could achieve as individuals. And we wanted to find a way to provide a new type of service to our clients, while also creating an environment that fosters training new talent.”

Kristen Merlino

They’ve worked with alumni including Lex Gernon-Wyatt, John Zuiker and Jenny Gould to design some of television’s biggest awards shows, including the Grammy Awards, MTV Music Awards, Screen Actors Guild Awards and Academy Awards. Collectively, they’ve received five Emmy Awards and more than 25 Emmy nominations for their work.

In the world of lighting design, CMU alumni including Dan Eφος, Drew Findley, Will Gossett, Hannah Kerman, Jasmine Lesane, Noah Mitz and Ryan Tanker have illuminated some of Hollywood’s highest profile events — from awards shows like the Oscars and the Grammys to televised productions like “Dancing with the Stars” and major arena concerts. These productions demand not only creative vision but also technical expertise and the ability to collaborate under pressure, often in real time. For lighting departments, LA-based events offer unique opportunities to experiment with scale, technology and storytelling on a national — and sometimes global — stage, pushing the boundaries of what’s possible in live entertainment.



The School of Drama’s Class of 2025 gets a special tour and presentation at TAIT — a global company specializing in creating extraordinary live events and experiences through cutting-edge technology, precision engineering and creative design.

Sound design graduates have also found success in Hollywood. Milo Train works for NBCUniversal as a re-recording mixer, balancing dialogue, music and sound effects in post-production to create a cohesive soundtrack for film and television projects. Emma Present works as dialogue editor. Her work on Netflix’s “All the Light We Cannot See” earned her a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Sound Editing for a Limited or Anthology Series, Movie or Special. Early this year, Present received a Motion Picture Sound Editors Golden Reel Award for Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Documentary for her work on Amazon Prime’s “The Blue Angels.”

Train and Present have each served as the two most recent presidents of the West Coast Drama Alumni Community (WCDAC) — the School of Drama’s official organization for West Coast-based alumni. Each year, WCDAC hosts Showcase & Expo — a four-day visit to Los Angeles where the current graduating class participates in industry-facing events including studio tours, one-on-one meetings with professionals and various networking opportunities.



School of Drama costume design graduates got special behind-the-scenes tours of some of LA’s biggest costume departments.

These gatherings serve as more than just introductions; they’re the first step into a well-established network of alumni who are eager to welcome, mentor and connect in new ways. From portfolio reviews to job referrals, the CMU community in LA plays a crucial role in helping emerging designers, directors, writers and production artists navigate the industry and find their footing in a competitive landscape.

“For many of us Showcase/Expo was our first in-person exposure to the world of film and TV,” said Train. “It marked a turning point in our lives where an entirely new industry and city became part of our experience.”

And if anyone is up for the challenge of new experiences, it is a CMU grad.

“Curiosity and bravery are two traits that I think many CMU alumni have in common. They don’t assume they know everything and are unafraid to ask questions to learn more.”

Alana Billingsley

Merlino agrees.

“We have found CMU alumni to have an eagerness to learn, as well as a true love for live theatrical environments,” she said. “That combination is ideal for any member of our team working in the field of live productions.”

Rooted in a shared foundation of rigorous training, diligent work ethic, and commitment to curiosity and community, School of Drama alumni have not only built successful careers out west, but also formed a tight-knit network that continues to welcome and support the next generation.

“We have made this place home, and in turn it has given us careers, families, friendship and community,” said Train. “We all feel some debt to this West Coast community and love sharing this place with new graduates.”



featuring the following:

Oscars images courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025

Faculty & Staff Resources

Contact

# CFA

College of Fine Arts  
Carnegie Mellon University  
5000 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[Contact Us](#)



Legal Info | [www.cmu.edu](http://www.cmu.edu)  
© 2026 Carnegie Mellon University





CMU School of Music students watching as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra plays their original compositions.

## Composition & Collaboration

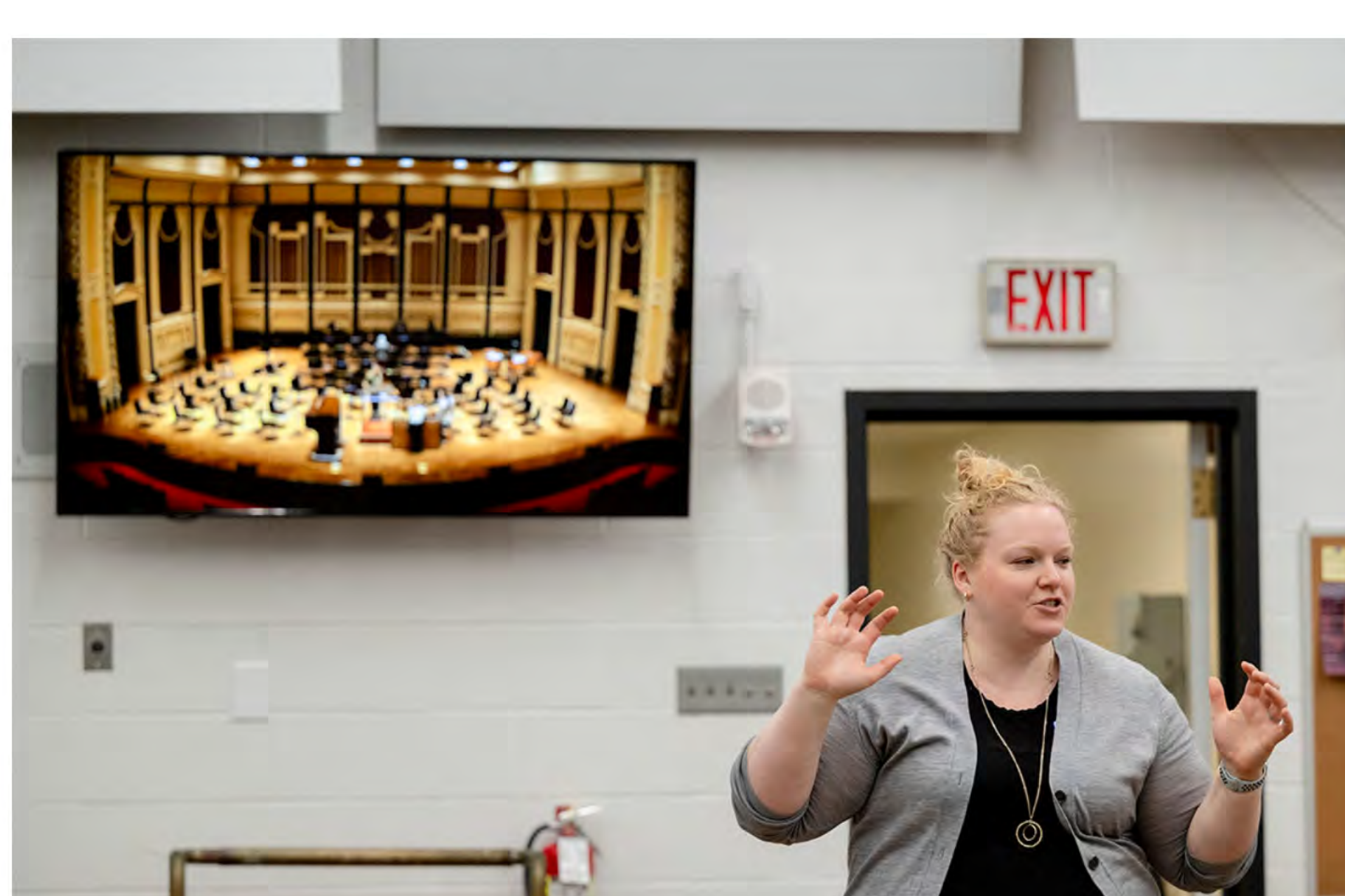
### Student Composers Collaborate with Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra during a Yearlong Project

School of Music

written by  
Dan Fernandez

On a Friday afternoon in the fall, music students filed into the airy rehearsal room for their Composer's Forum class as usual. What's unusual this time was the quintet of brass musicians from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) who were there as part of a new collaboration between the Carnegie Mellon University School of Music and the renowned orchestra. By the end of the year, eight composition students would hear their hard work performed backstage at Heinz Hall by some of the best musicians in the world.

"The best teacher for our composition students is to hear their music performed live," said Assistant Professor of Music Katherine Pukinskis (CFA 2008, 2010). "To be, to borrow the "Hamilton" quote, "in the room where it happens."



Katherine Pukinskis at Heinz Hall, home of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, for her Composition Collaboration course.

Pukinskis laid the groundwork for this new project in the summer of 2024 by pitching several ideas for a collaboration to the PSO. Tyler Bragg, the PSO's director of Artistic Planning and Administration, saw the possibilities and enthusiastically supported this outreach effort, which was structured around two visits to Carnegie Mellon by the PSO musicians. There, they played music for the composers to provide inspiration, and they talked about their instruments and answered questions. Five PSO brass instrument players and five string players participated in two sessions at CMU in November and January.

The students then composed drafts of their music and sent them to the PSO's professional librarians for review. The librarians and musicians provided initial feedback about any possible issues with music notation or the feasibility of each part of each work (for example, if a particular note is too high or low to be played at the indicated volume level by their instrument) and sent them back to the students in March. And finally, the students submitted the completed works to the library for processing, according to their rigorous standards, by their April deadline.

"The students really respected this process and learned from it. In the professional world, deadlines are strict, and all the other moving parts of an organization need to have your contribution, or else they can't do their job."

Katherine Pukinskis  
Assistant Professor, School of Music

The culmination was a trip to Pittsburgh's Heinz Hall during final exam week this spring, where each composition was played and workshopped for 30 minutes by the brass or string quintet for which it had been written. The student composers not only heard but also gave constructive feedback on their pieces, communicating their intent to the PSO musicians to help bring the music to life.

"This was a wonderful experience," said Leila Gottlieb Hedayati, a 2025 bachelor's degree graduate in composition. "Writing a piece while considering the high skill level of the musicians really opened a new world for me as a composer!"



School of Music students at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

"During the reading session, the players were very respectful to all the composers' ideas, while making sure to give truthful and meaningful feedback on how we could make our music more idiomatic and fit better to their instruments," she continued. "As a composer who focuses on Eastern music instead of Western classical music, I think it was a good experience for me and the players to collaborate and find new ways to meld the worlds of Eastern and Western music through methods that acknowledge their differences while making a cohesive sound."

The School of Music's recording services captured audio of each reading session at Heinz Hall and provided it to every student so they would be able to listen later and hear the back-and-forth feedback to help further refine their skills.

"The musicians were so kind and supportive and constructive with their time and their feedback."

Katherine Pukinskis  
Assistant Professor, School of Music

"In the School of Music, our students are primarily getting their works performed by their colleagues, which is important for their professional development and their networking," said Pukinskis. "But, inherently, because they're students, their skill set is still growing. And so, to be able to reach for the moon in terms of what a performer can do is a singular opportunity, which is why it's so important for us to bring in collaborative work with professional ensembles."



School of Music students touring Heinz Hall's music library.

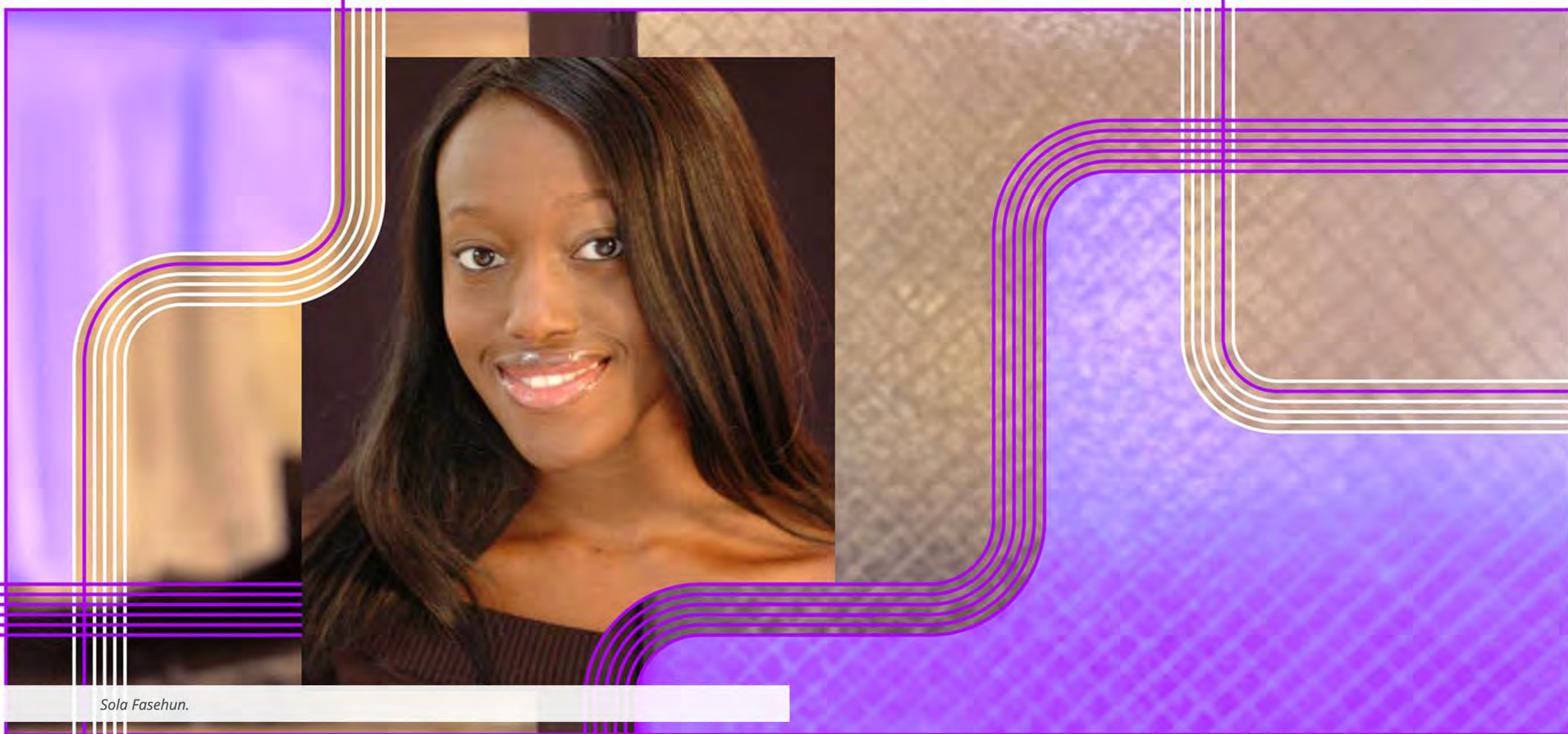
While at Heinz Hall, the composers even got to take a behind-the-scenes tour of the music library, where antique copies of Beethoven symphonies share space with contemporary works by living composers, such as CMU's own Nancy Galbraith, the Vira I. Heinz Professor of Composition.

"This experience was so valuable for our student composers," Galbraith said. "We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra for providing this unforgettable experience."



◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025

## College of Fine Arts

[Academics](#)[Research & Creative Practice](#)[ICA Pittsburgh](#)[Frank-Ratchye STUDIO](#)[News](#)[About](#)[Giving](#)

Sola Fasehun.

## Art Continues to Matter

Sola Fasehun's Passion Equates to Arts for All

BXA Intercollege Degree Programs

written by  
Pam Wigley

Simply put, Sola Fasehun is passionate about the role that the arts play in people's lives. She has built a career helping to ensure that exposure to the arts is accessible to all. To that end, she founded the [Diversity & Inclusion Film Festival](#) (DIFF), which launched in November 2022 at Lincoln Center in New York City. DIFF also co-presented and sponsored networking panels, performances and receptions at Sundance Film Festival and, this spring, during the Cannes Film Festival, DIFF presented several programs and panel discussions. *Forbes* hailed DIFF as a "Visionary Film Festival."



"I launched DIFF as a way to not only help clients, but to also help filmmakers from all over the world to present their projects, help with networking and provide mentorship. With all that is going in the world, the mission of continuing to bring people together from all walks of life through film, TV, theater, music and all art, continues with DIFF."

Sola Fasehun

To bring the festival to fruition, Fasehun (pronounced fah-**soon**), tapped into her training from the [BXA Intercollege Degree Programs](#) at Carnegie Mellon University, combining studies in the arts and other subjects that allow students to earn a degree. Fasehun graduated with a BHA from CMU (with college and university honors) with a double concentration from The School of Drama (directing) and the Dietrich College (creative writing) with a minor in film & media studies.

"I look at my time at CMU in the BHA program as an important time of growth that helped me to be where I am today," she said. "CMU and BXA gave me the confidence to launch my own companies: DIFF, [Fasehun Films](#) and [The Distribution Collective \(TDC\)](#)."

Accomplishing one of these goals would be an achievement in itself, but Fasehun clearly is a driven professional who isn't easily dissuaded from following her dreams.

Those dreams began early. Born in New York and raised in New Jersey, Fasehun said she always knew she wanted to somehow be involved in the arts. Her father, (a musician and music label founder) and her mother (a business owner), served as major influences at home. At CMU and within her BHA studies, she found further inspiration from faculty members Patricia Maurides, Ari Blackford-Rupp, Thomas W. Douglas, Sharon Dilworth and Shirley Saldemarco.

"They gave me the confidence to start my own projects," Fasehun said. "I had the support to do things that I really wanted to try."

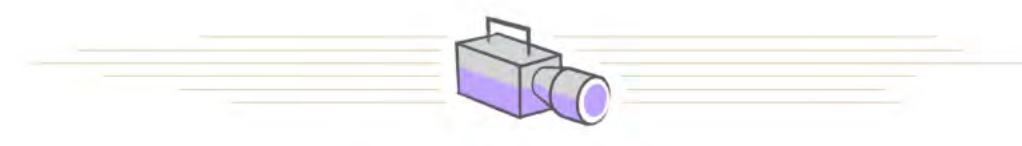
After graduating from CMU, she worked in film and TV development at Lighthouse Productions under Academy Award-winning producer Michael Phillips ("The Sting," "Taxi Driver," "Close Encounters"). She then graduated from Columbia University's MFA Film Program with a focus on creative film producing.

She later worked at Submarine Deluxe/Entertainment as a sales agent and distribution consultant. During her time at Submarine, she worked on multiple films, and Submarine hired her production company, Fasehun Films, to consult on film projects. She also worked at United Talent Agency, where she helped to launch their first diversity initiative. At another agency, she was also an MP/TV literary agent, co-head of the Indie Film Division and Inclusion Board Chair.

Currently, she manages writers and directors for TV/Film and consults for DEI initiatives at other organizations as the founder of The Distribution Collective. She continues to produce projects through Fasehun Films.

DIFF remains a primary focus. She describes DIFF as a "resource to connect diverse filmmakers with industry professionals." DIFF screens films, organizes panels and hosts networking events, all with the focus of cultivating a more diverse film industry. The bottom line, she said, is that DIFF believes in using film to inspire social change for a more equitable future.

"Art continues to matter," she said. "Don't give up on your art."



featuring the following:

photography by Pam Wigley

DIFF poster courtesy of Sola Fasehun

read more:

[Inspired To Create Opportunities She Didn't Have, She Launched A Visionary Film Festival](#)[Columbia Alums Share Work at Diversity and Inclusion Film Festival](#)[Film Festivals In America That Are Changing the Narrative](#)[Jaime King, Emma Comley, Sola Fasehun Form Production Banner \(Exclusive\)](#)[Recent festivals offer opportunities for filmmakers and the community](#)[Agents for Change 2025](#)[Buchwald Adds Sola Fasehun and Tim Patricia As Literary Agents](#)[◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025](#)[Faculty & Staff Resources](#)[Contact](#)

CFA

College of Fine Arts  
Carnegie Mellon University  
5000 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[Contact Us](#)



Legal Info | [www.cmu.edu](#)  
© 2026 Carnegie Mellon University



## College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research &amp; Creative Practice

ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving



"For the Love of Two Oranges"

## Discover Public Art

## Carnegie Mellon University's 125th Anniversary Tour Series

CMU Public Art

written by  
Margaret Cox

As Carnegie Mellon celebrates its 125th anniversary, it will soon be possible to explore its rich tradition of public art through a dynamic and interactive app experience!

Meagan Fekos, senior director of Advancement Communications & Marketing, leads the digital marketing efforts for CMU's 125th anniversary. "This app allows us to share the gems we have all around our Pittsburgh campus with the global CMU community," says Fekos. "As part of the public art tour, visitors can hear from artists, learn about the history of certain pieces and get a taste of the creative works woven into the campus experience."

Built on the Bloomberg Connects platform, the app connects CMU to a global network of cultural institutions and offers an immersive experience accessible from anywhere. "The app is about experiencing Carnegie Mellon and being a part of the CMU125 celebration, wherever you are. You can tour public art on campus, visit CMU satellite locations around the world, or travel time instead of distance to learn about some of our bygone traditions," said Fekos. One of the most exciting parts of this initiative? The app is just getting started — more CMU tours, exhibits and hidden gems are on the way.

## Sample CMU Public Art Through Time



"College of Fine Arts Niches"

1912–1995, limestone carving  
Archille Giammartini (1912), Nicholas Fairplay, Bruce Lindsey, Paul Rosenblatt (1980s)  
located at the College of Fine Arts, façade  
installation began in 1912 and was completed 1989–1995

The "College of Fine Arts Niches" are an enveloping series of limestone carvings on the CFA building that showcase five architectural styles — Greek, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance and non-Western traditions. Begun in 1912 as part of Henry Hornbostel's vision of the building as a "textbook of architecture," the project was finally completed in the late 1980s through a collaboration of artists and architects using both old-world techniques and new technology. The niches beautifully capture CMU's legacy of blending art, history and innovation.



"For the Love of Two Oranges"

1969, painted steel  
L. Clark Winter  
located outside Fifth and Neville Apartments  
installed in 1972 and reinstalled in 2021

"For the Love of Two Oranges" is a vibrant minimalist sculpture by former CMU professor Clark Winter, created in 1969 and installed on campus in 1972. Made of four bold orange steel blocks, it playfully explores shape and space while radiating a cheerful, whimsical energy. After years of weathering, the sculpture was restored in 2020 and relocated near the Fifth Neville Apartments in 2021 — where it has become fully embraced and affectionately known by residents as "the Cheeto."



"Curtains"

1999, bronze  
Carol Kumata  
located at the Purnell Center for the Arts building, exterior  
installed in 2000

"Curtains," by longtime CMU faculty member Carol Kumata, is a series of bronze sculptures that captures the movement of stage curtains caught in the wind. Designed for the School of Drama, it nods to the building's theatrical purpose while subtly echoing architectural details from Henry Hornbostel's original CFA designs. Blending old and new, Kumata's work softens the building structure and hints at the creative energy inside — highlighting her masterful metalsmithing and her fascination with how materials can shape both space and story.



"Untitled Core Sample (THE FENCE)"

2024, painted bronze  
Amanda Ross-Ho  
located at CMU's Forbes Beeler Apartments (5087 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh), outside  
installed in May 2024

"Untitled Core Sample (THE FENCE)" by Amanda Ross-Ho is a recent Public Art commission, curated by CMU Johnson Family Public Art Curator Elizabeth Chodos. This monumental bronze sculpture honors the university's iconic CMU Fence tradition — a student-maintained structure where messages are painted and repainted by various groups. The artist extracted and enlarged a cylindrical core sample from The Fence, capturing hundreds of layers of paint applied by students between 1993 and 2023. Ross-Ho describes the work as a tribute to the diverse voices and communal spirit of the CMU student body.

## CMU 125 Art Tours

Throughout its history, CMU has integrated public art into its environment, creating spaces that inspire reflection, dialogue and connection. The upcoming art tours are a fun and engaging way to celebrate the university's vibrant history and its bright future. Join the celebration and learn more at [cmu.edu/125/](https://cmu.edu/125/)



featuring the following:

photography for "College of Fine Arts Niches" and "For the Love of Two Oranges" by Michael Henninger

photography for "Curtains" by Margaret Cox

photography for "Untitled Core Sample (THE FENCE)" by Tom Little

◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025



# College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research & Creative Practice

ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving



Gaulon as he repurposes old technology.

## Defunct to ReFunct

Paris-Based Artist, "Recyclism," is Spring 2025 Steiner Artist-in-Residence

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry

written by  
Harrison Apple

Ben Gaulon is an artist, researcher, educator and cultural producer based in Paris and working under the name "Recyclism." His research focuses on both the limits and failures of information-communication technologies. His work investigates society's entanglement with these outcomes, looking to planned obsolescence, consumerism, disposable societies, ownership and privacy.

Together with Dasha Iliina, he is a founding member of the collective NØ, a non-profit organization whose mission is to support and promote emerging art and design research, and practices that address the social and environmental impact of information and communication technologies in France and beyond, since its creation in 2018. They are both co-directors of NØ SCHOOL NEVERS, since its first edition in 2019.



Gaulon was invited by STUDIO Director Nica Ross as the Spring 2025 Steiner Artist-in-Residence to deliver a lecture on his practice, as well as host a workshop he calls "ReFunct." Hosted in the Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, the CMU and Pittsburgh communities were guided through Gaulon's individual thinking and collective projects to reimagine our discomfort with waste. Gaulon and his collaborators produce software, installations, hardware, net-art, interactive works, street art interventions and open-source tools to reframe the impact of extraction and disposal for electronics.



Drawing on the theme of consumer technology's cycle of disposability, his work reclaims e-waste through a process of détournement — reassembling, appropriating, hacking and repurposing discarded electronics. Gaulon and the STUDIO team scoured thrift stores, flea markets and e-recycling centers to gather material for a full-day Saturday ReFunct workshop. Following Gaulon's prompt, participants animated the recently disposed collection of electronic debris into a signal path carrying sound and light through previously unexplored connections.

In disrupting expectations around e-waste, the workshop surfaced the latent potential of discarded materials, recasting technological refuse as points of creative departure.



featuring the following:

photography from Aaron Blum

◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025

## College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research &amp; Creative Practice

ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving



From the "PINCHGUT" opera, directed by Manich.

## A Director's Destiny

## Crystal Manich's Serendipitous Path to Directing Opera

Master of Arts Management &amp; School of Drama

written by  
Cally Jamis Vennare

Life is full of serendipitous moments. Being at the right place at the right time. Meeting someone who can change your life's path. Taking a risk. Trusting your intuition. For [Crystal Manich](#) (BFA, Directing 2004/MAM 2005), all of these moments converged in a Mt. Lebanon High School drama class.

At the age of 16, Manich wanted to be an actress. But her drama teacher, Cindy Shreiner, saw something more in her young student that would allow her to shine behind the scenes. "I think you're a director," her professor said. That singular insight would change Manich's life and, ultimately, define her career.



Manich, on the left, directing for her senior thesis, "Harold Pinter's Betrayal."

Manich listened carefully to those wise words, shifted her attention from centerstage to backstage and followed her destiny. She made her directorial debut directing a scene from her high school production of "Fiddler on the Roof" and hasn't stopped directing since.

The Emmy-nominated, versatile Latiné international creative director and writer still fondly recalls that moment ... and what followed. During her senior year of high school, Manich gained entry to Carnegie Mellon University's pre-college program in drama. She "loved the coursework and the rigor" and — with the encouragement of her voice/speech teacher Natalie Baker — applied to Carnegie Mellon for undergraduate studies.

"Natalie made an appointment for me with [Greg Lehane](#), who was the head of the directing program at the time," Manich explained. "Because of our mutual Pittsburgh connections, we had a lot to talk about. At some point I suddenly realized, 'Oh my god, this guy is going to be my mentor!' And of course, that's what he became when I was accepted to Carnegie Mellon. CMU was exactly where I needed to go to get the focus and attention for my goal to be a working director."



The "REESCH E'Vol," a circus event that Manich produced for the Biennale in Luxembourg.

Manich, one of the few students chosen for stage direction at CMU in 2000, thrived in her new environment. She double majored in European studies and, encouraged by Lehane's love of opera, became passionate about the artform.

"I didn't consider myself to be a real musician. But Greg said, 'No, you have the instincts. You should do this.' And so, I ended up studying abroad in Italy for a semester to learn about Italian opera history. I took cinema and language ... and saw as many operas and plays as I could."

Manich returned home and immediately started directing opera scenes at CMU's School of Music under the musical direction of [Robert Page](#). She also connected with [Dan Martin](#), the former dean of the College of Fine Arts and head of CMU's Master of Arts Management (MAM) Program, a collaboration of the College of Fine Arts and Heinz College. The MAM program focused on providing graduate-level education in the leadership of not-for-profit arts, culture and heritage institutions. Thanks to Martin's encouragement and Manich's multidisciplinary talents, she was able to start her MAM coursework during her senior year and complete her graduate degree in arts management only one year later.

"Looking back, I think that the best thing that I did coming out of graduate school was knowing that I wanted to explore my artistry first and foremost. And so, I started assistant-directing opera, both in Pittsburgh and New York City."

Crystal Manich

Manich commuted between the two cities for a while but eventually decided to move to New York. She lived there for 11 years, first working with [American Opera Projects](#) as an intern, serving as assistant director for a world premiere, learning what New York life was like for a director, and starting a baroque opera company, Opera Omnia, which ran for five years. She traveled elsewhere to assist and direct at various companies, but when Pittsburgh beckoned, Manich returned to her hometown and served as assistant stage director for Pittsburgh Opera for two seasons.

And then, PO's General Director Christopher Hahn opened the door. Wide. "He gave me my first big break at the age of 26, which was directing "La Boheme."

It was pure serendipity for many reasons. But Manich, who had seen "La Boheme" at the Benedum Center 10 years earlier, couldn't believe one particularly sweet coincidence.

"After I decided that I wanted to be a director, I saw my first opera at the Benedum — "La Boheme." And 10 years later, I directed that production on that stage with Pittsburgh Opera. It was a huge 360 moment for me; I *knew* that I was in the right place to pursue stage direction. As artists, we really latch on to these moments where we recognize the fortuitousness that we get and have gratitude for where we land."



Manich directing "The Copper Queen."

Other defining moments followed: working with PO Music Director Anthony Walker in Australia; appointments as Artistic Director of [Cirque du Soleil's](#) production of "Crystal" (2023/24) and Assistant Artistic Director of "Quidam" (2009/10); and serving as Artistic Director of Mill City Summer Opera in Minneapolis. The Cirque connection led to her work on the first-ever Biennale in Luxembourg in May 2024, where she directed another large circus production — "[REESCH E'Vol](#)." She also directed the world premiere of the opera "The Copper Queen" as a feature film for Arizona Opera in 2021. And, now a writer, she is both librettist and director of "[TRIÁNGULO](#): A Mixed Martial Arts Opera," which had its first preview as part of Florida Grand Opera's Innovation Hub in 2024.

To date, Manich's work as a stage director has been seen across the United States, Europe, Argentina and Australia. She has also proudly served on the adjunct faculty at UCLA and Rider University.

From her home in Puerto Rico, Manich reflected on what she could share with the next generation of aspiring artists. "Back when I was in school, we didn't have social media ... or the different outlets where you could create content that is anything from digital theater to digital opera or film. What I discovered for myself, particularly during Covid, was that today you don't have to pigeonhole yourself. And I think that younger people are better at not doing that than those of us who are older.

"I've always relied on the fact that my instincts were going to lead me to where I need to be. And that security in who I am as an artist came from Carnegie Mellon. There is no doubt that what I learned there was instrumental in my confidence. Because if you can get through Carnegie Mellon, you can get through anything. It was intense and very rigorous. And I loved every minute of it! I was being trained for how my life would eventually be ... which was that every day, you're just going at it, you're pounding the pavement, and you're really doing the work. And that's exactly what happens in real life."

Manich's directorial destiny has been fulfilled. But her future path is lined with endless opportunities, including the Pittsburgh Opera world premiere of "[Time to Act](#)" in Spring 2026, where she will serve as librettist alongside composer Laura Kaminsky and director Amy Hutchison.



featuring the following:

photography by Brett Boardman for "PINCHGUT"

[◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025](#)

## College of Fine Arts

Academics

Research &amp; Creative Practice

ICA Pittsburgh

Frank-Ratchye STUDIO

News

About

Giving



Andrew Birdzell meeting with Monduli Pastoralist Development Initiative, who bring education to the rural Maasai communities in Tanzania.

## Why I Give Back

## Andrew Birdzell and Family Set Drama Students up for Success

written by  
Pam Wigley

Sketching and doodling weren't compulsions for Andrew Birdzell when he was growing up in Stockton, Calif. That may seem odd for a man who made a career in scenic design, but for Birdzell, getting a late start worked. It wasn't until he was a teenager that he discovered the theater, and his fascination with creating stage environments grew from there.

Birdzell enrolled in a small conservatory program at San Joaquin Delta Community College, focusing on set design. There, he refined his skills and first heard about Carnegie Mellon University from a directing alumnus of the School of Drama, Jeffrey Wentworth, who supervised the program.



Birdzell and his daughter in a bateya, or small village where laborers live, in the rural outskirts of Santo Domingo, October 2024.

"I worked in the scene shop and became fascinated with scenic design," Birdzell said. "I have a propensity to think about things related to space, so it worked for me."

He went on to earn his undergraduate degree at the University of California Davis, where he found a professional and academic mentor in John Iacobelli. Iacobelli was "the first role model to show me I could do [set design] as a career," Birdzell recalled. In fact, Iacobelli kept in touch with Birdzell when he pursued his master's degree in scenic design at Carnegie Mellon's School of Drama and hired him right after he graduated in 2006.

"John told me to go to graduate school and learn from others," Birdzell said. "I looked at Yale, NYU and CMU. My peer group at CMU was most like me. You end up where you're supposed to be."

He found a welcoming presence in former drama faculty member Anne Mundell, who made him feel comfortable from the minute he met her. A stranger to Pittsburgh, Birdzell said he found in Mundell not only an academic mentor, but also a therapist and an empathetic maternal figure.

"Anne helped me to learn how to ask the right questions, and I now use her technique with my family, my children. These were the hardest three years of my life, but I left [CMU] more than prepared. I felt like I could handle anything that came my way."

Andrew Birdzell

To gain release of sorts from the rigors of the program, Birdzell took time during his studies to find a respite in Hawaii, where he could continue to work toward his master's and still have the self-care break he needed. Thanks to grants that Mundell helped him procure, his studies in Hawaii were covered and he returned to the School of Drama rejuvenated.

"That gesture solidified for me how important even small gifts could be in a person's life," he said. "The experience connected me to myself again."

He worked for Iacobelli then, designing sets, and found other roles through his CMU network. As his career thrived, so did his personal life. He met his wife, Flora, in 2009 while working on a movie set in Boston; they married in 2012. In discovering love, he rediscovered the power of giving.



Andrew Birdzell with Matumaini Mapya, a women's and children's empowerment group in Mwanza Tanzania, 2011.

Her family — William R. Hewlett and Flora Lamson Hewlett — founded the Flora Family Foundation in 1998. Birdzell saw the effects of the foundation's work while visiting villages in Tanzania, particularly how meaningful the assistance was for women. Seeing funding in action reminded Birdzell of his own experience receiving help during his time at CMU.

"I quickly came to recognize that philanthropy is a way to think outside of yourself. It's a great way to connect with your children, if you choose to have them. You can begin the journey of giving together."

Andrew Birdzell

Birdzell and his family decided to support the Student Enhancement Fund in the School of Drama to help others, like him, who truly need assistance while facing the challenges of a demanding curriculum at one of the world's top universities.

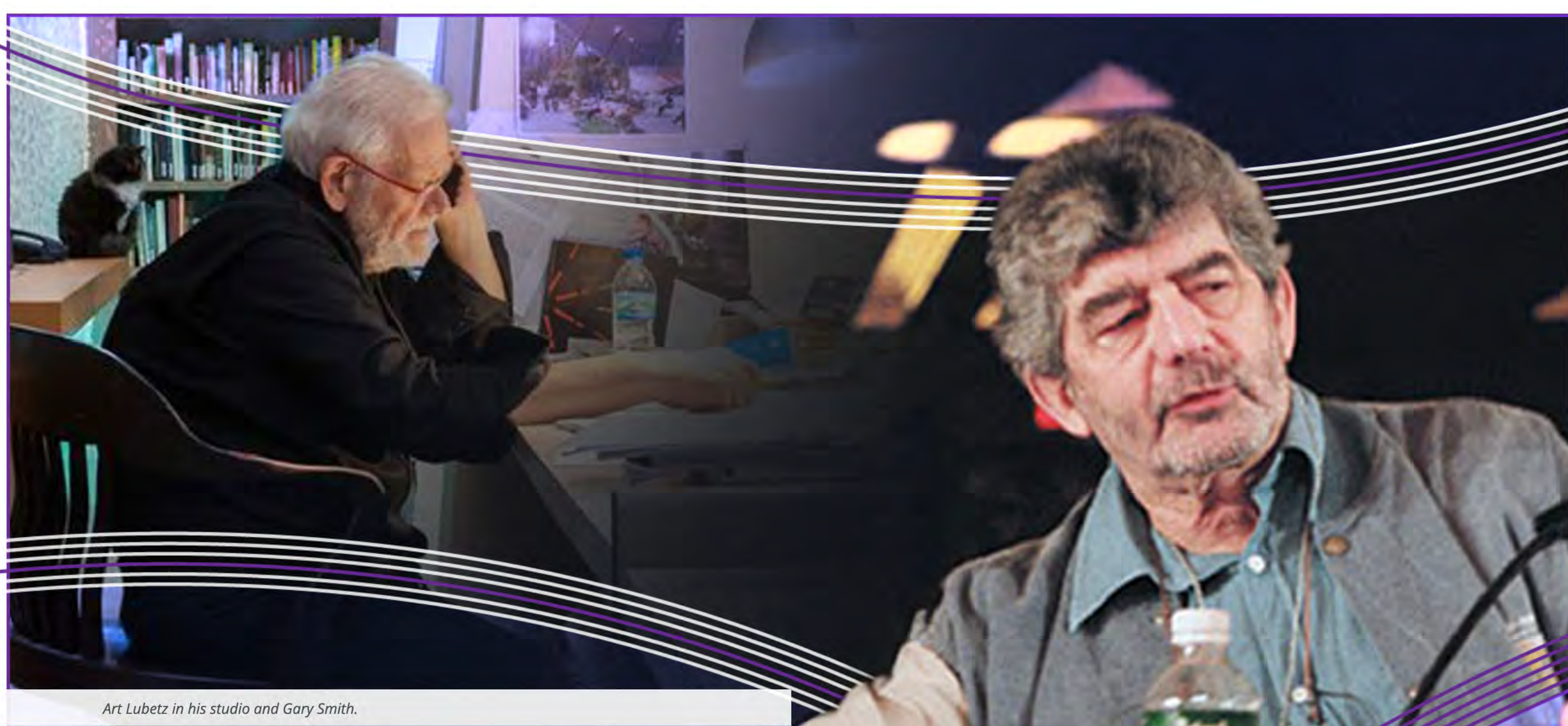
"Any amount makes a difference. It makes a difference for a million people to give a dollar in the same way one person gives a million dollars. Explore it. Begin that conversation with yourself."

featuring the following:

images courtesy of Andrew Birdzell

◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025

## College of Fine Arts

[Academics](#)
[Research & Creative Practice](#)
[ICA Pittsburgh](#)
[Frank-Ratchye STUDIO](#)
[News](#)
[About](#)
[Giving](#)


Art Lubetz in his studio and Gary Smith.

## Farewell

## Alumni Gary Smith and Art Lubetz Leave Lasting Legacies

*written by*  
Meredith Marsh and Pam Wigley

## Gary Smith, Producer

The entertainment industry bid farewell to School of Drama scenic design alumnus Gary Smith on July 18. He was 90 years old.

Smith was seen as a visionary in the industry and earned acclaim as a producer for variety and music specials. He was nominated for multiple Emmy Awards for his individual work and won eight.

*DEADLINE* reported that Smith began his career at CBS in 1956 as an art director, a role that tapped into his visual instincts and theatrical training. In 1963, while serving as art director on *The Judy Garland Show*, he was asked to take over as producer — a move that launched a celebrated producing career.

His approach to producing specials with then-business partner Dwight Hemion brought “artistry, innovation and elegance to the world of variety and music specials,” *DEADLINE* reported. Together, they won 24 Emmys.

“Gary did several workshops for the School of Drama and the Master of Entertainment Industry (MEIM) program in the past,” noted Daniel Green, Distinguished Service Professor of Entertainment Management and MEIM program director. “He was also a member of the MEIM Advisory Committee when MEIM was first established.”

Green recalled that Smith would often return to Carnegie Mellon’s campus to work with students.

“He worked with everyone from Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Pavarotti, Barbra Streisand, Paul McCartney and even Judy Garland. He shared his experiences and expertise with students many times through the years.”

Dan Green  
Director and Distinguished Service Professor, MEIM

## Architect, Educator and Alumnus Art Lubetz

Arthur Lubetz, a visionary architect whose bold and colorful designs transformed Pittsburgh’s architectural landscape, passed away early in the morning on July 4. Art was born in Squirrel Hill on January 15, 1940, to Milton S. and Aileen (Rosen) Lubetz. He influenced generations of students, as well as his colleagues, the school and the City of Pittsburgh over the course of his nearly six-decade career.

He earned his architecture degree in 1967 from Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University), where he formed friendships with artists Mel Bochner and George Nama, whose influence inspired his interdisciplinary approach to design, blending architecture with art and philosophy.

In 1967, shortly after graduating, Art established Lubetz Associates in Pittsburgh’s Oakland neighborhood, and his practice became known for challenging architectural norms. His early work gained attention for its creative use of common building materials, such as concrete masonry units and glass blocks, often on modest budgets, earning him a reputation as a visionary thinker. His architectural philosophy, described as “active, interactive and ongoing,” emphasized buildings that evolve through use and time, engaging users through sensory experiences. His work has been described as “immersive architecture” that blends philosophy, art and neuroscience.

In 1985, he converted a former mechanic’s shop into his live-work architectural studio at 357 N. Craig Street. It received national publication in *Architect Magazine*, and showcased his ability to transform mundane spaces into striking, postmodern landmarks with airy interiors flooded in natural light. Over the years, Art’s studio was often staffed with more student interns than licensed architects, a tribute to his mentorship and dedication to the future of architecture.

Art served as an adjunct professor at Carnegie Mellon University School of Architecture for over 30 years. He inspired generations of students, teaching 2nd year studio for decades, as well as a popular elective course on the concept of “incompleteness.” He provoked those at the school to think more radically about the impact that architecture has on people, especially emotionally.

“For me personally, he was a mentor and colleague and friend. He challenged me to rethink how I taught.”

Kai Gudschow  
Associate Professor and Associate Head for Design Ethics, School of Architecture

His notable projects include:

- Renovation of the Dalzell House, known for its “infamous” red wall that bisects the structure, dramatically challenging the perceptions and use of domestic space, an early project highlighting Art’s exploration of experiential design.
- Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill branch (2005), recipient of an American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honor Award in 2007.
- Glass Lofts (2007), a mixed-use building published in *ArchDaily*.”
- Liberty Avenue Medical Center (2010).
- Sharpsburg Community Library (2014), awarded a Certificate of Merit by AIA Pittsburgh’s Design Awards (2015).
- 555 First (2017), a 550+ unit residential development in New Jersey.
- Addition to the Katz House (2025), an 1869 Victorian house he had renovated once before in 1986. He removed interior walls and floors to open up the wood frame structure like a musical instrument, resonating natural light and music throughout.

In 2009, Art merged his practice with former CMU students Yen Ha and Michi Yanagishita to form Front Studio, with offices in Pittsburgh and New York.

In 2017, Art’s work was celebrated at the Carnegie Museum of Art’s Heinz Architectural Center in the first solo exhibition of a local architect. Curated by Charles Rosenblum, “[Action, Ideas, Architecture: Arthur Lubetz / Front Studio](#)” featured physical models, scale drawings and photography from the CMU Architecture Archives and Front Studio, showcasing his decades long career.

A passionate advocate for Pittsburgh’s built environment, Art was a founding member of the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh. He also served as principal of the Environmental Design Collaborative, president of the ECCO Foundation, a member of the advisory committee for the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation (now Rivers of Steel), board member of the Kuumba Trusts, and president of Preservation Pittsburgh.

Art is survived by his wife, Deborah Kaplan Lubetz, Marketing Strategist of Front Studio, traveling partner and his closest friend of 14 years. Deborah is the biggest supporter of his architectural vision and was by his side when he passed on to his next new adventure. He will be remembered as a designer who set out to improve existing architecture and provoke thought by creating more immersive spaces.

A memorial will be planned for the fall.

[◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025](#)

[Faculty & Staff Resources](#)
[Contact](#)


College of Fine Arts  
Carnegie Mellon University  
5000 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[Contact Us](#)



Legal Info | [www.cmu.edu](http://www.cmu.edu)  
© 2026 Carnegie Mellon University



# College of Fine Arts

[Academics](#)
[Research & Creative Practice](#)
[ICA Pittsburgh](#)
[Frank-Ratchye STUDIO](#)
[News](#)
[About](#)
[Giving](#)


Krause in the College of Fine Arts.

## Associate Dean for Finance Brings Arts Insight to CFA Role

Matthew Krause Joins the College of Fine Arts

*written by*  
Pam Wigley

Matthew Krause joined the College of Fine Arts as associate dean for finance in January and has become an integral part of the Dean's Office team. Krause most recently served as director of business and administration for the University Libraries at DePaul University in Chicago.

"Matt brings to CFA his extensive experience at The Theatre School at DePaul, as well as the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University," said CFA Dean Mary Ellen Poole.

"His unique blend of work within the finance and arts sectors made him a perfect fit for CFA, and we are thrilled to have him on board."

Mary Ellen Poole  
Dean, College of Fine Arts

Krause earned his undergraduate degree in music education from Augustana College in Illinois, after which he was a working actor in Chicago regional theaters. He then completed his MBA with a finance concentration from the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business at DePaul. He has a successful history of strategic budgeting, staffing and operations experience. During the past 13 years, he has progressively moved forward in demanding and complex operational and executive-level engagement responsibilities.

"It's been a great transition from Chicago to Pittsburgh, and I'm incredibly happy to be a part of CFA," said Krause, whose family joined him in Pittsburgh this summer.

"CMU and CFA faculty and staff have welcomed me with open arms, and I have really enjoyed connecting with our students through their performances, exhibits and showcases throughout the year. It is an honor and inspiration to support their creative work."

Matthew Krause  
Associate Dean for Finance, College of Fine Arts

Poole expressed thanks to the CFA search committee members (Jenn Joy Wilson, Dan Barrett, Dave Koltas, Carrie Nelson, Brent Carothers and Mary Glasscock) for their "efficient, thoughtful and, ultimately, successful work."

*featuring the following:*

photography by Pam Wigley

[◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025](#)

[Faculty & Staff Resources](#)

[Contact](#)

# CFA

College of Fine Arts  
Carnegie Mellon University  
5000 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[Contact Us](#)



Legal Info | [www.cmu.edu](http://www.cmu.edu)  
© 2026 Carnegie Mellon University



## ALUMNI NEWS

## Share Your Stories

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 are the stories that came through last time!



Still working as an artist, **Hilda Demsky** moved to a retirement facility and creates within a big, shared studio. She continues to paint in oil, focusing on abstract meaningful paintings about nature, often while listening to classical music. Demsky spent two years of the pandemic painting her interpretation of poems by U.S. Poets Laureate. She has been exhibiting the 36 paintings around Westchester County in universities and libraries. The overall collection is called "The Gratitude Project." Demsky is an alumna from the School of Art, BFA 1958.



After finishing an MFA at the School of Art and spending two years at the Robotics Institute, **Daniel Pillis** transitioned to the MIT Media Lab, where he continued working with robotics and tangible media. Now, as an assistant professor of virtual production at Emerson College in the heart of Boston, he is working with large-scale physical/virtual environments and robotic actors to create experiences and experiments with artificial intelligence. [An article from the Berkeley Beacon highlights Pillis' work](#) with a robot named **Jibo**, which Pillis calls his "teaching assistant." Pillis is an alumnus from the School of Art, MFA 2016.



**Jorge Vera**, a native of Pirayú, a tiny farming community in Paraguay, began his violin studies at age 9. In his community, 40 students shared the nine instruments their village could afford. He was not deterred and dedicated himself to his music studies. This summer, Vera began to change the lives of young musicians, as he stepped into a full-time position with the [Allentown Symphony Association](#), where he will play in the orchestra and teach members of its youth orchestra. Vera is an alumnus from the School of Music, MFA 2024, Certificate (Advanced Studies) 2025. [Read more about Vera's story.](#)



**Sherri WOLFGANG** is a painter specializing in life-size figurative work, which draws on Renaissance painting traditions in combination with Old Master painting techniques. WOLFGANG is represented by George Billis Gallery and Dacia Gallery, both in New York City, as well as M.A. Doran Gallery in Tulsa, Okla. Her work, pictured above, is on display in the Cohon University Center, as well. WOLFGANG is an alumna from the School of Art, BFA 1983.

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 Intercollegiate Degree Programs](#).

We'd love to hear from you! Keep us up to date on what's happening in your personal and professional life. [FILL OUT OUR ALUMNI CONTACT FORM](#) ►

◀ Back to CFA Magazine | Fall 2025