



2

In This Issue

3

From the Editor

4

News Briefs

7

Then & Now

S

Q+A with President Steiper

10

Feature: More Than Words

14

Happening

15

Feature: The Art of Storytelling

17

Feature: Making Change

20

Alumni Profile Khalif Tahir Thompson

22

What is Photography?

24

Connecting & Giving

25

Alumni Profile Bryan Czerniawski

27

Alumni Association

28

Alumni in Action

36

In Memorium

37

Faculty & Staff Pursuits

26

Commencement

On the Cover: Khalif Thompson '18

Lenox Avenue, 2024

94 1/2 x 67 inches

Oil, acrylic, fabric, pleather, handmade paper, collage on canvas

Collection of the Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, KS. Image courtesy of the artist

"Lenox Avenue, 2024, is a romantic street scene, reimagining a couple taken from a family photograph posing in front of iconic artworks cited from art history. Namely the Harlem Renaissance artists such as William H. Johnson, Horace Pippin, and modern artists Henri Matisse and Edward Hopper. The work is an example of how my practice wishes to celebrate the complexity of human experience, blending nostalgia with contemporary energy to create an unforgettable visual journey."

- Khalif Thompson / Read more on page 20

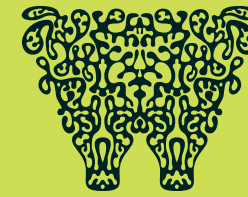
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Welcome back.

At *Proof*, we occasionally make up the rules as we go—in pure Purchase fashion.

We gave this issue, the follow-up to our magazine redesign, the extra time it deserved to gel. We hope you find it worth the wait.

Is It The People or The Place?

Purchase has long been a place that opens minds to new and novel ways of thinking, spinning people in directions they never imagined. But the people who find themselves here tend to be *open* to considering those new and novel ways of thinking.

It's Both

It might just be the people *and* the place. The place changes people, and people change the place, adding their own spice and spirit for the next cohort to do the same.

Whether you majored in economics, worked on publications in the School of Humanities, or honed your visual arts skills, like those featured, you've internalized invaluable lessons and experiences, leaving unique Purchase imprints wherever you've landed.

Pioneers of Purchase

As 2026 opens, we look forward to honoring the Class of 1976—our first four-year graduates. It's their spirit that lingers to this day. Those intrepid students who took a chance on a new and novel school, who trekked through mountains of mud, and who DIY'd their college experiences, essentially making things up as they went along. Together with those first transfers who arrived at the same time, you lit the fire.

Five decades later, those embers still burn, sparking every graduate who dares to make it up as they go.

Kristi McKee

Editor, Associate Director of Communications, Purchase College

Provide More Proof

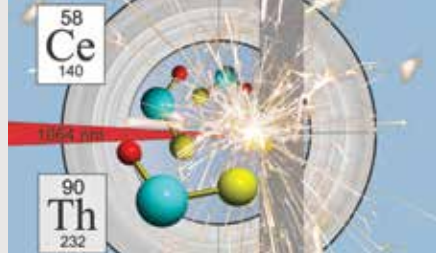
As they should, each issue can change and grow through reader feedback.

Let us know what you love seeing and what you'd love to see more of.

Alert us to your collaborations with Purchase people.

purchase.edu/proof





Inside Science

USNSF Awards Purchase Nearly \$2M

Joseph Skrivanek, PhD, Distinguished Service Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, **Mark Jonas '03**, PhD, Associate Professor of Biology, and **Athar Abdul-Quader**, PhD, Associate Professor of Mathematics/Computer Science together received a major grant of \$1,998,661 from the National Science Foundation to train and support 34 undergraduates in the disciplines of biochemistry, biology, chemistry, and mathematics/computer science in a program they call "Finding Common Ground: Support and Preparation of Students for Interdisciplinary STEM Careers."

Funded through the NSF's Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Program (S-STEM), which enables academically talented, low-income students to pursue successful careers in promising STEM fields, Finding Common Ground will provide selected four-year and two-year transfer students with significant scholarships, faculty and peer mentoring, and academic and social support to build a strong community among the cohort.

"Purchase College is in a unique position to accomplish one of the major goals of the grant; to increase the transfer and graduation rates of community college students who transfer to Purchase and finish their four-year degree in STEM disciplines," says Professor Skrivanek.

The program aims to ensure students leave ready to thrive in a competitive job market.

Professor Marin Kosut's Book Named Best of the Year

The California Review of Books named *Art Monster: On the Impossibility of New York* by Professor of Sociology **Marin Kosut** one of its 10 Best Books of 2024, calling it "insightful, compellingly readable, and funny."

Published by Columbia University Press, the book explores the margins of the professional art world through artists working behind the scenes in galleries and museums. Kosut examines artistic labor devaluation, gentrification's impact on cultural life, and the push toward professionalization.

Described as "ethnography, memoir, tirade, and love letter," the work draws from 10 years of fieldwork and Kosut's experience co-founding artist-run spaces in Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Chinatown.

Professor Stephen Cooke Creates New Chemistry and the Illustrations to Explain It

Professor of Chemistry **Stephen Cooke**'s research and artwork were featured on the cover and inside cover, respectively, of two major scholarly journals: *Chemical Physics Letters* and *Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics*.

Funded by a U.S. Department of Energy grant, Cooke's work explores uranium, thorium, and cerium bonding using high-powered laser pulses to synthesize metal-containing molecules. His team fires lasers at rotating metal surfaces in a vacuum chamber to initiate new chemistry.

Understanding these bonds has implications for reducing nuclear waste. Cooke creates his own scientific illustrations and animations to visually explain his work, making complex chemistry more accessible to broader audiences.

Major Reforestation Grant Benefits Campus and Students

Associate Professor of Environmental Studies **Allyson Jackson** secured a \$499,943 grant from New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation to restore nearly three acres on campus as part of Governor Hochul's "25 Million Trees by 2033" initiative.

The grant allows Jackson to hire student interns to help transform a 2.8-acre plot overgrown with invasive species by planting 1,800 trees using traditional forestry methods alongside the innovative Miyawaki method, which employs high-density planting to accelerate growth and resist invasive species. The restored forest will provide carbon capture, wildlife habitat, and cooling effects.

Math and Computer Science Club Visits IBM Research

Associate Professor **Lee Tusman** led Math and Computer Science Club students to the Thomas J. Watson Research Center, the global headquarters of IBM Research, to witness up close quantum computer systems and an AI-optimized supercomputer.

The iconic Yorktown Heights facility is home to over 1,500 scientists who work on breakthrough technologies in quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and semiconductors.

Images (L to R):

Bridges to Baccalaureate Summer Program

Kosut

Cooke

Jackson

Math/Computer Science Club



Image: **Garner**

Awards, Honors & Nominations

2025 Grammy Awards: Big Night for Jazz Studies

Purchase alumni triumphed at the 67th Grammy Awards, with **Samara Joy '21** winning her fourth and fifth Grammys for Best Jazz Performance ("Twinkle Twinkle Little Me") and Best Jazz Vocal Album (*A Joyful Holiday*). **Jaylen Petinaud '20** earned his first Grammy as drummer on the winning *Hell's Kitchen Original Broadway Cast Recording* (Best Musical Theater Album).

Other nominees included: **Cyrille Aimée '09** (Jazz Studies), Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album for *À Fleur De Peau*; **Lucy Kalantari '98** (Studio Composition), Best Children's Music Album for *Creciendo*; and Assistant Professor **Silas Brown '10** (Studio Production), Best Engineered Album, Classical for *Andres: The Blind Banister*.

Princess Grace Honors

Hannah Garner '15 (Dance, Arts Management minor) received the 2025 Princess Grace Award for Choreography. The founder of 2nd Best Dance Company pushes creative boundaries in work described as clever, engaging, and full of whimsy. "Her work seeks beauty in failure, explores limits of the body, and finds solace in the humor of being human," writes the Princess Grace Foundation.

SUNY's Highest Student Achievement Award

Medha Chandwani '25 and **Carver Fell '25** received the prestigious 2025 Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, SUNY's highest student honor. Chancellor Dr. John B. King, Jr. presented awards to 193 students systemwide.

Chandwani, completing dual Chemistry and Visual Arts degrees in three years with a 4.16 GPA, served as Pre-Med Club President and Chemistry Learning Assistant. Her interdisciplinary senior project explored oil blends in resin projection alongside an exhibition of her paintings.

Fell, a Psychology major with a 4.12 GPA, served as Psi Chi President and researched cognitive development. Both students presented research at the 43rd Annual James Utter Natural and Social Sciences Student Research Symposium and demonstrated exceptional leadership in academics and campus involvement.

Top Ten

U.S. News & World Report placed Purchase at #8 on its list of Top Public Schools among National Liberal Arts Colleges for 2026 and #30 for Top Performers on Social Mobility among national liberal arts colleges, a mark of how well colleges serve low-income students. The Psychology BA program also made the list of Top Undergraduate Psychology Programs.

Images (L to R):

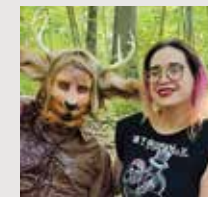
Joy

Petinaud

Chandwani

Fell

Rossman Film



Images:

Rodriguez

Bell-Smith

Magenheimer

Faculty Film Shorts

Best Short Doc at PIFF

Associate Professor of Communications **Megan Rossman** received the Best Short Documentary award at The Provincetown International Film Festival (PIFF) for her new film, *We'll Carry On Alright*, a win that renders the film eligible for the Academy Awards. **JoAnna Hensel '20** (Communications) and **Jessica Jimenez '20** (Playwriting and Screenwriting) worked on the film as production and research assistants.

Wild Animals at Woodstock

The horror short *Wild Animals*, produced and executive produced by Lecturer in Communications **Melissa Rodriguez '13** (Cinema Studies, Screenwriting minor) with **Jamie Simiele '26** (Film) as production coordinator, premiered at the Woodstock Film Festival in October.

Acetone Reality at NYFF

New Media Associate Professors **Michael Bell-Smith** and **Sara Magenheimer**'s experimental video premiered at the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center in September. Lauded for its "inventive use of artificial intelligence," *Acetone Reality* uses animation, found images, and the professors' own video recordings to explore the nature of meaning through blocky pixels, smeared colors, and cryptic iconography.

NEWS BRIEFS

NEWS BRIEFS



On Campus Annual Science Symposium Renamed for Founding Professor

This year marked the 43rd Annual James Utter Natural and Social Sciences Student Research Symposium, held Saturday, May 3, 2025. The event was renamed this year to honor Associate Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies and Biology **James Utter**, who championed its founding back in 1982.

Distinguished Authors Speak

The Durst Distinguished Lecture Series brings renowned literary voices to Purchase every year, creating rare opportunities for students at a small public liberal arts institution like Purchase to engage with major contemporary writers.

This fall's lecturers included **Jesmyn Ward**, the historic winner—first woman and first Black American—of two National Book Awards for Fiction for *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017) and *Salvage the Bones* (2011). Her most recent novel, *Let Us Descend* (2023), was named one of the best books of the year by the *Washington Post*, *Time*, and *The New Yorker*, among others.

Next was **Laila Lalami**, the author of five books, including the national bestseller *The Dream Hotel* (2025). *The Moor's Account* (2014) won the American Book Award and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.

Percival Everett visited in November, whose most recent novel, *James* (2024), won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Kirkus Prize, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and was named one of the ten best books of the year by the *New York Times*.

Stage & Screen On Broadway

Carter Hudson '09 (Acting) returned to his theatrical roots in David Cromer's adaptation of George Clooney's acclaimed film *Good Night, and Good Luck* at the Winter Garden Theater for his Broadway debut. Known for his starring role in six seasons of FX's *Snowfall*, Hudson played CBS correspondent Joe Wershba opposite George Clooney's Edward R. Murrow.

Micah Stock '11 (Acting) returned to Broadway in *Little Bear Ridge Road*, costarring Laurie Metcalf, in a performance being hailed by *The Hollywood Reporter* as "a revelation."

Stock plays a struggling gay writer who returns to his small Idaho town and locks horns with his razor-tongued aunt, played by Metcalf. The play is on a limited run at the Booth Theater.

Purchase Power in Numbers

Two debuted on Broadway at once when **Jasai Chase-Owens '17** (Acting) and **Daniel Bravo Hernández '24** (Acting) appeared together in Sam Gold's *Romeo + Juliet* at Circle in the Square last fall.

Season three of HBO's hit series *The White Lotus* featured **Parker Posey** (Acting) and **Sarah Catherine Hook '17** (Voice and Opera Studies) as mother and daughter Victoria and Piper Ratliff. Hook noted their shared Purchase connection helped them bond on set.

Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning showcased three generations of Acting BFA alumni. **Ving Rhames '78-'80** returned as Luther Stickell, the only actor besides Tom Cruise to appear in all eight franchise films. **Shea Whigham '93** reprised the role of government agent Jasper Briggs from *Dead Reckoning*, while **Sydney Cole Alexander '15**, known for her role (and smile) in Apple TV+'s *Severance*, made her franchise debut as helicopter pilot Lt. Cmdr. Bennet.

DANCE magazine's prestigious "25 to Watch" list for 2025 features three from Purchase. **Dava Huesca '19** gained viral attention starring in Broadway's *Cats: The Jellicle Ball*, while **Symara Sarai '19**, a BESSIE Award winning choreographer and Urban Bush Woman member, captivates audiences with bold solo work. **Gilbert T. Small II '09**, Company Director at Gibney Company, creates work that drives human connection as he "elicits rigor, athleticism, and exquisite performance quality."

Images (L to R):
**Utter, Professors
Ryan Taylor and
George Kraemer
Ward
Hudson
Stock
Hook & Posey**



Images:
**Rhames
Whigham
Huesca**

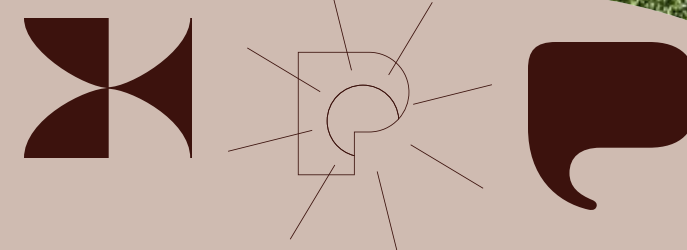
A Welcome Entrance: For decades, pedestrians chose the shortest route from the West 1 parking lot to the mall, bypassing the wide set of stairs rising alongside the PAC, opting instead for the blacktop path that cut off the angle. With the construction of the Center for Media, Film, and Theatre (CMFT) in 2019, a new set of stairs was punched through the mall. Last spring, the Admissions Office relocated from the estate building to its new home in the lower lobby of the CMFT.

Then & NOW



Juxtaposing archival photos with current attempts to recreate the moments.

Photos:
Then: NYCFC
Now: Kristi McKee



NEWS BRIEFS

Q+A with President Steiper

Purchase College welcomed Michael E. Steiper, PhD as its seventh president in August.



Proof Mag: What most appealed to you about becoming President of Purchase College?

MS: Where do I start? I have long admired the excellence of Purchase's programs across the arts and the liberal arts and sciences, and the way they come together here with real synergy. Now that I am on campus and immersed in this vibrant community, I am even more impressed by the way we serve our mission as part of SUNY, by providing access to these programs at an incredible value. It is evident that the faculty and staff live this mission every day as they serve Purchase's dynamic and creative students. Of course, there is also our incredible alumni community, the "Proof of Purchase," who demonstrate the transformative power of a Purchase degree every day. I also feel personally connected to Purchase through my own professional background as an anthropologist and leader in public higher education, as well as my personal interests in the arts. Purchase's mission of access and excellence, and its impact in the arts and the liberal arts, and sciences is truly special, and this is why I am thrilled to serve as its President.

PM: As you learn more about Purchase and its programs, history, students, alumni, and overall footprint in the world, what has surprised and impressed you most?

MS: What has surprised me most is that each day I am still learning new and impressive things about Purchase. I am amazed by our students. Their talent and energy pervade campus, and each day I learn more about how they aspire to change the world. Getting to know our alumni has shown me just how far a Purchase education will take you. Our alumni are shaping their fields at the highest level and serving as powerful ambassadors for Purchase. The campus itself continues to amaze me, from its natural beauty to our performance spaces to the Neuberger Museum and beyond. The more I see, the more I am convinced that Purchase is a truly special gem.

PM: And how do you see yourself engaging with alumni?

MS: For me, it's all about engaging with alums to continue building and elevating the Purchase alumni community. I am looking forward to getting out there to meet alumni at gatherings, performances, screenings, and other events. If you send me an invitation, I'll do my best to attend! I've also been connecting with alumni on social media, and I encourage everyone to get involved in these virtual spaces. Just as importantly, I want to extend a personal invitation for alumni to return to campus: come meet today's students and experience today's campus energy, from the Durst Lecture Series and Neuberger Museum exhibits to performances at the PAC, as well as student symposia, showcases, and concerts. It will be my pleasure to host you! My goal is to build and deepen our connections, and celebrate and elevate the accomplishments of our alumni community.



PM: If you weren't in higher education, what would you be doing?

MS: Great question! I often think about the metaphorical "road not taken," and how serendipity might have led me somewhere else, perhaps wholly unexpected. But wherever I landed, I would hope that my talents would be put to good use.

PM: What do you see as the biggest challenges—and opportunities—the college faces in the next few years?

MS: The challenges facing Purchase are the same ones confronting many colleges right now: growing skepticism about the value of higher education and decreasing enrollments. I believe these challenges create a major opportunity for us, because Purchase has such a unique and vibrant culture where everyone has a place, academically and socially. We provide both access and excellence across the performing and creative arts and the liberal arts and sciences, all at an incredible value as a public institution. Where else do you have opera singers rooming with computer scientists? Or dancers and philosophers debating the latest films? By telling our story more effectively, we can show how we prepare students not only for exciting careers across so many fields, but also for lives of impact and meaning. At the same time, we have an opportunity to deepen our ties with Westchester through internships and partnerships, so that more people experience our campus and the extraordinary talent and energy of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Opposite: President Steiper and his dog Nova on campus.

This Page: Assistant Professor Rebecca Haviland (left) with Conservatory of Music students and President Steiper

this way. This has been a joyful part of my work and it is what a vibrant campus like Purchase is all about: people connecting with people. As an anthropologist, I'm naturally curious. I'm always eager to listen and learn, to get to know people, and to understand what's working well and where we can do better. Most of all, I want to learn from our community about their successes, aspirations, and concerns, so that we can work together to make Purchase even stronger.

PM: Tell us something interesting about yourself that we won't learn from your professional bio.

MS: After playing bass guitar off and on since high school, I started playing regularly during the pandemic. That led me to join a cover band and get more involved in music. At Purchase

I'm surrounded by incredible musicians. Of course, this is more than a little intimidating, but I'm also excited about the chance to occasionally sit in with students around campus.

PM: Do you have any pets? If yes, please share details—and provide photos. (Purchase people love animals.)

MS: Yes, we have a family dog named Nova. She is a very sweet five-year-old Golden Retriever. I've brought her to campus a few times and she's been having a great time meeting students, when she isn't napping under my desk. I'll say that Nova has really boosted my Instagram feed, too. We've been calling her the "First Dog" of Purchase and at this point, many students know her name and look forward to seeing her.



MORE THAN WORDS

The Opportunity and Community of Purchase Publications



Kay Mancino



Jennifer Ward

Arlenis Marmolejos

Jennifer Ward (left) and former editor Barb Kay '24

When you talk about student life at Purchase, one idea never fails to come up: DIY. The Do-It-Yourself ethos is both a reflection of the “creative types” drawn to the college’s brick-filled campus in the first place, and a testament to their ability to not only seize opportunities, but to make them. From concerts at The Stood to impromptu art shows in the woods, student productions in the Humanities Theatre to drag performances in The Olde, one of the college’s core identities is creating art that builds community. This has always included student publications, which continue to be an important part of that culture.

There are currently three main student-run publications at Purchase: *The Purchase Phoenix*, *The Beat*, and *Italics Mine*. Proof spoke with the editors and academic advisors of these three institutions to discuss how they reflect—and what they contribute to—life on campus.

The (Purchase) Phoenix Rising

In some ways, weekly meetings for *The Purchase Phoenix* (formerly *The Load* and *The Brick* before a rebrand about 10 years ago) are exactly what you’d expect. Students gather to discuss what’s happening within the Purchase community—student government decisions, social events, protests, performances—and how best to share that news. But while the room is full of editors, interns, and contributors who do it “for the glory of the byline,” some people just come for the vibes, apparently.

“We have students who have shown up for years who never take on a story,” marvels Donna Cornachio, the publication’s faculty advisor for more than 10 years.

While she’d like to credit the homemade brownies she brings to every meeting for encouraging this inviting atmosphere, Cornachio says it’s thanks to the efforts of Editor-in-Chief **Jennifer Ward '25** (Journalism) and Managing Editor **Arlenis Marmolejos '25** (Journalism and Law & Justice Studies).

“We’ve definitely tried our best,” says Ward, who notes that even those who don’t contribute bylines are important to the paper’s success. “They might know somebody who can help with an article, or they’ll have a source. It’s just really such a nice little community.”

“We’ve really tried to create that as a foundation: to be accepting and welcoming to all students, especially if journalism is not your major,” Marmolejos says.

“Purchase is a very unique and artistic campus. There are different ways of expressing the news, so we’ve been trying to hone in on multimedia.”

And while both say they’ve become more deeply involved in student life as a result of this work (“Creating my own opportunities within the campus started with *The Phoenix*,” Marmolejos observes), *The Phoenix* remains their favorite claim to fame. “People hear my name,” says Ward cheerfully, “and they just know, ‘Oh, you’re the girl from *The Phoenix*!’” And there’s always a little bit of pride: “‘Yeah! I’m the girl from *The Phoenix*!’ And then sometimes they pull me aside and whisper, ‘I have something I need to tell you ...’”

by Jamie Kenney '05



Sophia Castro-Astor in broadcast TV studio

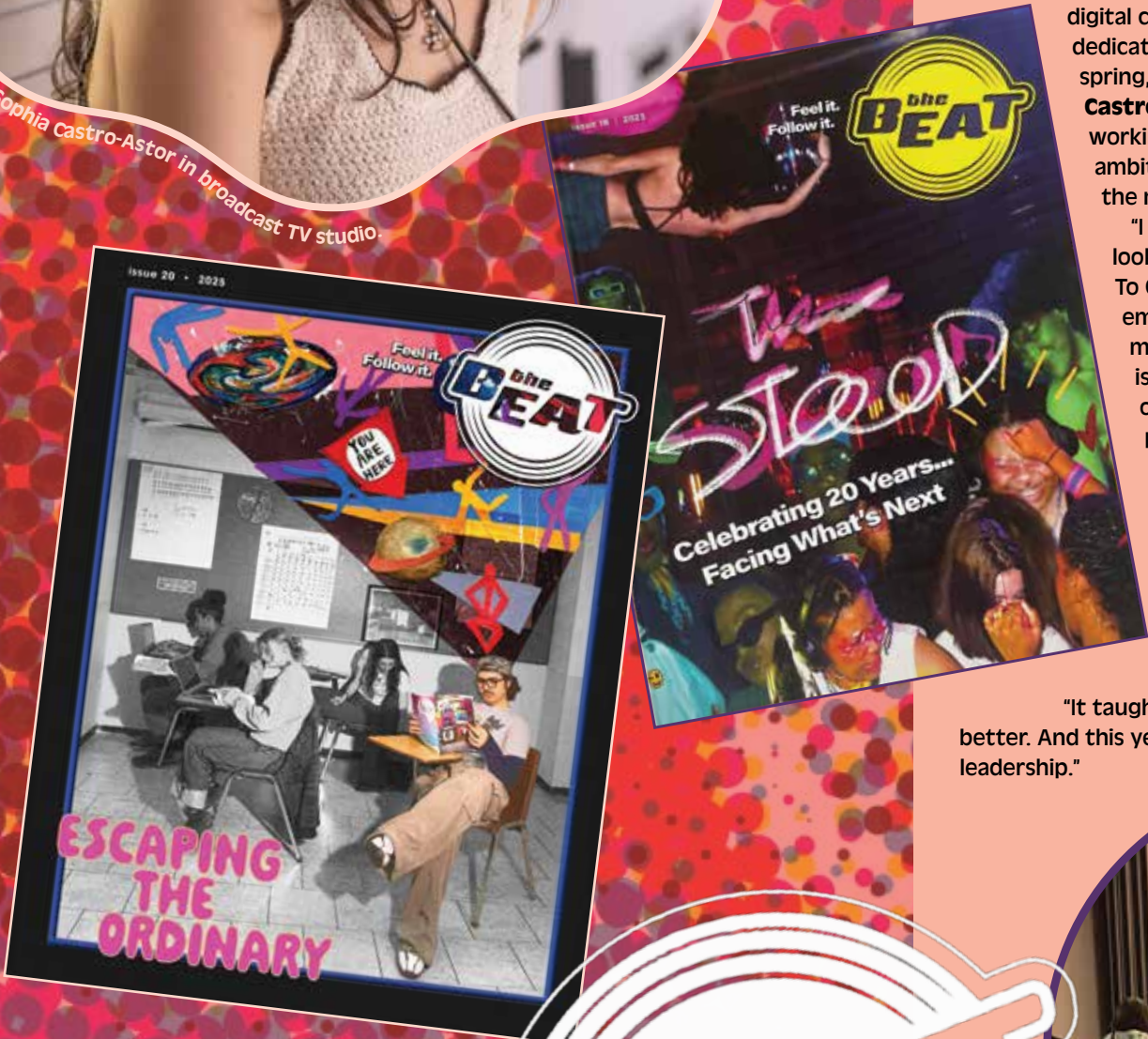
The Beat Goes On

The Beat, Purchase's arts journalism publication, was first conceived in 2011 by faculty advisor Andrew Salomon and his students. The inaugural issue launched in fall 2012 through a successful Kickstarter campaign and, in his words, "sweat equity." "That's all a credit to the students and their drive and their belief," he tells Proof. "And I think that's the most Purchase thing ... [students] are used to that DIY aesthetic and *The Beat* has been DIY since its very beginnings."

Approximately 10 to 20 students take Salomon's course—The Beat: Magazine Production—to produce digital content in the fall semester. Spring is dedicated to publishing a print edition. Last spring, *The Beat's* Editor-in-Chief was **Sophia Castro-Astor '25** (Journalism). After years of working on the publication, she had a bold and ambitious idea for her final issue: to redesign the magazine as part of her senior project. "I just kind of felt like we could make it look a little bit more Purchase-y," she says. To Castro-Astor, this meant putting more emphasis on the visual component while maintaining high-quality writing. The result is a gorgeously produced exploration of the arts on campus, full of stunning photographs, interviews, reviews, profiles, and more. For Castro-Astor, it's in many ways a culmination of her four years of college experience.

"[*The Beat*] has been a huge part of my college life," she says, explaining that writing for the publication introduced her to shows, events, and people she may not have known about otherwise.

"It taught me how to write better and edit better. And this year especially, it's taught me a lot about leadership."



The Beat Fan Regina Spektor '02



Italics Mine contributors



Kay Mancino

Italics Mine—Purchase and Beyond

The school's literary magazine, which primarily features fiction and poetry, has been a Purchase institution for more than 20 years. Rooted in two creative writing courses, Editing and Production Workshop, the fall semester focuses on editing, and the spring on producing the magazine. Submissions are open to anyone on campus and beyond.

A team of editors reviews anonymous submissions. Choosing what gets published and what gets passed on is at once an exhilarating community experience... and the hard part, says Editor-in-Chief **Kay Mancino '25** (Creative Writing).

"We have so many different editors with different visions and voices," she notes. "And they work extremely well together, but there were times when ... [faculty advisor] Lee Conell and I had to really make sure that our students were on the same page. None of them were combative at all, and they were very respectful, but gathering together 11 writers and creatives who all have different visions can sometimes be a challenge."

"When the students started in the fall, I think they were nervous about taking on pieces to edit and doing justice to them," says Assistant Professor of Creative Writing Conell, fresh off her first year of advising for *Italics Mine*.

"I felt like the class really came together in an amazing way. Once they were talking about pieces, I could really see their excitement ... it was so cool to see their confidence and sense of community growing."



After their joint interview with *Proof*, Mancino and Conell said they're going to discuss the future of *Italics Mine*—and decide which editors showed over the course of this year that they have what it takes to lead the charge in 2025–2026.

The Next Generation

All the editors and advisors who spoke to *Proof* are mindful, melancholy, and excited about handing the reins over to next year's teams as they move on to their post-Purchase lives.

"I am being so careful," Ward says, in reviewing applications for *The Phoenix* editor-in-chief position, "because this is my baby."

Castro-Astor says she already has an idea of who will be taking over at *The Beat*. "I'm excited to see what she does. And I hope they just continue making it their Purchase in a magazine."

Do Purchase students know any other way?

Here or Anywhere: Find the Neuberger Museum on Bloomberg Connects

The Neuberger Museum of Art can now be found on Bloomberg Connects, a free arts and culture app created by Bloomberg Philanthropies. Through this new partnership, alumni and other guests can explore the Neuberger's exhibitions and collection highlights—onsite or wherever they are in the world—right from their mobile devices.

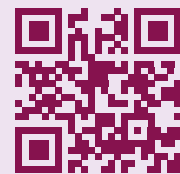
"Our guide invites users into the stories behind the art," says Neuberger Director Tracy Fitzpatrick. "It's an extension of our commitment to accessibility, education, and creative engagement."

The Neuberger's guide includes audio narrations by students from Purchase's Conservatory of Theatre Arts, as well as videos of Conservatory of Dance students responding to works in the galleries—bringing fresh, creative student perspectives to the experience. An interactive tour of the college's outdoor sculptures leads users along a path through campus to the Museum's front door. A second tour explores some of the objects founder Roy R. Neuberger considered his personal favorites.

On site, the app offers a self-directed way to navigate the Museum and explore context-rich content, including archival images, exhibition highlights, and behind-the-scenes audio and videos from artists and staff.

The app is available in over 40 languages and is free to download from the App Store or Google Play.

Information: purchase.edu/neubergerapp
 FB/IG: @neubergermuseumofart
 X: @neubergermuseum



Experience Something Real at the Purchase PAC

The Purchase PAC's 2025–2026 professional presenting season celebrates the incredible inventiveness and diversity of American artists and the ideals that have nurtured and sparked broad-ranging creativity. Today more than ever, the joy and connection that the arts bring us are an anchor in a turbulent world, and a lens through which we can envision hope for what is to come.

Upcoming performances include an exhilarating mix of dance and Jazz with Ephrat Asherie Dance and Arturo O'Farrill: Shadow Cities, and the legendary Martha Graham Dance Company.

So much more than a place to experience world-class performances, The PAC is an arts center where the stages, lobbies, and rehearsal rooms provide space for public discourse, connection, learning, and creativity.

Talkbacks, workshops, and masterclasses offer opportunities for engagement. Visiting dance companies mentor Purchase College students. Tech rehearsals support the development of innovative new work. The Purchase PAC is advancing and supporting the arts on campus and beyond; it's the hub of a thriving creative community.



Tickets: artscenter.org
 Social media: @PurchasePAC

Photo: Ephrat Asherie Dance with Arturo O'Farrill / Credit: Nir Arieli

Happening

MAR 6

7:00pm

Purchase Symphony Orchestra

Recital Hall, The Performing Arts Center

MAR 12-16

1:30pm, 7:30pm*

Romeo and Juliet

Acting Co. 50 (Class of '26) and Design/Tech

PepsiCo Theatre, The Performing Arts Center

MAY 1

8:00pm

Purchase Dance Company Spring Concert

PepsiCo Theatre, The Performing Arts Center

MAY 2

9:30am–2pm

44th Annual James Utter Natural and Social Sciences Research Symposium

Natural Sciences Building

*time varies by day

purchase.edu/calendar for details and more events.

THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Brandon Campbell, *Big Secrets*

Illustrates a New Path for Art+Design Students

Purchase's new illustration concentration isn't just an academic expansion. It's a sign of the times.

We wake up, and most of us immediately start scrolling through our phones. We brush past dozens of marketing emails and advertisements. The pop-ups and TikToks and Instagram posts are all artfully designed to capture and hold our attention. Some of us might peel open *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, or any of the dozens of other popular magazines, and look at illustrations as they wrap around headlines. Maybe some of us turn on the TV. Either way, everything we see is a form of graphic design, and everyone is trying to sell us a story.



This is something Hakan Topal, Chair of Purchase's Graphic Design Program, saw reflected in the portfolios of prospective students: there had been a shift. Among the still lifes, paintings, and traditional works, he saw anime, cartoons, and other illustrations.

"Students really grow up with the cartoons, Japanese animation, 3D animation, video games—all of which are essentially illustrations," he says. So, they want to get involved in this area, and we didn't have any structured way of serving our students."

Topal helped recruit 15 students for the program's maiden voyage in the fall, but it was a long time coming. The concentration, which resides within the Graphic Design BFA program, was initially spearheaded by Robin Lynch, the previous Graphic Design Chair, along with Visiting Assistant Professor Timothy Samara and Assistant Professor Benjamin Santiago. After a national search, the School of Art+Design hired artist/designer Deena Sooteh, whose illustrations have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The New Yorker*, as a tenure-track Assistant Professor to lead the concentration. The goal? Help students learn the art of visual storytelling—whether it's an illustration on the cover of a book, an animation in a social media advertisement, or a journalistic data visualization used in a documentary.

by Mariel Loveland '10



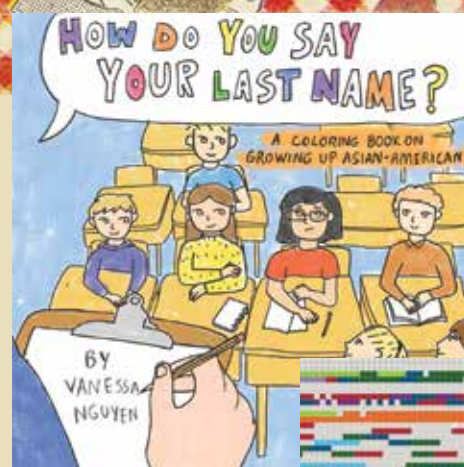
Jakob Lorenzo '21, *Last Supper*

"We don't want to be a traditional illustration program," says Topal, "but we want to make sure that we are providing skillsets for the future illustrators."

Topal is an engineer-turned-artist. He studied engineering as an undergrad, earned a master's in Gender and Women's Studies from Middle East Technical University, and then went on to receive a PhD in Sociology from The New School for Social Research. It shouldn't be surprising that his artistic approach blends analytical tools with creativity—like the brutalist-inspired home he designed in Turkey, which was featured in *Dwell* ("Construction Diary: An Artist Plays Architect to Design a Brutalist-Inspired Family Home in Turkey" on dwell.com)

That approach is not far from what he sets out to do with the program. "The idea of design," he said, "is based on solving problems. ... We want our students to be expressive and explore new ideas, but also, we want them to engage in an ever-changing design field defined by an active professional community."

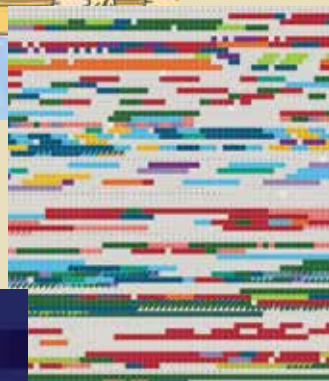
The illustration concentration kicked off this fall. Students from the School of Art+Design can apply once they have completed their shared first-year Foundations curriculum.



Vanessa Nguyen '18, *How Do You Say Your Last Name*



Jacqueline Vaccaro '24, *24 Hours*



Jax Deleon '09, *Vocal Album Grid*

making change

And Solving Problems

Meet graduates from the Economics program who've chosen to make a difference in fields such as philanthropy, arts management, and the law.

Defending Creatives

Ken McGinis '95 is the quintessential type of student you might expect to attend Purchase College. Musically inclined, open-minded, socially conscious, and coming from an artistic family, McGinis came to Purchase after deciding he didn't want to pursue a music career.

"I started playing guitar when I was 12 years old, and eventually went to Juilliard, but I realized I didn't have the personality for it," McGinis says. "I still wanted to be around the arts, so when I was 20 years old, I decided to apply to Purchase."



After a brief stint in what he calls a "Wall Street-adjacent job" and a position in the advertising department of *The Nation* magazine, McGinis decided to go to law school.

"I had been toying with the idea of becoming a lawyer involved with the artistic

community or the entertainment world in some way," McGinis said. "But that would have meant going to LA, and LA wasn't really for me."

McGinis did end up getting his law degree at Pace University, after which he worked at boutique Manhattan law firm Hill, Betts & Nash LLP.

"It was a maritime and admiralty law firm, and the work was super interesting because I got to do the performance aspect of the practice of law, which is trial work," he says.

"One of the partners there called it 'warfare by theater,' and that's what we were doing."

Schoolchildren take their first step into the world of economics when they have a basic understanding of addition, subtraction, and coin and bill values. They can then learn how to make change.

Another sense of "making change" is the one espoused by the controversial economist and philosopher, Karl Marx. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways," Marx wrote. "The point is to change it."

Schoolchildren who go on to major in economics in college learn how societies manage limited resources, with traditional curricula focused on core concepts in microeconomics and macroeconomics, public policy, and economic theories.

At Purchase, economics majors study those things too, but they also graduate with the ability to analyze and interpret a wide range of societal issues and propose solutions.

"The main goal of the economics program at Purchase is to train students in the 'economic way of thinking,'" says Associate Professor of Economics Cédric Ceulemans, "and to use economics as a tool to understand, analyze, and solve problems in all walks of life."

by Steve Neumann

At the same time, McGinis kept his connection to the arts world by providing pro bono legal advice and representation through Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts in New York. It's an organization artists can turn to when they believe they have a legal claim to something.

"My economics education opened me up to the idea that people's motives could be quantified and even in some ways predicted," McGinis said, "and that was fascinating to me."

McGinis applied this knowledge to the claim that one of his favorite pro bono clients—a songwriter living in Soho who had written music for a BBC program. The client had gotten paid for it, but felt that he had gotten stiffed when the company had released a DVD of the program without paying him.

"I asked him what he thought was a reasonable amount of compensation, and he told me \$2,500," McGinis says. "But I told him I was gonna shoot for the moon and try to get him a lot more money than that."

McGinis then wrote a letter to the BBC laying out the facts of the case and asking for \$25,000 based on how many DVDs they sold and how much of his music was part of it.

"I told them that because they have offices in New York, I could take them into federal court and win, because they've taken advantage of this person. A couple of days later I get an email from them asking if my client will accept \$10,000."

"That's the kind of rewarding stuff I've been doing," McGinis adds, "because I know there are shark-infested waters in the business of entertainment."

Protecting IP

Like McGinis, **Angela Galli '19**—who majored in both economics and arts management—also grew up as a musician, playing piano and trombone.

And although she attended the prestigious Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts in Manhattan, she, too, quickly discovered that a career in music wasn't for her.

"Although I love music, I realized I wanted to be more on the business side of it," Galli says.

Today, Galli is the Senior Manager, Content Protection & Anti-Piracy at Warner Music Group, where her focus is on AI-related copyright infringements. Before joining Warner in 2023, Galli was the Lead Agent of Copyright Administration at TuneCore, the world's leading digital music aggregator.

"At Warner, I lead a team that monitors social media

like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to detect and remove copyrighted content," Galli said.

Galli uses the synergistic blend of economics and arts management she experienced at Purchase to excel in her role at Warner.

"Throughout my years at Purchase, I realized how hand-in-hand arts management and economics actually are," Galli says. "Economics is used in everything. I work for a major record label analyzing large data sets and looking for trends, which is similar to how it is in economics."

Galli got a taste for this type of analysis through her senior thesis, which included aspects of both her arts management and economics majors.

"My senior thesis focused mostly on the marketing strategies that Jazz at the Lincoln Center uses to get people's attention and get them to buy tickets," Galli says. "I pulled behavioral economics into it to explain how JLC was deciding on these tactics and what their strategy was, and the economics behind why they would do what they do."

Funding Food Security

Rebecca Snyder '08

credits Purchase with ultimately helping figure out her career path. Snyder is currently Director of Corporate Partnerships at Feeding Westchester, a nonprofit that serves Westchester County by providing food to a hunger-relief network of nearly 300 partners and programs.

"The trajectory of my life changed after my time at Purchase," Snyder says. "The one course that really sticks out 20 years later was Professor Peter Bell's wealth and poverty course, which was heavy with critical thinking."

It was that course that led to an opportunity for Snyder to further her intellectual and moral horizons through a fellowship to study abroad.

"I was the recipient of the ASIANetwork Freeman Fellowship grant to study in Thailand in the summer of 2007," Snyder said. "I studied the impact of the media on the modernization of Thai women economically, socially, and politically."

"I was interested in understanding if, as the country became more globalized, women were given more opportunities," Snyder adds. "The short answer—societally, economically, politically—was no."

Immediately after graduating from Purchase, Snyder continued to explore broader international economic and societal issues by earning a master's degree in International Relations and Affairs at The New School with a dual concentration in development and governance and rights.

"I ended up in Hong Kong working at a social service agency that supported asylum seekers and refugees," Snyder says. "It was there that one of my supervisors asked if I ever considered a career in fundraising because he thought I was a fearless and passionate person."

That was in 2012, and Snyder has been working to make change through the nonprofit world ever since.

"It was studying at Purchase that ultimately led to my career in philanthropy," Snyder says, "because there was a lot of critical thinking, and boxes that were opened, and different ways to look at things, which I think is the Purchase way."

"I fly out of bed in the morning, excited to work at Feeding Westchester," Snyder adds. "It is a dream job for me, personally, because food insecurity is one of the most critical issues facing the world."

And Justice For All

Ndukwe Agwu '03 attacks critical justice issues—like bankruptcy and foreclosure for low-income individuals and families—from a different angle, that of the legal profession.

As Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, Agwu, who majored in both economics and political science, works to advance social and economic justice through innovative, neighborhood-based legal representation and advocacy throughout New York City.

"I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer," Agwu says. "I initially wanted to be a prosecutor, because I equated law with what I saw on TV growing up. But when I interned at the district attorney's office, I realized that it wasn't for me."

After Purchase, Agwu went on to get his law degree at Touro Law School, but he recognizes that his Purchase education gave him the foundational tools to succeed in law school and beyond.

"The projects I did throughout the years at Purchase were heavy on research and understanding, not just memorization," Agwu says. "And that was kind of what law school was—you had to do a lot of writing, a lot of reading, and a lot of due diligence to make sure you understood what you were doing."



Agwu particularly enjoyed those economic classes that talked about the fiscal and monetary structures of governments that are tied to legal structures and issues—like the IMF and World Bank, which was the topic of Agwu's senior thesis at Purchase.

"My thesis was called the IMF Dilemma, and it was influenced by both the political science and economic side," Agwu says. "I discussed how the IMF goes into struggling countries looking to help by loaning them money, but demands that they change their economic structure to Western capitalism."

"I think Purchase is primarily known for the arts," Agwu says. "But I got an excellent education on the social science and humanities side."

While economics is primarily considered a social science—the goal of which is to understand and explain human behavior, relationships, and institutions—it can also be said to draw on philosophy for its values and goals, and on art for its application and practice. The unique strength and utility of the Purchase economics program seems to lie in blending all three to understand and improve the human condition. These four alumni are just some of the many graduates of the program who strive to make sense of the complexities of human life and contribute to a more just and informed society.



Khalif Tahir Thompson

Keeps Pushing Forward, One Brush Stroke at a Time

For Khalif Tahir Thompson '18, the art doesn't necessarily reflect the artist. The painter's personality is so big it nearly hops out of our late afternoon Zoom call.

"I'm very ... I don't want to say bubbly, but ... what do you call it? I'm just very not as serious," he says. "Sometimes my work seems a lot more serious."

He's not necessarily wrong. Thompson's primary practice is portraiture, which he uses to chronicle the human condition. While the subject matter may have a stoic sensibility, focusing on themes concerning race, family, and the art historical, the execution does not. His work, recently on display at the Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery in Luxembourg, uses bright color and layered textural elements to craft a world that's both emotional and striking.

This boldness is exactly what helped Thompson rise out of Brooklyn and find success in the global art scene.

Chasing Fame

Thompson, who grew up in the Glenwood Projects in the Canarsie area of Brooklyn, first learned he had a unique perspective in the trenches of middle school.

"I was very intensely bullied," he says of his public-school experience. "...Growing up in Brooklyn and being black and being [LGBTQ] ... I was just very different."

At a time when most kids try their hardest to blend in, Thompson used his differences to stand out. This helped him secure a spot at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, the real-life high school that inspired the 1980 film *Fame*. There, he found his people, but he struggled to keep up.

"I couldn't afford a sketch book," he says, admitting his teacher scolded him for tearing pages out of old sketchbooks in the classroom. "No one was going to jump out and save me and support me in that way. I had to put myself in the position to be helped or I had to help myself."

Thompson carried this fire throughout the rest of his art career.

The Worst They Can Do Is Say No

Thompson transferred into Purchase to study liberal arts after a year at SUNY Cobleskill. An offhand email to a Purchase studio art teacher led him to the School of Art+Design, where he was able to study his practice intensively. At the time, Thompson had missed the deadline to apply for the BFA program, and asked the teacher if he could take an art-focused liberal arts elective. The teacher saw his portfolio and convinced the School of Art+Design to admit him anyway.

"I was just expecting just to get into the class," he says, "But he took those images [of my work]... and went straight to Art+Design."

In his last year, Thompson applied to residencies that he admittedly "had no business applying to" (the kind primarily for mid-career artists). His mantra? The worst they can do is say no—but some of them actually said yes, including the prestigious 2021 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship in Painting and the Vermont Studio Center. The latter led to the first major sale of his work and primed him for success with future solo shows (think Dubai and Paris), museum acquisitions (think the Smithsonian and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts), and a spot at The Armory Art Show at the Javits Center last fall.

After receiving a master's degree in painting and printmaking from Yale School of the Arts, Thompson wrapped his first museum exhibition at the Harvey B. Gantt Center of African American Culture in Charlotte, NC. Gearing up for a solo show at the Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery in Paris, he continues to bet on himself.

"I had a lot of friends that lost their way or didn't make it out of school, and that could have easily been me," he recounts. "But I just slithered [toward] that twinkle of light in every situation to motivate the next step and just be positive that way."



Khalif Thompson in the studio with his nephews. (Photo: Adam Reich)



Top: *The More I See You*, 2025, oil, acrylic, handmade paper/papyrus, denim, pleather on canvas, 94.5 x 66.8 in.

Left: *I Think It's Gonna Rain Today*, 2024, oil, pastel, acrylic, papyrus, fabric, handmade paper (abaca, cotton), pleather, on canvas, 47.25 x 47.25 in.

Right: Khalif Thompson in class (2017)



WHAT IS PHOTOGRAPHY?

The *Photography Is...* festival explored the answer.

How do you define photography? For professors Josh Lutz and Katie Murray, the answer was clear—let the students decide.

The colleagues co-created the *Photography Is...* festival as an open-ended framework “rooted in a pedagogical commitment to let students define photography for themselves rather than have a definition imposed upon them,” explains Lutz, Associate Professor of Photography and Chair of the department. Murray is Assistant Professor of Photography.

The festival took place from September 18 to November 22, 2024, featuring over 25 public programs, including exhibitions, lectures, workshops, screenings, and student-led installations.

“What made it unique was the intentional placement of student voices directly alongside internationally recognized artists and alumni, creating real dialogue rather than a top-down showcase,” says Lutz.

Major events drew up to 150 attendees, with crowds packing some exhibitions wall-to-wall. Alumni flew in to attend, and visiting artists from as far as Belgium and London led talks and informal gatherings.

Exhibition highlights included *Photography Is...* in the Visual Arts Building’s Maass Gallery. Featuring work by a dozen artists, including Marina Berio, James Casebere, Lois Conner, Gregory Eddi Jones, Justine Kurland, Andrea Modica, Nandita Raman, and David Wojnarowicz, and more, the exhibition showcased photographic practices, from early Daguerreotypes to contemporary uses of artificial intelligence, while demonstrating both the revealing and concealing power of images.

And *Photography Is Us* celebrated 50 years of faculty and alumni contributions, demonstrating the evolution of photographic practice at Purchase through the work of 28 artists, including Nicholas Bruno '15, Veronica Cruz '22, Regina De Luise '81, Bob Kozma, Zoeann Murphy '03, Justin O'Neill '94, Leonard Stokes, and Jo Ann Walters, among many more.

Even casual viewers could engage with work placed in highly visible locations—such as windows in Campus Center North, the Natural and Social Sciences Buildings, the Multicultural Center, and the Student Services Building. A metal shipping container, doubling as an experimental space for students, stood on the Great Lawn. For ten weeks, students transformed it into a weekly series of exhibitions, performances, or installations, rendering it “... both a physical structure and a conceptual framework: a vessel for ideas, a stage for image-making, and a space to question how photographs occupy and shape the world around them,” according to the forthcoming *Photography Is...* catalog (Conveyor Studio, 2025).

“One of the most meaningful outcomes was seeing students realize that their work—often deeply personal, experimental, or politically urgent—could hold space next to the work of photographers like David Wojnarowicz, Justine Kurland, and Andrea Modica. The feedback we received centered not just on inspiration, but on transformation.”

Lutz, who admits it was “by far the most ambitious programmatic initiative I’ve undertaken,” hopes to make it a recurring tradition every four years.

—Kristi McKee

Opposite
Clockwise from top left:
Jo Anne Walters, Wood River Blue Pool
Ruby Liu '24
Florencia Escudero
Kris Graves
Main Festival Exhibition, Maass Gallery

List of Events



Photos:
Josue Mendoza '25
IG @josuemendoza_photo



1976–2026: Fifty Years of Purchase Graduates

In May 1976, Purchase College handed diplomas to its first class of four-year graduates. Fifty years later, those pioneers—and the thousands who followed—have built careers that span impressive fields, from Broadway stages to research labs, from design studios to newsrooms, classrooms, boardrooms, and courtrooms.

As we approach this milestone anniversary in 2026, we're planning a celebration that honors not only the class of '76, but every graduate who's carried the Purchase spirit into the world. We'll gather for events, share stories, and reconnect with the people and places that shaped us.

But anniversaries aren't just about looking back. Right now, a Purchase student is staying late in the studio, questioning whether they can make it work. Another is applying for an unpaid internship and wondering how they'll cover rent. They're walking the same path you did—and your engagement makes that path a little less lonely.

Whether you join us at a reunion event, mentor a current student, or make a gift to the scholarship fund, you're proving what we've always known: Purchase graduates show up for each other.

The class of 1976 started something. Let's show them what we've built together.



Class of '76: Share Your Memories
Submit notes or photos for use in reunion materials or on the website.
purchase.edu/classof76



Peter Compo '81 Gives Back

Peter Compo '81 (Biology/Chemistry) fondly recalls his Purchase experience:

"Purchase was the right school at the right time: small classes, excellent opportunity for interaction with professors, and a cohort of outstanding students."

Compo completed a PhD in Chemical Engineering at the City College of New York and then built a distinguished career at DuPont where he held several leadership roles, including as Director of DuPont Ventures and Corporate Integrated Business Planning. He's a published composer and the author of the book *The Emergent Approach to Strategy*.

Compo decided to give back and challenged fellow alumni to join him. After making a \$25,000 gift last spring, he considered a second gift in the same amount but found a way to make an even greater impact. Through the end of 2025, he matched every donation to the School of Natural and Social Sciences, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$25,000.

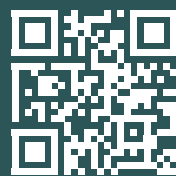
"With this matching grant, I hope to encourage alumni to connect with Natural Science, either to support the school financially or in other ways. While Purchase may be better known for the arts, I know that many alumni from Natural Science went on to do great things. Let's use our success to help propel current and future students to do the same."

Interested in making a challenge gift? Reach out for more information today.



Contact
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Connecting & Giving



Alumni Affinity Groups
purchase.edu/affinity

Alumni Networks:
Black, Latinx, LGBTQ+, & Women Leadership



Alumni Volunteer Opportunities
purchase.edu/getinvolved

Admissions Ambassadors, Postcards, Mentor Network, In the Classroom



Stay In Touch
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Share news or update your contact info.



Questions/Info
alumni@purchase.edu

Alumni Weekend
May 1-3, 2026
Stay tuned!

Following the Thread

For Bryan Czerniawski '11, a lifetime of preparation unfolds, yet the pattern emerges only in hindsight.

The interior of a Westchester County country club, doubling as a Newport, RI, mansion, buzzes with the last-minute activity typical on set just before film begins to roll. Dozens of crew members move purposefully among the actors, all draped in elaborate period costumes historically accurate to the 1890s-era estate. Among them is set costumer **Bryan Czerniawski '11**, who expertly examines buttons, bustles, and closures before the cameras capture a complex ballroom scene in the final episode of HBO's *The Gilded Age* Season 3.

"I realized what ten years' experience feels like all of a sudden, because this Olympic-level costume show didn't feel hard," he says. What may be an atypical career path for a visual artist and printmaking major is more a fortuitous overlap of skills and timing than a deliberate plan.

Patterns Emerge

Czerniawski grew up on Staten Island in a family of theatre people. While his sisters performed, even at age six, he knew designing sets was for him. He would accompany his mom to the local theatre and stand by while she helped with the costumes.

In high school, he immersed himself in set painting, design, and art direction for every show. The Theatre Design/Tech program led him to Purchase, but he chose the visual arts to pursue a more well-rounded fine arts background. Live figure drawing and Professor Elizabeth Cuffey's design history course—which defined history by design eras, rather than wars—proved to be incredibly formative. And the art he made back then focused on the wear of industrial objects and how things age.

"There have been a lot of consistent threads and overlaps in the work that I started in college that somehow remain as threads in my professional career now."

Scene Change

A job offer in 2012 through his best friend, **Dylan Rossman '12**, also a printmaking major, proved pivotal. As a costumes production assistant on the set of Darren Aronofsky's film *Noah*, Czerniawski knew just what to do—thanks to his mom. "She raised me as her little costumes PA my whole life."

The costume roles continued. As an ager/dyer on the NBC series *Believe* in 2014, he turned new clothes into those that look properly worn, torn, or dirty for each scene. Or as if they've been through an explosion—as he did for the Netflix series *Zero Day*.

The techniques came naturally—his body of work and figure drawing skills aligned perfectly. "It requires a combination of being aware of how people move in the world," he says, "and needing to know how things break down, wear, or age."

By the time he first worked on *The Gilded Age* in 2020, he'd held more roles like key costumer and costume supervisor—each a deliberate choice about time and energy. "What I like about this industry," he says, "I can pick and choose job to job how invested I want to be."



Alumni Profile

Finding the Through Line

In 2016, Czerniawski pooled resources with Rossman and two other printmakers from Purchase—**Alex Derwick '11** and **Manny Bova '11**—to create BigFoot Press, a full-service printshop in rural Pennsylvania. He's now its sole proprietor, the house and barn serving as both retreat and studio.

After ten years on film sets, Czerniawski has returned to figure drawing with a group in New York City called Doable Guys. "An unfortunate name," he admits, but they've been incredibly encouraging following his hiatus from the practice since Purchase. They also host art sales in and around NYC, a welcome opportunity where he's had luck selling original drawings and prints on cork, totes, and hankies he made in the printshop. Hoping to devote more time to his own art and less time on sets, he was thrilled when his art sales matched his day rate in costumes—on the nose his first try, then tripled the next.

His next move might involve sharing his printmaking retreat with artist friends. "It's magical to come out and spend a weekend," he says.

"I consider it a Printshop of Requirement, like Harry Potter, because what people really need is space and facilities, and that's what I have."

Serendipitously or not, the pieces are falling into place. "It's like all of the little things I've been training for my whole life have been perfectly organized, where I'm in the right place in the right career at the right time."

by Kristi McKee

Congratulations Class of 2025!

On Friday, May 16, 2025, 771 candidates proudly crossed the Westchester County Center stage during the 53rd commencement ceremony.

Celebrated were Honorary Degree Recipient **Adam Nagourney '77** and President's Award for Distinguished Alumni **Jeffrey Putman '96** for embodying the Purchase spirit by leading thoughtfully, empowering others, and inspiring change.

From The Load to The Times

Esteemed journalist Adam Nagourney (Economics) delivered a valuable prescription to the graduates: lean into their collective Purchase experiences to find their way in the world.



For more than 45 years, Nagourney has covered elections and politics, providing insights into the democratic process for millions of readers worldwide. Since 1996, he's been a national and political reporter for the *New York Times*, a role he envisioned the very first time he reported a story—for *The Load*, the Purchase newspaper of record in the 1970s and 80s.

"I remember thinking that night that this was what I wanted to do with my life, to write for newspapers.

For some reason, I decided at that moment I wanted to be a national political reporter for the New York Times," he recalls.

Nagourney has also written two books, *The Times: How the Newspaper of Record Survived Scandal, Scorn and the Transformation of Journalism* (2023) and *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (1999).

"I have no doubt that I am what I am today...because of the exposure to the ideas, the intellectual energy, and the take-a-chance spirit of faculty and fellow students that I encountered here," he says.

Rather than deliver platitudes, Nagourney encouraged patience and offered a sobering yet hopeful message.

"This is the world that we are presenting you with, and hopefully, you are leaving here with the tools, the ideas, the inspirations, the experience, the friends, the insights about yourself that will help you get through that," he says.

"I expect that in 45 years, one of you will be standing on a stage like this and making a speech like this, and realize, as I have, that you took the right lessons from your years

here, and are ready and equipped to go out and repair the broken world we have bequeathed you," his voice catching with emotion, "and to make a great life for yourselves. I sure did."

Devoted to Student Success

Jeffrey Putman, EdD, (Political Science) also credits his Purchase experiences as foundational. He currently serves as the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs for all five SUNY Downstate schools and colleges.

His 30-year career empowering students began on campus, where he had roles in student government and championed initiatives such as the Alternative Clinic, student-run publications, and the WPSR radio station.



"Purchase instilled in me a deep sense of possibility and a set of enduring values: curiosity, service, and the power of community."

He stuck around after graduation, holding multiple positions in student affairs on campus from 1996 to 2006. His ongoing commitment to Purchase continues through his membership on the Purchase College Alumni Association Board of Directors, a role he's held since 1997.

The self-admitted *Star Trek* fan drew on the science fiction franchise for advice to the Class of 2025, as he shared a quote from Captain Jean-Luc Picard.

"It is possible to commit no mistakes and still lose. That is not weakness. That is life," further suggesting a shift away from self-blame when life doesn't go as planned.

"That doesn't mean you failed; it simply means that you're living boldly. This work, this life, is not about having all the answers, but about remaining open to the questions."

Dear Alumni,

We hope the stories in this issue recall all the ways Purchase has impacted your life, personally and professionally.

Our alumni often forge unexpected careers, lead through uncertainty, and blaze trails where none existed. Sound familiar? That's the Purchase DNA, and it's exactly what connects our community across generations.

The Alumni Association is here to keep those connections strong.

Stay Connected: From student performances to Neuberger exhibitions to PAC events, subscribe to our alumni newsletter and bookmark the college calendar. purchase.edu/calendar

Get Together: Alumni Weekend 2026 (May 1–3) is your chance to see how the campus has changed—and how it hasn't. Come for the nostalgia, stay for the great experiences. purchase.edu/alumni

Give Back: Whether it's your time, your expertise, or your financial support, every contribution helps the next generation of Purchase graduates blaze their own trails. purchase.edu/getinvolved

Thanks for staying part of the Purchase story.



#ForeverPurchase!
Stephanie Blum '13
President
Purchase College
Alumni Association

Board of Directors 2025–2026

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Tiffany Dubon-Yard '10 (Journalism / Sociology)

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Maya Jingles '19 (Sociology)

Ira Lipson '76 (Literature)

Kenneth McGinis '95 (Economics)

Margaret Mendelson '89 (Music / Literature)

Maria-Cristina Necula '97 (Language and Culture)

Alexandra Palmatier '11 (Literature)

Nickay Piper '17 (Liberal Studies)

Rosabeya (Diaz) Rotondi '12 (Biology)

Pietro Rotondo '88 (Literature)

Antonio Santiago '00 (Liberal Studies)

Omar Seda '21 (Graphic Design)

Elizabeth Smith '94 (Sociology)

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Alumni in Action

Multiplying Forces

Colin Henning '19 (Acting) and **Chad Hylton '18** (Film) are founders of C.H. Squared Films, an independent film house whose debut feature, *Appalachian Dog*, was acquired by Buffalo 8 Distribution and premiered in December 2024 at the Big Apple Film Festival. Shot by **Aidan Macaluso '18** (Film), the film stars Acting BFA alumni **Hayleigh Hart Franklin '19**, **Monica Rae Summers Gonzalez '16**, **Georgia Morgan '19**, and **Aaron J. Stewart '21**, as well as **Brooke (Paolotto) Elizabeth '16** (Liberal Studies).

Jay O. Sanders '76 (Acting) and **Owen Laheen '18** (Acting) appeared together in *Henry IV*, Dakin Matthews's adaptation directed by Eric Tucker, at Theatre for a New Audience's Polonsky Shakespeare Center. Critics called Sanders' portrayal of Sir John Falstaff a role he was born to play. Laheen, a non-binary actor from Wicklow, Ireland, made their TfaNA debut as the quick-witted Davy.

Proof of Purchase was on display at the Brooklyn Museum recently, with five alumni on staff across a range of departments: curator **Ernestine White Mifetu '99** (Visual Arts); interns **Julianna Vargas '23** (Communications/Arts Management) and **Briana Thompson '23** (Arts Management/Museum Studies); fine arts packer **Paul Speh '96** (Visual Arts); and framer **Takayuki Umezawa '16** (New Media).

Jasai Chase-Owens '17 and **Daniel Bravo Hernández '24** made their Broadway debuts in September 2024 as members of the cast of *Romeo + Juliet*, directed by Tony Award-winner Sam Gold.

Danny Eberle '22 (Anthropology), **Bret Kaser '20** (Studio Production), **Connor Kleitz '21** (Studio Production), and **Ilan Natter '20** (Studio Production) comprise Lip Critic, a band formed at Purchase in 2018. Named a "Band to Watch" by Stereogum, their album *Hex Dealer* landed at No. 57 on *Paste Magazine's* "100 Best Albums of 2024." An online pinball game accompanies the recent release of two new songs.

Receiving Honors and Awards

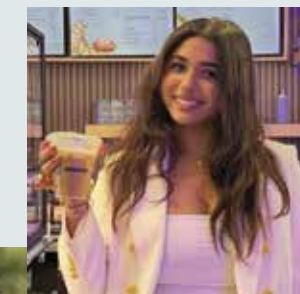
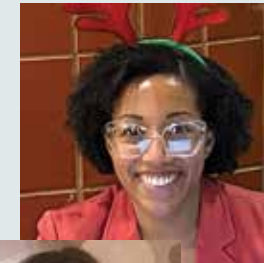
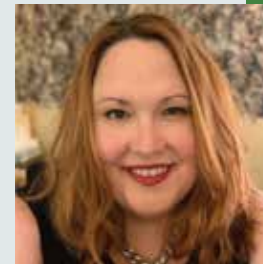
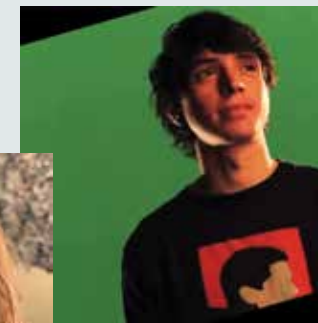
Fred Wilson '76 (Visual Arts), a conceptual artist known for challenging assumptions of history, culture, race, and display, was celebrated at the Neuberger Museum of Art's *Passionate Artist* during its Golden Anniversary Gala in April 2024. Earlier in 2024, he had been honored by the establishment of the Fred Wilson Lectures in Global Black Studies, created in partnership with the Museum and the Purchase College Global Black Studies and Media Studies programs. In fall 2024, Wilson was appointed to the Board of the Friends of the Neuberger Museum of Art.

Ona Gritz '84 (Literature) has received multiple honors for her true crime memoir, *Everywhere I Look* (Apprentice House Press, 2024), including the Storytrade Award for Nonfiction Book of the Year and the Readers' Choice Gold Award.

Gregory Crewdson '85 (Culture and Society), known for his cinematic photographs of suburban life, is the subject of a new book by Walter Moser exploring his images of the extraordinary in everyday scenes. He received the Purchase College Distinguished Alumni Award in 2013.

Kathryn C. Collins '98 (Literature), the first female partner at Feldman, Kleidman, Collins & Sappe LLP, received the 2024 ATHENA Award from The Chamber Foundation Inc. and the Women's Leadership Alliance of the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce. The award honors her leadership, professional excellence, and commitment to mentoring the next generation of women leaders.

Ali Sharma, PhD '03 (Biology), Scientific Review Officer at the National Library of Medicine, received the NIH Director's Award for his contributions to scientific peer review. He has held faculty appointments at both the Icahn School of Medicine and Weill Cornell Medical College.



Matie Argiropoulos '04 (Literature) was nominated for a GRAMMY® Award for co-producing Barbra Streisand's audiobook *My Name Is Barbra*. She also received the 2024 American Library Association Odyssey Award for producing the audiobook *El Deafo*.

Sidra Bell '05 (Dance) has been named a 2025 Yaddo Artist Medal honoree, recognizing her contributions to contemporary performance and her work as a choreographer, dancer, performance artist, and founder and artistic director of Sidra Bell Dance New York.

Adam Eccleston '08 (Music), a flutist, educator, and radio host, received a 2024 Spark Award for Oregon Artists from the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation. One of 20 mid-career artists honored, he was awarded \$25,000 to support his creative development.

Brandi (Wagner) Perri '09 (Women's Studies), Assistant Professor of Sociology at MassBay Community College, won the 2024 Constance Coiner Award for Best Dissertation for her groundbreaking research on blue-collar workers.

Stephanie LeBlanc '14 (Media, Society, and the Arts) was named one of the Top 25 Women Chief Content Officers of 2025 by *Women We Admire*, recognizing her leadership and impact on the content industry across North America.

Ruby Rose Makkena '22 (Film) was named one of 17 winners of the National Board of Review's student grant program for her senior thesis film *On the Ridge*, which she directed, edited, shot, and produced.

Oliver Pezzano '23 (Film) received a National Board of Review student grant for his senior thesis film *Penny*, which he wrote, directed, and edited. The film was also an Official Selection and Semifinalist at the 2023 New York Indie Shorts Awards.

Making Moves

Mary Corda '84 (Psychology) is loving retirement after a 35-year career with IBM Corporation. She is now focused on her work on the board and as a member of the chorus of the Taconic Opera Co.

Sarah M. O'Brien '95 (Film) was appointed Director of Development and Marketing for Goodwill of the Finger Lakes. In her new role, she oversees fundraising, marketing, and engagement strategies designed to boost public outreach and support.

Daniel Connor Jr. '07 (Political Science) is the new Broadcast Account Manager for Sony in the Northeast Market, specializing in cinema and broadcast productions. He brings extensive account management and retail sales experience to the region's entertainment industry.

Catania James '07 (Language and Culture) has joined Maryland Youth Ballet as Administrative Assistant and Ticketing Coordinator. She brings a unique blend of experience in ballet, Spanish interpretation, and customer service, along with a master's degree in international affairs from The New School.

Geri Munnick '07 (Liberal Studies) is a playwright, poet, and award-winning community contributor. She retired last June after more than 29 years as a special education teaching assistant in the Carmel Central School District. In January, she rejoined the Purchase community as a new staff member at The PAC.

Kate (Hope) Giscombe '11 (Media, Society, and the Arts) and her husband, Bryant, welcomed their daughter, Anaya, on August 1, 2025. Giscombe serves on the PCAA Board of Directors and is Manager of Development and Communications at Abbott House in Irvington, NY.

Sydney Rivera '17 (Sociology) and **Shomar Lowe '14** (Arts Management) were married on July 27, 2025—a love story more than a decade in the making. They first met at Purchase in September 2013, when Sydney was a freshman and Shomar was a senior. Years later, a reconnection brought them back into each other's lives. Today, they share a life filled with travel, creativity ... and two cats.

Priya Tejpal '25 (Communications) has opened Momo's Café, Westchester's newest spot for coffee, bubble tea, pastries, and wraps. Named for her cat, the café's logo even features Momo's ears peeking out of a coffee cup. Tejpal was part of a three-person team that won the Best New Business award at Shark Tank 2023 for a different entrepreneurial idea.

Images:
Appalachian Dog
Brooklyn Museum
Sanders
Wilson
Romeo + Juliet
Crewdson
Collins
Sharma
Lip Critic

Leading

Kevin Lawler '88 (Acting) has served as Artistic Director of the Great Plains Theatre Commons in Omaha for 17 years, where he strengthens community by supporting the creation and sharing of diverse new stories. In 2025, the company marked the 20th anniversary of its New Play Festival, which has nurtured playwrights and supported the development of over 600 new scripts since its founding. He works alongside alumna **Rachel Hauben Combs '90** (Acting).

Davnet Conway '94 (Environmental Science), an experienced conservationist and nonprofit leader, joined Sudbury Valley Trustees on March 1 as Executive Director. She previously served as Executive Director of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center in Mystic, CT.

Raissa Simpson '01 (Dance) is founder and Artistic Director of PUSH Dance Company in San Francisco. In celebration of the company's 20th anniversary, she was a featured panelist in the Black Choreographers Festival's opening discussion in February 2025.

Sethu Laxmi Nair '04 (Women's Studies) is a mediator, coach, and trainer specializing in alternative dispute resolution and restorative practices. She serves as Director at the Center for Creative Conflict Resolution in New York City and consults with nonprofits and businesses on leadership, mediation, and conflict management.

Allison Pohl '05 (Music) became the new Artistic Director of Vashon Opera in October 2023. Her first production, *Romeo and Juliet*, opened in May 2024 to rave reviews. A soprano, she has performed nationally and abroad, including tours in Italy and China.

Meredith Burns '08 (Acting) is the Executive Artistic Director of Art House Productions, bringing over 15 years of experience to cultural and nonprofit organizations. Before transitioning to arts leadership, she worked as an Off-Broadway actor.

Jessie Biele Luxenberg '08 (Journalism) was elected President of the Board for the Washington Metropolitan Gamer Symphony Orchestra (WMGSO), the DC area's premier community ensemble devoted to video game music. She also performed with WMGSO at the Kennedy Center in 2024.

Joey Katz '18 (Cinema Studies) has been named Artistic Director of Boston Jewish Film Festival (BJFF). Joey started at BJFF as a programming associate, eventually becoming Director of Special Programming before stepping into his new leadership role in December 2024.

Empowering Artists and the Arts

Rachel Hauben Combs '90 (Acting) is an actor, writer, and nonprofit arts administrator who serves as Development Director at the Great Plains Theatre Commons in Omaha. In addition to her work with GPTC, she is a part-time Grants Manager with Fox Creek Fundraising. Previously, she worked as a performer, playwright, and member of the artistic leadership team with the BLUEBARN Theatre.

Jennifer Goggans '00 (Dance), Program Director for the Merce Cunningham Trust, continues to carry forward the legacy of the iconic choreographer. A longtime performer and former Assistant to the Director of Choreography, she toured globally as part of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's final Legacy Tour.

Brett Alan Garfinkel '12 (Dance) founded The Louisiana Dance Alliance to strengthen and unite the state's dance community. He is the department head and Chair of Theatre and Dance at Northwestern State University of Louisiana.

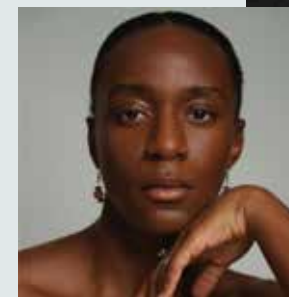
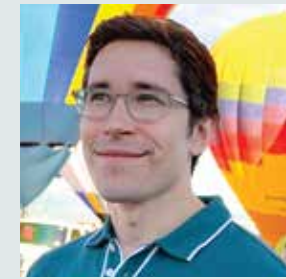
Spencer Moon '19 (Arts Management) is Associate Chief of Staff at ArtsWestchester. He represented the organization and joined other alumni attending the Samara Joy '21 concert at The PAC in November 2024.

Producing and Directing

Lauren Kurinskas '06 (Theatre Design/Tech) is the Producing Director at Two River Theater in Red Bank, NJ. She has overseen more than 70 productions and helped develop the theater's 36,000-square-foot Center for New Work. She is deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Karen (Dr. K.) Baptiste '07 (Sociology) directed the award-winning documentary, *Preschool to Prison*, now streaming on Amazon Prime Video. She also leads a coaching and consulting firm focused on leadership, workshops, and mentoring.

Damani Pompey '12 (Dance) received a 2025 NYSCA Support for Artists Grant for his collaborative residency project at Vassar College. During his residency in March, Pompey choreographed *Empty Hand*, a new work created in partnership with Battery Dance Company.



Images:
Lawler
Simpson
Luxenberg
Nair
Pohl
Goggans
Garfinkel
Moon
Kurinskas
Baptiste

Images:
Giacalone
Savage
Watson
Saint-Victor
Gaudin-County
Kaufman
Czerniawski
Do



Angela Giacalone '13 (Arts Management/New Media) served as Associate Producer on *The Four Phantoms in Concert: Live at the Grand Oshkosh*, a public television special that received a Silver Telly Award. She is also the Tour Manager for the production's national concert tour.

Cory Savage '16 (Theatre and Performance) co-directed *DORIS*, an immersive performance by Joan Nelson. The intimate, absurdist experience premiered at Theatre 154 in New York's West Village for a limited run in late 2024.

Performing

Andrea Patterson '05 (Theatre Arts) is an award-winning television and theatre actor who starred as Helen in *Memnon* at the Getty Villa Outdoor Classical Theater in Los Angeles last November. In 2023, she received an Obie Award for Sustained Achievement in Performance.

Lawrence Saint-Victor '06 (Acting), best known for his role as Carter on *The Bold and the Beautiful*, debuted in the BET+ thriller *One Night Stay* last January. He was nominated for a 2014 NAACP Image Award and lives in Los Angeles with his wife and son.

Jennifer Mogbock '13 (Acting) stars as Dora Carter in Apple TV+'s *Lady in the Lake*, opposite Natalie Portman and Moses Ingram. The series is now streaming on Apple TV+.

Chloé Watson '13 (Dance) premiered *Sábado*, a work inspired by her family weekends, in March with Ballet Vero Beach. She retired in April 2025 after 12 seasons with American Midwest Ballet, Peninsula Ballet Theatre, and Ballet Vero Beach.

Jaylen K. Petinaud '20 (Music) is a musician, arranger, composer, and educator thriving on the music scene. He played drums on the *Hell's Kitchen* Original Broadway Cast Recording—winner of the 2025 GRAMMY® Award for Best Musical Theater Album—and is currently touring with Herbie Hancock.

Imani Gaudin-County '21 (Dance) appeared this spring in Alethea Pace's interdisciplinary, site-specific performance *between wave and water*, which reclaims the history of an African burial ground in Hunts Point, the Bronx. She is currently a movement artist with TRIBE and artistic director and founder of Gaudanse.

Sean Kaufman '22 (Acting) returned as fan-favorite Steven in the final season of Amazon Prime's *The Summer I Turned Pretty*.

Analyzing and Innovating

James Czerniawski '16 (Economics) is a senior policy analyst at Americans for Prosperity. In April, James testified before Congress on government surveillance of U.S. citizens.

Nickoli Parkinson '21 (Biology and Biochemistry) works at the New York Genome Center as an Associate Scientific Project Manager. He supports cutting-edge genomic research and fosters collaboration among interdisciplinary teams.

Composing and Recording

James P. (J.P.) Kiernan '90 (Music) and his band Three Normal Humans—originally formed at Purchase in 1986 as Being Don and Nothingness—are finalists in the International Songwriters Competition. The band is currently preparing to release a new album.

Ryan Homsey '07 (Studio Composition) composed the original score for *Merchant Ivory*, a feature documentary film produced and directed by Stephen Soucy that explores the legacy of Oscar-winning director and screenwriter James Ivory and legendary producer Ismail Merchant. **Adam Scott '07, MM '08** (Studio Composition) served as the film's post-production supervisor and sound mixer. Homsey also serves as director of academic advising at Skidmore College.

Exhibiting and Making

Kim Do '76 (Visual Art) is a New York-based artist and educator whose work reflects a painterly, observational connection to earth, water, and sky. In fall 2024, he exhibited paintings and worked in residence at NYC's Blue Mountain Gallery; he was also an inaugural exhibitor at the Purchase 2025 Alumni Showcase.

Jon Kessler '80 (Visual Arts) presented *Petrified*, a selection of new bronze and ceramic sculptures, at Magenta Plains in spring 2025. Jon was a founder of the Bozart toy company and is a Professor of Art at Columbia University, where he has taught since 1994.

Jennifer Madelin Burns '87 (Visual Arts) is an award-winning commissioned artist. A selection of her oil paintings was on view in *Pivotal Moments in Caring for the Earth* at The Donald Gallery, South Presbyterian Church, Dobbs Ferry, NY, last fall.

Abigail Doan '89 (Visual Arts) is an interdisciplinary artist, curator, and writer dedicated to cultural and environmental preservation. In November 2024, she launched *Sedimental Edition 01*, the inaugural exhibition of her Lost in Fiber Library gallery and special collections project in New York City. In February, she opened *MASQUERADE*, an exhibition of masks spanning African, Asian, and European traditions, at the Museum in Progress in Cincu, Romania.

Dannielle Tegeder '95 (Visual Arts) co-founded Hilma's Ghost, a collective dedicated to fostering growth through feminism and spirituality. Recently, the group created a "magical space" at the Guggenheim Museum, celebrating creative expression and collective power. In spring 2025, they installed a permanent public glass mosaic mural at Grand Central Station and debuted a solo exhibition at the RGR Gallery in Mexico City.

Dana Piazza '10 (Graphic Design) is a visual artist who creates abstract drawings and paintings. Previously featured at the Dallas Art Fair, his first solo exhibition with Turley Gallery was on view this spring.

Jen Hitchings '11 (Painting & Drawing) completed a six-week residency at Colstoun, a historic estate in Scotland, where she began new works featured in her first major solo exhibition at Gaa Gallery, which ran through late 2024 in New York City.

Working the Land

Lily Bruder-Zal '04 (Visual Arts: Printmaking and Sculpture) is cultivating the art of flower farming at Vanishing Point, her 35-acre farm in the Hudson Valley. She and her husband **Isaac Zal '04** (Visual Arts) live on the farm with their two children and sheep.

Ceara Rose Creegan '23 (Sociology) is pursuing her passion for organic farming while traveling across the Northeast. She has worked as a farm educator, livestock caregiver, horse hand, and livestock assistant.

Filmmaking and Creating Content

Paul Sanchez (Yates) IV '93 (Film) is a director, writer, and cinematographer who was named a 2024 Sundance Episodic Lab Fellow for a television pilot based on his experiences as a homeless, Latinx, teenage punk rocker in the early 1980s. Paul returned to campus in December 2024 for a screening and discussion of his short art-horror film *Babyteeth*.

Compton A. Belle Jr. '94 (Studio Composition) is the founder of CPTFX Studio and a VIZ artist at NBC Universal. His animation and graphic works have been featured on major networks, including ABC, CBS, and ESPN. He recently debuted his project, *JAZZ Upright Trio*, from concept to collectible.

Azazel Jacobs '95 (Film) premiered his latest film, *His Three Daughters* (2023), at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2023. The film, which he wrote, directed, edited, and produced, was subsequently released globally by Netflix. Jacobs was also selected as the 2025 recipient of the Purchase College Alumni Association's Outstanding Commitment to the Arts Award.

Sean Kenealy '07 (Dramatic Writing) is writer and director of *Two Knocks on a Door*, a short horror film that toured 12 festivals last fall. It won Best Writing at the Nightmares Film Festival.

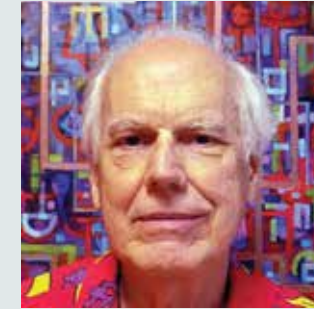
Allison Jones '09 (Dance) was Lead Intimacy Coordinator for the final season of Netflix's *You*, which premiered April 24, 2025. Allison has built a career advocating for consent and safety in vulnerable scenes across film and television.

Nina-Marie Daniele '11 (Creative Writing), also known as Nina Drama, is a comedic content creator and social media personality known for her MMA interviews and commentary. With over 11 million followers across platforms, she continues to expand her reach through viral collaborations.

Sebastián Rea '12 (Cinema Studies) was selected into the NBCU Writers Launch program (2024–2025) and is now a staff writer for UCP and Peacock's series *Devil in Disguise: John Wayne Gacy*. He traveled to Toronto in December to film the episode he wrote. He has also joined the Writers Guild of America and signed with RAIN management.



Images:
Burns
Tegeder
Hitchings
Creegan
Sanchez
Jones
Daniele
Kenealy
Doan
Bellen



Images:
Garcia
Cohn
Loftus
Callo
Erickson
Necula
Montes
Butler
Knight
Chirico



Derek Shane Garcia '13 (Film) premiered his film *A/way* at the 2024 Dances With Films NYC film festival. The film previously won multiple awards, including Best Feature Audience Choice at the Festival of Cinema NYC and Outstanding Narrative Feature and Director at the Art of Brooklyn Film Festival.

Dan Cohn '14 (Studio Production) served as Audio Coordinator for Super Bowl LVIII (February 2024), overseeing enhanced audio for NFL Films—including the quarterback mic'd-up segments heard by more than 124 million viewers. He brings expert sound design to concerts, broadcasts, and major events.

Andrew J. Rodriguez '19 (Film) wrote and directed *El Tiguer* (*The Tiger*), selected by Lin-Manuel Miranda's Colectivo Fellowship to premiere at the 2025 Tribeca Film Festival. The film follows a Dominican immigrant in the Bronx running a mobile food garden while trying to reconnect with his son.

Mathew Louis Reyes '20 (Liberal Studies) served as First Assistant Director on the Sundance Film Festival award-winning feature, *Mad Bills to Pay (or Destiny, dile que no soy malo)*. The film premiered globally and continues to earn honors across the circuit.

Aracelie Aarie Colón '25 (Film) received a filmmaking grant from the National Board of Review for her documentary short *Puff Puff Pass*, an intimate look at Black lives shaped by the legal and cultural history of the now-legal cannabis industry.

Publishing

Geoff Loftus '78 (Literature) has released *The Devil's Vacation*, the 10th novel in his Jack Tyrrell thriller series. A former *Forbes.com* contributor, Geoff's career includes freelance and on-staff assignments as a business journalist and in corporate communications.

Kathleen (Kat) Callo '81 (Political Science) recently ghostwrote *The World According to Stoopball: A Bronx Childhood*, a memoir based on interviews with her 95-year-old father, retired Rear Admiral Joe Callo. It reflects on his Bronx childhood and the legacy of his immigrant roots.

Rollie Erickson '81 (Visual Arts) is the author of *Gentleman of the Road: A Hitchhiking Memoir of the 1970s*, published by Between the Lines Publishing. His cross-country journey, guided by the I Ching, ends with his graduation from Purchase College and move to New York City.

Elizabeth Smith '94 (Sociology) became a self-published author in 2024. Her new book, *Pocketful of Poetry*, is available on Amazon and through Barnes & Noble. She also recently launched her YouTube channel, Queen Lizz, a poet's place and a space for people who love poetry.

Maria-Cristina Necula '97 (Language and Culture) is the author of *The Voice Beneath the Quince Tree: A Memoir of Growing Up in Communist Romania*. Her memoir recounts her early life under a repressive regime, her father's defection, and the powerful role opera played as both refuge and resistance.

Adam Knight '05 (Literature) published *Made of Iron*, a memoir chronicling the life of Holocaust survivor Dina Jacobson and her legacy as a teacher and mentor, in September 2024. Adam is an English teacher and writer based in New Jersey.

Lara M. Montes, PhD '09 (Literature) is a writer, editor, teaching artist, and member of the faculty at Pacific Northwest College of Art. Her latest book, *The Time of the Novel*, was published by Wendy's Subway in June 2025.

Sara Barkat '19 (Philosophy) is an intaglio artist, writer, and editor. Illustrator of *The Yellow Wall-Paper: A Graphic Novel*, Sara has recently released a graphic adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's *The Colour Out of Space*. Interpreting the tale as ecofiction, she brings it to life with woodcut-inspired art (white pen on black paper) and gouache-colored pages.

Educating

Joyce Butler '77 (Psychology), **PhD**, is an educational consultant specializing in systematic analysis and change. In October 2024, she presented portions of her new book, *Comparative Psychology and Educational Outcomes: Lessons from Project Nim*, at the International Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) conference.

David Chirico '92 (Literature) has joined the Liberal Arts faculty at the Savannah College of Art and Design after teaching English for more than twenty years at SUNY Broome Community College in Upstate New York.

Marcia Neblett '95 (Visual Arts) has been promoted to Associate Professor of Fine Arts with tenure at Norfolk State University, where she also serves as Foundations Coordinator. A three-time Fulbright recipient, she recently delivered a TEDx Talk on teaching in India.

Marilyn K. Miller '10 (Dance), owner of Pilates on Hudson in Peekskill, NY, presented at the July 2024 Performing Arts Medicine Association's annual conference in London. Her talk focused on how core weakness contributes to chronic back pain in dancers and how this issue is embedded in technique.

Mike Zacchio '11 (Journalism) recently changed careers from sports journalism to education. After earning his master's degree in secondary education and receiving his NY State teaching certification, he started his first full-time position in Rockland County in September 2024 and now teaches U.S. History, Participation in Government, and Economics, and serves as the advisor for the Student Government and Youth in Government clubs.

Diana Gilday '22 (Journalism) is in the second year of her master's degree program at St. John's University, working toward a dual degree in Public History and Library Information Science. She recently completed a visual media internship with the National Parks Service and an internship with the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society.

Mixing Disciplines

Tom Whitford '86 (Political Science) retired after a 30-year career practicing law and now produces music and DJs under the name euSonix. His first song, *Dream of Me*, was signed by a record label and released in November 2024. Listen on Spotify and SoundCloud.

Aaron Conte '92 (Acting) booked a supporting role in Jim Cummings's pilot *IBG YBG/The Screener*, shot the short film *Entanglement*—which was featured in the Culver City Film Festival—and played drums with the John Powhida International Airport band during its Los Angeles shows.

Ezra LeBank '05 (Philosophy) teaches, choreographs, and directs internationally. Currently, he is Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Head of Movement at California State University, Long Beach, and Director of Bad Goat Dance. His book *Clowns: In Conversation with Modern Masters* is available from Routledge Publishing, UK.

Harry Edgar Palacio '11 (Liberal Studies: Arts)—known artistically as Hari—is an author, artist, and musician with a new book released in 2025 by Atmosphere Press. He has performed with GRAMMY® winners and nominees including Ari Up, lead singer of The Slits, and former members of The Raincoats. In addition to his artistic pursuits, he is a certified yoga teacher and ordained guru.

Helping Heal

Jayne Singer '82 (Psychology) **PhD, IECMH-E®**, is a Senior Attending Psychologist at Boston Children's Hospital, a Past President of the Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health, and an accomplished researcher and author in the field of early childhood mental health.

Anne-Marie McGovern Uebbing '83 (Anthropology) is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Mount Saint Mary College and a certified family nurse practitioner. She brings more than 20 years of experience in internal medicine to her teaching and participates in international missions and public health initiatives.

Dr. Dinorah Nieves '02 (Liberal Arts: Sociology/Media, Society and the Arts) was featured as a guest expert on A&E's *Hoarders*, contributing her insights on addiction and mental health. A certified coach and mediator, she also serves as Assistant Professor of Liberal Arts at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design.

Raditia Lasry '19 (Liberal Studies: Arts) leads mindfulness and art workshops that promote compassion and connection. She offers online and in-person sessions, an inspirational summit, and forest retreats. In 2025, she was an inaugural exhibitor at the Purchase Alumni Showcase, where she introduced her services and book, *Be Human, Be Happy, Be YOU!*

Reporting and Podcasting

Emily McElwreath '05 (Art History), an independent curator and host of *The Art Career Podcast*, moderated the 2024 Yaseen Lecture, *Feminism and Body Freedom*, at the Neuberger Museum of Art, featuring speakers Marilyn Minter and Jasmine Wahi.

Blake Pfeil MA '19 (Entrepreneurship in the Arts) received a 2025 Ambie Award for excellence in audio storytelling for *abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast*. Blake also works as Operations & Digital Programs Manager at TMI Project and co-hosts *Cinema Kingston!* on Radio Kingston.

Mariah Thomas '20 (Journalism) was recently promoted to Associate Editor at *Reader's Digest*, where she covers celebrity interviews, travel, and lifestyle trends. Her recent stories include a feature on fellow alum **Stanley Tucci '82**. She also shares personal insights via her blog *Internationista*.



Images:
**Neblett
Miller
Thomas
Pfeil**



Images:
**Nieves
LeBank
Palacio
Uebbing
Singer
Conte**



Meet Cute on the Mall

It all began beneath the iconic pillars of Campus Center North during Orientation Day. **Jas'meena Melendez '15** (Literature), in a flurry of excitement, searched for Group 1—only to be gently guided to Group I. There, fate stepped in as she sat beside **Jeidar Cole '15** (Biochemistry) just in time for the ice breaker that would spark an unforgettable connection.

That day laid the groundwork for a friendship that soon grew into a beautiful, enduring love. Fast forward nearly 14 years, through shared milestones and unwavering support, their bond has only deepened. On Saturday, June 28, 2025, with their family, closest friends, and fellow alumni—**Aliyah Worthy '14**, **Emani Steele '14**, and **Cassandra Lamanna-Coppola '15**—by their side, they returned to the place where it all started.

In a moment that brought their story full circle, they got engaged on the very campus where their journey began.

—Jeidar Cole '15 and
Jas'meena Melendez '15

In Memoriam

Carolyn Brown, 97, dean of the Conservatory of Dance from 1980 to 1982, died on January 7, 2025 at her home in Millbrook, NY. Brown was a founding and foundational member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

Keara Jean Carr '02 (Liberal Studies), 47 of Briarcliff Manor, NY, passed away on September 10, 2025. She had been a producer for NBC in New York City. Keara loved being a mother and cherished time with her daughter, Quinn.

Joel Forbes '80 (Visual Arts), 68, died on December 28, 2024, from complications related to multiple sclerosis. A professional jazz bassist, master craftsman/furniture designer, and artist, Joel's love of the acoustic bass began at Purchase and continued for more than 30 years as a highly respected musician on the global jazz scene.

Noah Kucij '01 (Literature), 43, died unexpectedly of natural causes on April 5, 2023, at his home in Albany. Noah had been a full-time member of the Hudson Valley Community College English faculty. He is survived by his wife, Corey Cramer, and daughter, Matilda June.

Amelia R. Whitehurst '22 (Biology), 38, passed away in October 2024. A brilliant researcher, lover of the outdoors, and a uniquely colorful soul, she will be remembered for her wit, insight, and deep passion for biology.

Paul Santo D'Agostino, 72, of Bedford, NY, passed away on June 27, 2025. Paul worked in the School of Art+Design for more than 44 years as a member of the Instructional Staff for the Photography program. He was deeply invested in supporting his students' talents and emerging careers, helping generations of young photographers. Though modest about his abilities, Paul was a gifted photographer whose work garnered much admiration.

Remembered fondly by his colleagues, who wrote, "Paul was the thread that connected generations of students to Purchase—the keeper of the torch, the holder of stories, the king of the basement."

"Paul was devoted to this place—even if, like many of us, he showed that devotion in his own scrappy, no-nonsense way. In so many ways, Paul embodied the spirit of Purchase: sharp-edged but full of heart, unflashy but essential. He held so much of the department's infrastructure, history, and culture in his hands."

"His loss leaves a hole not only in the department but in the daily rhythm of this place. He carried so much of what made the program run—quietly, expertly, and without fuss—and it's hard to imagine things without him."

Jed Devine, 80, of Martha's Vineyard, passed away on October 29, 2024. He was Professor Emeritus, School of Art+Design, having retired in 2012. An accomplished photographer, Jed was known for his black-and-white palladium prints and later for his color digital prints.

He began teaching at Purchase in 1977, and many of his students went on to become recognized photographers themselves, including **Gregory Crewdson '85**, **Regina DeLuise '81**, **Andrea Modica '82**, and **Deborah Mesa-Pely '91**. In 1987, Jed was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for his photographs of Central Park's Bethesda Terrace. His work is found in the permanent collections of many museums.

His son Jesse described him as "A man with fierce but evolving opinions, and an irascible and profane antagonist to authority figures including school administrators, cops, and umpires," but adds, "he was a loyal and devoted friend, patient and encouraging to generations of students at SUNY Purchase and elsewhere."

The Purchase community remembers him as a guiding, sometimes fiery voice of reason and a master technician. Equally a friend and professor, he gave his students the confidence to brave a new world.



Images:

Carr
Forbes
Kucij
Whitehurst
Devine

Faculty & Staff Pursuits

A

T. Adamson, Lecturer of Playwriting, saw his play *Usus* named Top 10 Theater of 2024 by *The New Yorker* and *New York Magazine*. *The New Yorker* described *Usus* as "One of the finest, slickest works I've ever seen at the always excellent Clubbed Thumb Summerworks festival."

B

Billy Blanken, Lecturer of Dance, was awarded a GO Queens grant for his dance company, Sheep Meadow Dance Theatre. The operational grant was provided by the Howard Gilman Foundation and administered by Flushing Town Hall. The grant supports artists and organizations that work in Queens and use arts and culture to enrich and enliven their community.

E

Erika Ebbs, Assistant Professor of Biology, published the article "Legacy parasite collections reveal species-specific population genetic patterns among three species of zoonotic schistosomes" in *Scientific Reports*, 15, 9410 (March 19, 2025).

Marianne Egger, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art History, published a book review of *Michelangelo Sabatino, The Edith Farnsworth House: Architecture, Preservation, Culture* in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 84 (2): 267–269, June 2025.

H

Lauren Harburger, Assistant Professor of Psychology, presented research co-authored by **Joseph Pamiotto '23** and **Litzy Valdovinos '23** at the Cognitive Science Society's conference, Cog Sci. The conference took place July 30-Aug. 2, 2025, in San Francisco. The presentation, entitled "The effects of hormone contraceptives on spatial task performance in young women," describes research performed at Purchase College investigating the impact of progesterone-only contraceptives (POCs) and combined hormonal contraceptives (CHCs), which include both estrogen and progesterone, on spatial memory.

These results indicate that the use of hormonal contraceptives does not significantly influence spatial ability.

I

A. Dean Irby, Associate Professor of Acting, received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 52nd Annual Vivian Robinson AUDELCO Recognition Awards—the VIV Awards—celebrating his significant contributions to the performing arts. The November 2024 event also honored former faculty member and guest director **Trazana Beverley** with the same award.

As a longtime faculty member, Irby has helped shape generations of performers through his work as both a professor and professional director. His directing credits span numerous productions across New York theatre, including work with the New Federal Theatre and the Negro Ensemble Company.

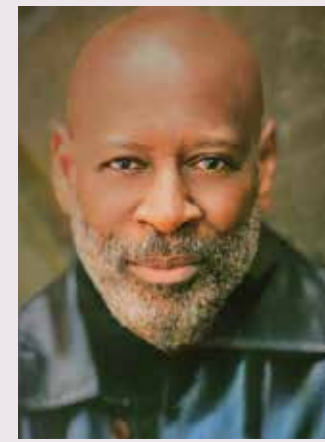
An acclaimed actress and director, Beverley previously taught first-year acting at Purchase and has returned as a guest director.

J

Allison Jackson, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, was awarded a NYDEC Community Reforestation Grant for \$499,943 to restore a degraded area between the Commons and the West Loop. The grant allows student technicians and interns to help with the project over five years, providing real career experience while also bettering the campus. (See grant details in NewsBriefs.)

L

Keith Landa, Associate Librarian and Director of the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center, received a Special Service Commendation from SUNY Chancellor John B. King for his work as Trustee and President of the University Faculty Senate on June 3, 2025. Landa also led the planning for and hosted Public Good U: Strengthening the Case for Public Higher Education, a national conference held in Albany Feb. 7–9, 2025.



Top Left: **Adamson**

Top Right: **Irby**

Above: **Blanken**

Left: **Egger**

Bottom: **Landa, Merryl Tisch, Cesar Perales, King**



Elise Lemire, Professor of Literature, was awarded the 2025 Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award by the Thoreau Society. "Lemire's work exemplifies the very best of archival scholarship and stands as a model for all of us, showing how academic work, done with principle, reaches far beyond the academy to help us move towards the kind of America people in Concord [Massachusetts] and beyond have long imagined."

M

Kerry Manzo, Assistant Professor of Global Studies, joined scholars from around the world at All Souls College, University of Oxford in Oxford, England, for Achebe Redivivus, a conference hosted by British Academy Conferences on July 3–4, 2025. This conference aims to showcase fresh insights into the works of Chinua Achebe, often credited as being the "father of African literature." In his research, Manzo explores the conflict between two aspects of Achebe's work: his criticism (though limited) of rigid colonial ideas about sex and gender, and his texts' support for a "national masculine" ideal that depends on those same rigid gender categories. Each presenter from the conference will additionally have their research published as a chapter in the forthcoming *Chinua Achebe in Context* by Cambridge UP.

Jeanine Meyer, Professor Emerita of Mathematics/Computer Science, taught the class Flapping Bird and Tato Pouch (Purse) at the OrigamiUSA Annual Convention in New York City, July 19–21, 2025.

Lisa Jean Moore, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, published a book chapter, "Freaks of Nature: Using Deep Reflexivity and Creative Writing to Understand Transgenics," in Anke Tonnaer ed. *Multispecies Ethnography and Artful Methods*, Cambridgeshire: White Horse Press (July 2025); an essay, "I Didn't Really Want to Care for These Animals': Teaching about Nonhuman Animals in Prison," in Markia Lindholm and Elizabeth A. Wood, eds. *Between Us: Understanding Ourselves and Changing the World through Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 288-292. (September 2024); a literary nonfiction essay, "Engineering Obsolescence: A Spider Goat's Tale," on halfandone.com (February 2025); and a literary nonfiction essay, "Between Walls and Wave," in *Heartwood Literary Journal*, Volume 19 (May 2025).

N

Djordje S Nesic, Lecturer in Voice and Opera Studies, conducted the opera *An American Dream* by Jack Perla and Jessica Murphy Moo at the Manhattan School of Music, Dec. 14 and 15, 2024; taught a masterclass for young opera singers in Belgrade, Serbia, May 19–22, 2025; and conducted the Handel opera *Alcina* with Opera Seme in Arezzo, Italy, July 2025.

O

Rebecca Albrecht Oling, Librarian and Director of Digital Accessibility, co-authored with Carli Spina *The Digital Accessibility Handbook for Libraries*, Chicago, IL: ALA Editions (2025); and co-authored Colleen Lougen, Claire Payne, Shannon Pritting, and Carli Spina the article "A cohort model approach to addressing library accessibility in a large, devolved library system" in *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 68(4) (2024). Oling made the following virtual conference presentations: "Integrating accessibility: Serving all members of our community" at ARLIS/NA Annual Conference, and with Carli Spina, "Integrating accessibility into database procurement processes" at the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) Accessibility Symposium on June 19, 2025.

P

Lenka Pichlíková-Burke, Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre and Performance, published two books in the Czech language: *Michall Čechov a současná herecká pedagogika v USA* (Michael Chekhov and the contemporary acting pedagogy in the USA), Praha/Prague: Edice Disk; and a book by her father, Karel Pichlík, PhD, dedicated to the Pešek acting family. The latter text was written in 1977 in only a few typewritten copies. It is being published for the public for the first time and is supplemented with chapters by current members of the family, Z. Hodková, L. Pichlíková-Burke, and M. Topferová, who have been dedicated to art since the mid-19th century, despite all the complexities of the 20th century. Lenka Pichlíková Burke, Andrea Jochmanová, eds, in Czech, 2025 – Brno: Moravian Provincial Museum.

Pichlíková-Burke played the role of Martha in a filmed version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, directed by Daniel Kuriakose, and conducted community outreach through 15



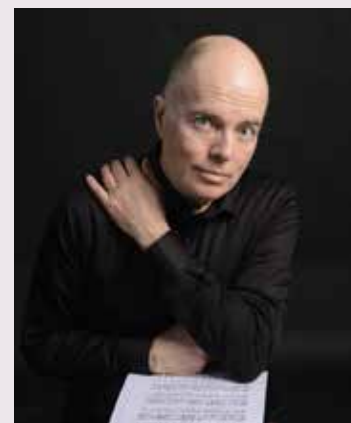
Top: **Lemire**

Right: **Meyer** Another Flapping Bird

Below Left: **Nesic**

Below Right: **Oling**

Bottom: **Moore** Illustration from halfandone.com by Allen B. Thangkhiew



Top: **Tamburri**, Jim Lichtscheidl and Olivia Lampert in *Drawing Lessons* (Photo: Kaitlin Randolph)

Bottom: **Wright**



solo performances for elementary public schools in Stamford, CT, from September to November, 2024. She taught mime and acting and directed a circus show with children in March 2025, and spoke at the Michael Chekhov International Conference in Berlin, Germany in August 2025.

T

Jack Tamburri, Lecturer of Theatre Arts, directed the world-premiere production of *Drawing Lessons*, a new play written by Theatre & Performance faculty member **Michi Barali**, Assistant Professor of Theatre and Performance, at Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, MN. The play opened on Oct. 12, 2024, receiving extremely positive reviews, and was included in the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune's* year-end roundup of best theatre in the region.

W

Amy Beth Wright, Professor of Practice in the School of Humanities' Expository Writing program, received the 2025 Allen Shoup Memorial Fellowship for writers and communicators, an award from the Washington wine industry (comprising the Washington State Wine Commission, the Washington Winegrowers Association, the Washington Wine Industry Foundation, and the Auction of Washington Wines). The fellowship is intended to identify and elevate "the wine writers and communicators of tomorrow."



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Cheers and best to all in 2026!

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We hope you enjoyed this issue.

Find the F/W 2025 issue of *Proof* on the web with additional content.

A look ahead to the online-only S/S 2026 issue: the Purchase Labyrinth opens as a space for all who need a moment to relax, clear their minds, or find inspiration.

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