THE NEWS SOURCE FOR WEBSTER UNIVERSITY

THE JOURNAL

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India Eddy (center) and Crayton Haney (second from right) perform in WebCo's "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui" in September 2024. *Contributed by Phillip Hamer*

Big Dreams, Small School

by Emerson Goelz
Culture & Lifestyle Editor

The Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts (WebCo) has been producing theatre professionals for more than five decades. From a rigorous audition process to training with industry experts, it is understandable why the program has held up for so long.

The program boasts a notable list of alumni, including stage and screen actress Jenifer Lewis, who has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and Matt Vogel, the voice of Kermit the Frog since 2017. But what is it that makes Webster's program more appealing than ones in bigger cities like Chicago, New York or Los Angeles?

Of course, most performers dream of overtaking a big city, seeing their name shining in the lights of a marquee. Donned in a fur coat, they step out of their stretch limousine to greet their adoring fans. But, the reality lies in that most theatre professionals have to start out small, even with their schooling.

Freshman musical theatre major Michael Stark is from Sacramento, California. Webster University was one of the first schools he auditioned for and he felt a strong connection after meeting Lara Teeter, the head of musical theatre.

"Part of me related so much to Lara because he was a song-and-dance actor who loved to tap dance which is exactly what I want to center my career in theatre around," Stark said.

Following his audition with Webster, Stark ventured to Chicago to participate in the Chicago Unifieds, a mass audition for some of the nation's top university-level theatre programs.

Mass auditions are a common occurrence for many prospective theatre students, as they allow for multiple schools to witness their skill set at once instead of having to repeat the process multiple times. The Unifieds – held in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City – host recruiters from 24 schools nationwide, including Webster.

"After my second audition with Lara, I visited him during the spring of 2024 and I knew that he was someone I could really see myself working with for the next four years," Stark said. "I love his energy, his joy and his ability to make us feel seen as not only actors and artists, but humans first."

For sophomore acting major India Eddy, Webster Groves was where she wanted to call home for four years after living worldwide due to her father's job.

"I moved a lot, I went from North Macedonia, to Bolivia, to [Washington] D.C. for a year, then Thailand and Brazil and back to [Washington] D.C., and then here," Eddy said.

For Eddy, Webster's location was a prime factor in her decision. Webster Groves is close enough to the city to feel connected, but far enough away to offer a breath of fresh air without feeling like being on a farm in the Midwest.

Unlike Eddy, junior musical theatre major Crayton Haney traveled from a neighboring state to continue his education. Haney is from Oklahoma City, a seven-hour drive he describes as just far enough, but not too far that he cannot go home.

Haney participated in the College Audition Project, a mass audition group similar to The Unifieds. Out of the 60 schools he auditioned for, Haney chose to make the seven-hour move to be a part of WebCo due to the focus and dedication that is encouraged throughout the classes.

"From 1 to 5:30 p.m., I am in some sort of theatre class and in the mornings, I have music lessons and dance classes," Haney said. "Basically, all of my day is consumed by theatre, which I love. It's different from other schools where you will have more general education and other classes outside your major."

Haney feels focusing on theatre for the next four years will genuinely prepare him for seeking opportunities later. While he enjoys other subjects, such as math and science, Haney believes now is the time for him to focus on theatre because he can always take math and science classes in the future, but he may not be able to do a dance class someday – a feeling Stark can also relate to.

"I think, in general, a larger school just wasn't the best fit for me," Stark said. "Often I was overwhelmed by how many students there were, and being in a conservatory where I am really focusing on my major rather than my major and a bunch of general education classes is helpful for staying connected in the training and work I am doing."

This spring, WebCo has 139 students enrolled in its program, with 36 students from Missouri, 99 students from out of state and five international students. Conservatory chair Gad Guterman feels that by choosing Webster, students allow themselves to experience a completely immersive education.

"The rich artistic life in St. Louis provides our students with unparalleled opportunities to build professional resumes, while pursuing their undergraduate degrees," Guterman said.

A Message from the Editor

Picking a theme for The Journal's special edition is a funny thing. You're expected to choose something most people on campus will enjoy, as well as something your reporters will cling to and the paper's faculty adviser will love. How do you navigate choosing a topic to please everyone?

Actually, who am I kidding? I asked myself those questions, but the root of the problem goes deeper.

How do you choose a theme as a 19-year-old who, somehow, is now in her first semester as editor-in-chief? Someone who, just two years ago, decided, "I like writing. I guess I'm going to major in journalism." How do you prove to yourself that you not only made the right choice, but prove to your predecessors they didn't leave this beloved decades-old paper in the hands of someone who isn't up to the task?

Last year, I interned at the Webster-Kirkwood Times and, whether it was on purpose or by accident, I became the one who wrote stories about the arts. I spent my summer attending the Webster Arts Fair, sitting in on an AP Art and Design workshop and speaking to a just-published author who had been working on her book for 18 years. While I had written about the arts before, getting to exclusively focus on it fulfilled me in a way I didn't know was possible.

But I also wondered if my love for writing about the arts made me not a "real" journalist. I used to picture a journalist as a middle-aged coffee drinker with gray hair from working all those deadlines. Every time I've told someone older than me that I wanted to become a journalist, they assume I want to be a political or investigative reporter. I'm not saying there's no chance I become a hard-news reporter; I just know every time I write a story about an artist, I feel like I've amplified something beautiful.

In my freshman year here, I found myself at a networking event. My professor knew everyone in the room, so naturally I asked him who he thought I should talk to. He proceeded to say, "Hmm, you're a feature writer … so, not a real journalist." It was a joke (I think), but that didn't stop me from being mad at him. He unknowingly fueled an insecurity I had bubbling up inside of me since my first day at Webster. But he was partly right. "Hard news" scared and saddened me.

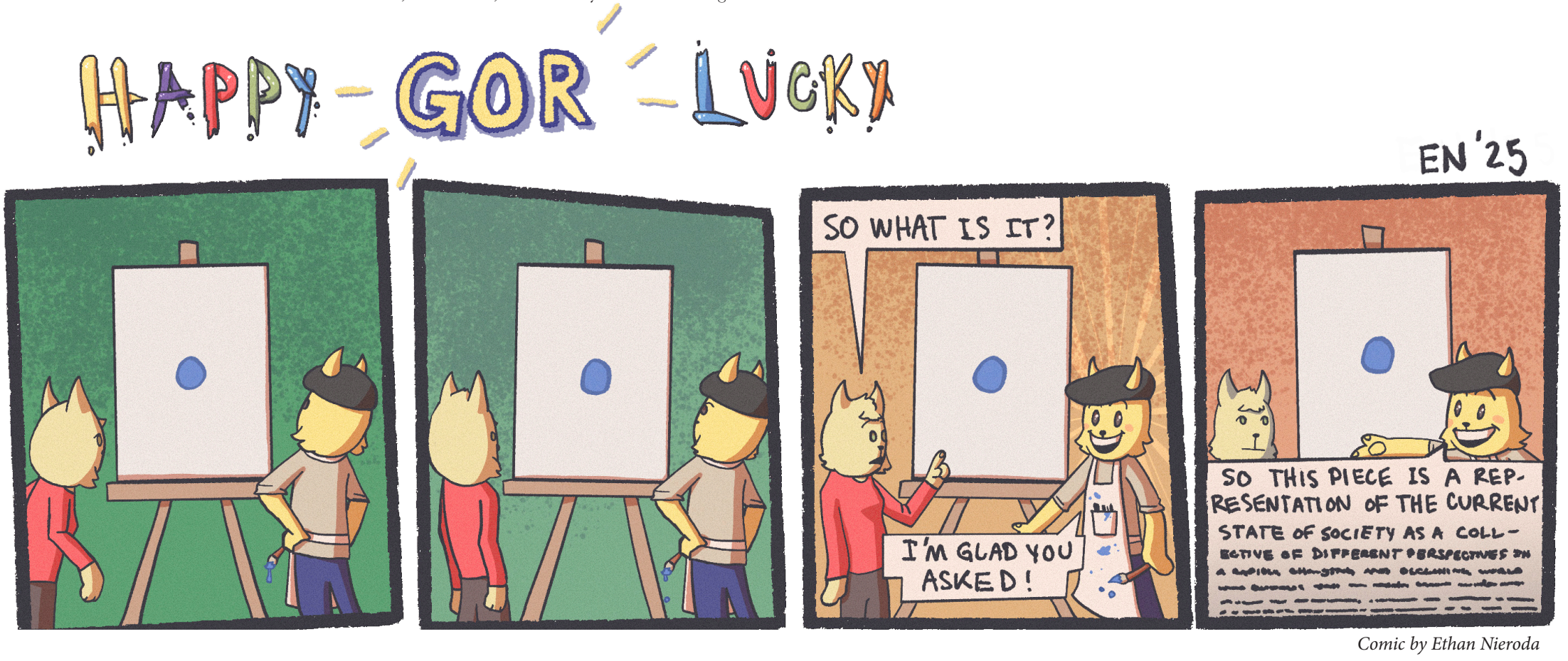
A volunteer I spoke with at the art fair told me people who work in the arts are "kinder, more thoughtful – the arts are gentler." Maybe it's because of the political landscape I've grown up in. Maybe it's because every scroll on social media causes the ball of anxiety in me to grow bigger and bigger. But reporting on the arts feels like a good deed. For all of the bad news that I will report on – and grow another gray hair because of – in my lifetime, I hope I remind myself of this revelation I discovered quite early on in my journalistic career: I love writing about the arts.

"An Ode to the Arts" is also a reminder for everyone here just how much we need the arts. In a school actively cleaning up its self-inflicted fiscal mess, it's bound to start cutting programs. In a way, this edition is The Journal's letter to Chancellor Keane, calling upon him to leave the arts as they are. While no plans are in place to make any changes to the university's arts programming at this time, the uncertainty gnaws at me.

Plus, there's a secondary, more selfish reason: No matter what happens in this world, the arts – which has survived centuries of wars, revolutions and most recently, a global pandemic – will be here and always will be. And they will be a soft, gentle place for this so-called "not-a-real-journalist" journalist to land.

-Chloe Sapp

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Comic by Ethan Nieroda

Webster's Zine Scene

by Styx Nappier
Managing Editor

As simple as a folded piece of paper, yet enough to cause a stir on campus: zines.

Typically made from a singular piece of paper, zines appear as a small booklet that shares information and art. The first ever zine, "The Comet," was created in 1930 and primarily discussed science and science fiction. For the next four decades, science fiction "fanzines" skyrocketed in popularity, influencing cultural and media trends. In fact, it was these very same zines that helped convince studios to keep "Star Trek" going.

Today, in an even more digitally-accessible world, zines have become all the more prevalent, including on campus.

Alain McAlister, a Webster alum of illustration, encourages people to take this creativity to heart. Their own zines feature a range of creations, including a fun collection of "people my partner looks like" to showcasing their own life experiences as a trans person.

"Zines were a way to get around publishing restrictions and censorship," McAlister said. "[The zine community] is a very affirming space for many marginalized identities."

McAlister has found success for their zines at the St. Louis Independent Comics Expo (SLICE), where they received the Mr. SLICE award for Local Best in Show. But their work as a "zinester" goes even farther than this. Betty's Books, for example, has its own community zine that McAlister helps with. The shop, located just a couple blocks away from campus, allows for individuals to fill out an application to put up and share their own zines.

But it was Webster where McAlister got their first taste for zines.

The university's Book Arts and Letterpress course, offered by Tate Fooley, assigned students to create their own zine to test their skills with different formats. It was here where McAlister produced their first zine, "My Name Is…," outlining their own difficulties and experiences coming into their transgender identity.

Not unlike McAlister, Webster Arts Coalition (WAC) president Marian Vordtriede also began her journey with zines on campus with "Party at Disco Daves," in which viewers follow bugs at a party.

Each year, WAC creates two community zines based around Halloween ("Hallowzine") and Valentine's Day ("Valenzine"). The group encourages students to submit their own art related to the themes, cultivating in a project with a variety of works and artists. The latest Valenzine featured around 25 students, more than the publication had previously.

"It's like an incentive to do art, that's what I see zines as," Vordtriede said. "I also really enjoy doing poster designs, cover and back cover designs … They're just so fun to do."

However, zines aren't known for their uniformity. McAlister explains zines provide a "space and container," but that the exact dimensions and content of this can vastly differ. Any way that you can fold paper, you can create a design. The possibilities, though sometimes overwhelming, are endless.



The Webster Philosophy Coalition took this challenge to heart, not only hosting its own zine-making events, but encouraging students to submit for the Webster Philosophy Conference's zine gallery.

This annual conference, which is now in its 19th year, gives students a chance to submit and share their own philosophical work with others. In an attempt to encourage further student involvement and broaden what a philosophy presentation can look like, coalition co-president Cecelia Anderson is further advertising this option.

"I do think the ability for them to be philosophical ideas as zines is what makes it a really cool idea," Anderson said. "It just makes philosophical concepts or philosophers so much easier to understand because of how visual and interpretive they are."

Anderson created her own philosophical zine last semester featuring books about feminist thinking. Currently, there are a few copies still lying around Webster Hall and Pearson House, but they will likely make another appearance at this year's philosophy conference on March 28.

So far, three students have submitted their work to be shown in the gallery. These zines will be shared during breaks in the day, being presented in a more casual manner to attendees. The coalition hopes to receive somewhere from six to 10 submissions, though more are always welcome.

It's recommended that students pick a main theme or topic that they enjoy, then summarize its impact and meaning. But, as with the nature of zines, there are numerous options available.

"It can really be about whatever people want and that's what's cool, but I think starting with something they liked in a class or some authors they like can help with ideas for what to put," Anderson said.

For those wishing to experiment and share their own zines, there is a zine library located near the entryway and student lounge of the Visual Arts Studio (VAS) building. Most students "borrow" the zines, reading over them before setting them back for others to see.

But sometimes, it's just a matter of getting started.

"Make the messiest [zine] you possibly can! It's about trying your best, even if you mess it up," McAlister said. "It's about trying to remember at the end of the day that it's cool to make art with them."



A one-page spread from Vordtriede's first personal zine, "Party at Disco Daves." As the zine goes on, the "audio" gets more distorted, representing the life of the party. "There's this song called 'Party at Club Bug' and I was like 'I'm gonna be inspired by that song and make a bug party,'" Vordtriede said. *Contributed by Marian Vordtriede*

Dance Offers College-Level Training to Youngsters

by Chloe Sapp
Editor-in-Chief



Senior dance major Sarah Faith Peterson helps a young dancer come down a silk. *Photo by Chloe Sapp*

The Webster University Department of Dance connects with aspiring dancers early – really early. A decade from now, one of the department's first third-grade students may be enrolling here at Webster.

For more than a decade, the department has held workshops and intensives for middle and high school dancers looking to gain college-level dance experience. This summer, a mini-level summer intensive will be offered to third-, fourth- and fifth-graders.

The idea came after the middle-school program sold out before it even began. Dance department chair Maggi Dueker realized it as a prime opening to connect with younger students.

"I think it's just a great opportunity to share what we love to do and what I think we do very, very well with the community to build those relationships, to build awareness of our programming and what we do here," Dueker said. "And it doesn't necessarily need to translate to enrollment down the line, but that's great when it does."

According to Dueker, the intensives bring a bigger audience for the dance department's performances.

"These students will come back and back and back again to see us and they build relationships with the program," Dueker said.

In February, the department held its annual winter workshops. High-schoolers and middle-schoolers got to learn the same dance styles: ballet, modern, jazz and aerial. The classes are taught by Webster staff, including Dueker, with days lasting from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m, including lunch and a discussion with dance faculty and current students.

The dance styles chosen are a mix between popular demand and showcasing what Webster offers.

"We have emphases in ballet and modern and so it makes sense that we would start our day off with those classes," Dueker said. "But then we find, especially the aerial program, something that's kind of unique to Webster and a lot of students don't have the opportunity to explore that elsewhere, and so they really like having the chance to do that here."

Dueker adds students who attend the intensives usually return for other workshops offered at different times of the year.

"They come to know and to love Webster, and so when it comes time to look at the college options, we're high on their list," Dueker said.

For freshman dance major Vivian Birch, volunteering at the workshop was a full-circle moment. Five years ago, Birch performed aerial dance for the first time at the workshop. Now, she shows high schoolers the ropes – er, silks.

"I came to the workshops when I was in middle and high school, I wanted to volunteer for them, regardless, just because it's so special to me because this is how I started here," Birch said.

All dance majors under a scholarship are required to volunteer for the workshops. But many students take the opportunity, anyway.

"Our students really enjoy the opportunity," Dueker said. "They really take great pride in being here on these days. And it's always exciting for me to see our dance majors, how engaged they are with the students and being a part of these programs, too. So I love that because I think that hopefully it's a legacy that will continue on."

Fourteen-year-old Sage Dobbins signed up for the workshop because she wanted to gain some experience outside of her dance studio.

"It's definitely challenged me to mix technique and performing all in one at the same time, not just go between one or the other, but to really put them into both," Dobbins said. "It was very fast paced, which I enjoyed. And the range of all the classes that I took were a lot different, which was nice."

While the workshop helped Dobbins improve her already existing skills, it also gave her a new opportunity: aerial.

"I'd never really done anything like that before," Dobbins said.

Birch believes it's important for young dancers to know going to college for dance is an option – a push she needed to realize for herself.

"I think it's really important for schools and for Webster to reach out to young dancers and studios and really show them what their opportunities are in regard to dance," Birch said.

During the summer, the department will offer three levels of its summer intensive: senior, junior and mini. High-schoolers can participate from July 21 to 25, middle-schoolers from July 28 to 31, and third- to fifth-graders from Aug. 1 to 3.

‘Georgia McBride’ Sparkles with Sold-Out Shows

by Chloe Sapp
Editor-in-Chief



Tristan Wallach (left foreground) and Bryson Sands (center) rehearse during the tech week of “The Legend of Georgia McBride.” *Contributed by Inocencio Boc*

Prior to his star turn as the lead in “The Legend of Georgia McBride,” Tristan Wallach had never seen a real-life drag queen before. Now, he can say he’s performed in front of audiences in four consecutive sold-out shows dressed in full drag.

Webster University’s Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts (WebCo) staged playwright Matthew Lopez’s “The Legend of Georgia McBride” Feb. 28 to March 2, with performances that sold out two weeks prior to opening.

The award-winning play, which debuted off-Broadway in 2014, is about Casey, a young and broke Floridian Elvis impersonator living off gigs at a bar. When his act is replaced by a drag show, Casey is recruited to play drag queen Georgia McBride when one of the performers can’t go on.

Wallach, a sophomore acting major, was cast in the lead role as Casey by day, Georgia McBride by night. During callbacks, Wallach played guitar, danced, lip-synced and read scenes for hours to earn the role. Even after all of that, the hardest part for him was learning how to move with the flair of a drag queen.

“The big hip pads certainly helped,” Wallach said.

Presented in the middle of WebCo’s 2024-2025 season, the show is directed by senior directing major Avery Harrison, who has a ton of experience under their belt, including as assistant director for Repertory Theatre of St. Louis’ production of “August: Osage County.”

When preparing for “Georgia McBride,” Harrison, who identifies as queer and trans, had Missouri’s queer community on the brain and believed it was that very community that contributed to the show’s massive popularity.



Wig, hair and makeup designer Salem Galloway fixes Tristan Wallach’s makeup on set. *Contributed by Salem Galloway*

“I think it’s something about being in a little blue pocket in a red state where it is that idea of us caring so much about all of these issues,” Harrison said. “I do think a lot of it has to do with it being a drag show. I think that the community is deprived right now of a lot of queer experiences and outward queer art. That’s what we want to flock to – specifically, our little Webster University community, our little, young, vulnerable 20-year-old selves who are horrified about the state of the world.”

Juggling three jobs, classes and directing, Harrison’s day-to-day during the production was “chaos in the best way.” As director, Harrison oversaw the whole production, making sure it came together in a cohesive way to tell the story. This meant leading rehearsals, picking the cast, coaching the actors, talking with designers and lighting, wig and makeup, costume, scenic and sound crews – all while dealing with “the beautiful challenges of being young and 21.”

Directing majors in their junior year get to choose a show they wish to direct. Harrison has had “Georgia McBride” on their radar since they were 12 years old.

“I think I saw it at a theater in Arkansas way back when, and I knew nothing about drag,” Harrison said. “I saw it, and I was like, ‘wow, pretty dresses.’ And now that I’m older and have more brain space to comprehend the meaning of it, I truly fell in love with the story.”

Wallach notes “Georgia McBride” showcases drag for what it is: an important and historical art form. He believes educating more people about drag is the best way to shut down harmful legislation.

“I can’t imagine what being an actual drag queen in Missouri must be like today, especially with our state senators constantly trying to pass laws restricting drag performances,” Wallach said.

In February, a Missouri Senate committee held a public hearing on SB 295, a bill sponsored by Sen. Rick Brattin, who claims it is meant to protect children from sexual content. The bill would make an “adult cabaret performance” a crime if performed on public property that “could be viewed by a person who is not an adult.” The definition of an “adult cabaret” includes “male or female impersonators who provide entertainment that appeals to a prurient interest or similar entertainers.”

Harrison’s director’s notes for the production stated, “It has been 11 years since Matthew López created ‘The Legend of Georgia McBride.’ While I want to say we have progressed as a society since 2014, the evidence proves otherwise.”

Since the play first took the stage, Harrison adds, the LGBTQ community has not been able to escape the public scrutiny. Gay nightclub shootings, anti-transgender legislation, the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, drag bans and many other acts of violence have swept the nation.

“I offer these examples as a reminder that queer folks remain a political target,” Harrison wrote. “I offer these examples as a reminder that if you join us for a drag show, you must join us in protest.”

While the play deals with heavy topics, Harrison hopes the audience left with a good laugh.

“Right now in the world we’re in, we need a lot of life and a lot of fun,” Harrison said. “So I think the idea to go and escape for like an hour and 40 minutes in a big world of hair, makeup, heels, song, and dance and luster is super-appealing to people.”

Professor Looks to Amplify Voices of Black Creatives

by Jaci Bethel
News Editor

Some teachers testify that students motivate them, but associate professor of cultural anthropology Jong Bum “JB” Kwon is going the extra mile. Inspired by his former students, Kwon is leading a study to examine the obstacles and aspirations of Black artists in St. Louis.

Kwon’s pursuit follows a 2023 survey by the Regional Arts Commission (RAC) that revealed Black creatives and artists were not as well off as their white counterparts.

Earlier this year, the National Endowment for the Arts selected Kwon’s study as one of 18 research grants approved for funding. The honor comes with a $45,000 grant, which will be matched by funding from other sources.

“I’ve had very talented young Black students come through my classes,” Kwon said. “Some of them became creative; be they dancers, singers or other kinds of art. Just talking with them and learning more about what they had been up to during and after they graduated really stoked my interest in what it meant to be a young Black artist here.”

As a teacher of urban anthropology, as well as race and ethnicity, Kwon notes it can be hard to find resources for his classes, partly because a lot of the scholarly literature around young Black people tends to focus on the negative aspects, rather than the positive aspects, of their lives, causing disproportionate representation.

“There’s very little that really describes and analyzes the normal aspirations and dreams of young Black people and how they do that within a very specific context,” Kwon said.

Arts and culture contributed over $800 million to the St. Louis economy in 2022, according to the RAC – clear evidence of the arts’ importance as an economic driver, which could be boosted further by the dismantling of racial bias.

“All the research shows that if we address – as a region – racial inequality and segregation, the regional economy would benefit by tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars,” Kwon said. “Almost all the research demonstrates that segregation is a hamper or obstacle to economic growth.”

Kwon hopes his research can encourage more people from the surrounding areas, such as Webster Groves, to regularly visit and engage with the city’s arts and music scene, helping change the way St. Louis is perceived in their own eyes, as well as those of the general public.

“I think there are these old ways of thinking about the city that have to change,” Kwon said. “So we need to change the way that people think and talk about the city and Black youth. And once we can begin to do that, I think that things can begin to change.”

The ultimate goal is for everyone to thrive equally, and policy discussions and representation are very valuable to reaching that.

Kwon holds some scholarly aspirations, as well, thinking about turning the future results into a book, academic articles or policy papers, while aiming to make the work publicly accessible.

“My hope with this is to get some conversations started, to get policy changed and to change the way that people experience the city,” Kwon said.



JB Kwon, who has previously published work on matters such as global unemployment, is spearheading a new project on the lives of Black creators in St. Louis. *Photo by Jaci Bethel*

Keeping It Local: Theatre Opportunities Thrive in St. Louis

by Jaci Bethel
News Editor

Webster's Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts (WebCo) houses the university's musical theatre, acting, directing, design, technical theatre and stage management students. The program is certainly one of the university's most renowned, and with its own theatre partner on campus, WebCo is able to help students thrive in the ever-expanding theatre scene in St. Louis.

With many theatrical institutions such as The Muny and Repertory Theatre of St. Louis (The Rep) close by, Conservatory chair Gad Guterman recognizes the opportunities for student career development.

"We're lucky to be in a city that has a lot of arts organizations up and running," Guterman said.

WebCo partners with The Rep, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Variety Theatre, The Muny, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival and Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre. Except for Arrow Rock, all are located within a 15-mile radius of Webster.

Michael Baxter, WebCo alum and the associate artistic director of The Muny, wanted to create an opportunity where students could audition without feeling the stress of working around their school schedule.

The Muny hosts seven other major auditions throughout the audition process, but having a specific day that was geared towards Webster Conservatory students allows them the space and the chance to leave their regularly scheduled classes to come and have a professional opportunity.

"I believe not only as an artist, but a curator of talent and believing in the incubator of talent that The Muny is, there should be an opportunity for those Webster students to be seen, to be heard, and to be their true authentic self in the audition room," Baxter said.

Though Baxter had an extensive background in dance and theatre training before attending college, the outlet that Webster provided allowed him to hone in on his skills and craft a lifetime of opportunity for work in theatre.

"The basis of my work and training at Webster gave me a profound sense of wisdom," Baxter said. "It gave me a sense of myself, confidence and belief in what I can ultimately be and bring to this crazy biz called show."

Senior acting major Isa Venere recently worked with one of the Conservatory's partners, The Rep, starring in its recent production of "Athena." This was her second professional show, where she performed alongside many other Webster alums.

"The Conservatory definitely provided training to prepare us for how to audition for shows like that; and ultimately, when we're in professional spaces, how to carry yourself, how to take care of yourself and how to be a nice person to work with," Venere said.



Isa Venere in the title role of "Athena" at The Rep. *Contributed by Jon Gitchoff*

Her first professional show was also at The Rep, last year's award-winning production of "August: Osage County."

Though much smaller in scale to New York's theatre scene, St. Louis makes up for it with a vibrant local art scene.

"I think St. Louis is actually a really lovely place at which to start and build a professional portfolio, whether you're a performer or a designer or a technician or stage manager, because the theatre scene is small enough that you can really build a name for yourself very quickly," Guterman said.

Freshman costume construction major Shannon Mayo aims to head to New York after graduation, but agrees that sticking around St. Louis would have its perks.

"I would be totally fine with staying here in St. Louis as there are so many great theatre companies, departments, options, all, everything, just in one city," Mayo said. "I feel that St. Louis has one of the most prevalent abundance of theatres in the country, in my experience, at least."

Not only does theatre bring excitement to the city of St. Louis, but it also brings its values. Baxter believes his work at The Muny is a clear and thoughtful representation of why musicals matter.

"They are important to our culture, they are important to the success of our city, they are important to the success of us as a nation," Baxter said. "As all as people come together to sit under the stars to watch a musical and see empathy and humanity on stage, it is the clearest representation of what makes us better people."

Webster Singer/Songwriter Releases 'Doublespeak'

by Styx Nappier
Managing Editor

It was a cold winter's day when Cameron "Cam" Burns performed at Urban Chestnut Brewery in Midtown St. Louis. His set included one of his newest songs, "Doublespeak," a song he needed to stand out. So, he asked Webster University dancer Reuben Thomas to perform with him – a dance with Burns and Thomas jumping up and stomping on a table.

"I want to surprise people, just because [being] behind a piano, singing, it gets monotonous," Burns said. "So I want people to be expecting the unexpected."

Self-described as an alternative pop singer and songwriter, Burns is majoring in music composition with an emphasis in songwriting. Determined to do everything he can to further his music career, he picked up a second major: sound recording and engineering, as both contribute to his journey of emphasizing the value he finds in his work with experimentation and collaboration.

"Doublespeak" director and editor Riley Perkins is one of these collaborators. As a film major, Perkins' collaborations with Burns includes a short documentary and music videos, such as "Loving Ghost" and "Doublespeak."

"For [Cam and I], it's always about not landing in the same spot twice," Perkins said. "It's about how to take things we learned and apply them in a completely different avenue."

For the videos, it was about shifting the story style of "Loving Ghost" into a "liminal and timeless" concept in "Doublespeak."

Perkins and Burns initially met as freshmen, just two of four suitemates who all immediately bonded together. Both still live together in a house full of artists and creatives. For the duo, connection is essential.

"Specifically, Cam and I have such an essential shorthand with one another, personally and through the work [we've done]," Perkins said. "I wholeheartedly know that the things we've made and the ideas we're working on wouldn't come to fruition in this way if our dynamic was different."

Thomas, also a former roommate of Burns, is also deeply involved with the videos, providing everything from scenes of eating brains in the haunted house of "Loving Ghost" to ethereal spins in "Doublespeak."

Thomas also joins Burns in live performances, dancing to create a visual element to the work. For this reason, Burns' personal favorite piece to perform is "Doublespeak." Instead of playing the song, he turns on a track, getting up to join Thomas in "vibing it out" on stage – which, yes, does include the occasional and impromptu dancing on tables.

"To me, there's something exciting about that. It feels like I'm more grounded in the moment rather than worrying that 'this part's coming up,'" Burns said. "I like to be fully present, so to have somebody on stage with me who is also fully present … is awesome."

Burns first began his music journey at the age of 7, taking piano lessons for three years before taking a "break." The pause, largely caused by his frustration of sheet music, propelled him to teach himself more about chords and tones – something he claims resulted in the largest growth of his career.

At 12, he entered the realm of musical theatre, playing roles like Tiny Tim, the iconic character from "Christmas Carol." Transitioning into a now-singing actor, his agent suggested he obtain vocal training.

Burns' vocal teacher at the time, Vigthor Sjafnar Zophoniasson, gave him the encouragement he needed to begin writing his original songs at 13. His first creation, "Constant Enemies," followed the frustration Burns felt about one of his brothers. It was the song that ignited his hunger for writing.

"[Vigthor] was super-excited," Burns said. "I kind of saw him light up … having a student come in and do something different piqued his interest."

It also led Zophoniasson to create a song of his own, with the two of them sharing their works with one another – a mutual creativity that inspired Burns to get a music degree.

In the time since, Burns has performed at numerous events on campus, such as the Audio Engineering Society (AES) concert series, and across St. Louis, including STL Fringe FEST and The Reno. In addition, Burns is a background singer of Eldraco and Freenation.

In the works for Burns is a new video, "Surefire," as well as embarking on his own personal merchandise and performing at STL Fringe FEST once more.

For now, he can bask in the glow and take pride in his work. During his February screening of "Doublespeak," students in attendance at the event, such as Emery Bass, commented that he had his "mind blown."

"I'm getting lots of great feedback and we surpassed the view count for our first music video in a day," Burns said. "So, I really couldn't be happier with it."

Beckah Reed Leaves Lasting Legacy for Dancers

by Layla Halilbasic
Staff Writer

The sun beamed as a soft rain fell on the Fourth of July in 1974. At a graveyard in Boulder, Colorado, as the glistening droplets hit the light, they landed on the face of 19-year-old Beckah Reed, who was fully immersed in tai chi. For her, the practice and place were perfect for solitude: peaceful, quiet and private, her gentle movement flowing with the rhythm of the world around her.

But in that stillness, something shifted – a clear and certain voice pierced the calm.

"You're going to dance."

It was a moment of revelation as the universe itself had seemingly whispered its truth.

That voice was the push Reed needed to move to New York City and pursue a life in dance after graduation from the University of Colorado - Boulder.

Five decades later, Reed, Webster University professor emerita of dance, continues to nurture her enduring connections with students and faculty, even in retirement.

Reed's lifelong love of dance began in Cañon City, Colorado, at 5 years old. Her first memory of movement lies in the Independent Order of Oddfellows of Colorado's basement, with no bars, wooden floors or mirrors to aid her.

Reed was influenced by her mother, who was in modern dance pioneer Martha Graham's third company. The exposure led her to concentrate on technique, composition, improvisation and international dances, fostering a broader understanding of dance and culture.

Reed says she learned how to dance from within.

"It was a very all-encompassing experience," Reed said. "It was more than a ballet class or a jazz class. It was something that really opened my eyes to various cultures, and to myself, to what was within."

For her, the lack of formal settings allowed for a more internal and self-guided approach to dance, a philosophy that still lives in her teachings today.

Throughout her time dancing, Reed quickly realized that in order to make a living, she had to focus on teaching rather than performing.

She had the passion, joy and creativity required for the art form but felt she was still far behind on her technique. New York City had the solution she believed she was looking for. But there were setbacks: working multiple jobs, facing financial instability and even being robbed multiple times in the city. Despite it all, Reed continued to dance.

"If I screwed up, I just went on to the next minute," Reed said. "Also, growing up in nature, I learned that the rock slides, the snow slides, the mountains are there to get lost in. That puts you in a particular place where you get the mentality of, 'I got to do this and figure out how to do it.'"

Reed began teaching at Webster in 1986, serving as program head and chair of the Department of Dance from 2006 to 2013 and artistic director from 2013 to 2021.

Reed's choreography is best described as theatre dance, as she draws on props, voice and the motivation of human interactions to create her works. Her teaching emphases lie in modern technique, composition, dance history and improvisation.

Through all this, her love and gratitude for working with students remains unmatched.

Paige Walden-Johnson, a 2013 Webster dance graduate and current executive director at CommUNITY Arts Festival, considers Reed her forever mentor.

"I was really able to find my own way because of her and her encouragement, and I am so grateful that she took me under her wing because I wasn't the dancer that would take the traditional path of performing," Walden-Johnson said. "At the beginning, I was like, 'No, I want to be like everybody else.' It took me so long to let her advice and mentorship sink in."

Reed's impact goes beyond students. Department chair Maggi Dueker describes Reed as a force of light felt by all, who shaped the department's culture.

"I've really found her to be such a great leader. She leads from that very, very giving and empathetic way and really puts students first," Dueker said. "That's something that I feel like we've really tried to embrace within the program. I feel like she's been a role model to me, and it's something that I've tried to model and, hopefully, keep true in the program."

Putting students first means addressing all aspects of their wellbeing, including mental health.

"She was one of the first people to really advocate and put mental health in the forefront of my life," Walden-Johnson said. "I can't dance, I can't work, I can't do life unless I take care of myself."

Now, Reed says her future lies in the energetic world. The former Webster professor spends her time diving into her work in somatics, focusing on transformation through subtle energies. She is a master reiki practitioner, with training in hunyuan taiji and qigong: practices that center around natural healing and wellbeing by using the body's innate energy.

The soft-spoken Reed plans to keep educating through promoting Continuum Movement, a somatic experiential method that aims to consciously explore the self as an unfolding biological and planetary process. She is eager to share this modality with as many people as possible, despite feeling burnt out from teaching.

While she was a student, Dueker witnessed Reed's performances. She recognized firsthand that Reed's teaching approach extends beyond performance art. Deeply based on her somatic practices, Reed created a collaborative environment at Webster where students, still, are safe to explore.

"This is a place that's very collaborative," Dueker said. "We're going to dig deeply, take risks, be vulnerable, fail at times, but together, we push each other and make beautiful, challenging things in a way that's really rooted in integrity and authenticity."

Reed hopes those she collaborates with understand the importance of being one's own best healer and the ability to make significant shifts within oneself, both in a professional and personal sense.

"When I was teaching at Webster, I used to say, and I still tend to say, 'If there's not a place for you, you'll create a place for yourself,'" Reed said. "I had a great career, and it was simply doing what I love to do, just continuing doing what I love to do. So, there is that perseverance, and it's allowing myself to do what I need and want to do."



Beckah Reed showcases a parachute piece, "Fabrications," a solo she designed in 1983. She served as artistic director of Wishbone Dance Theatre and co-artistic director of St. Louis-based GASH/VOIGT (GVDT) Dance Theatre ensemble. GVDT later transitioned into ANNONYArts, a performing arts company dedicated to supporting performing artists. *Contributed by Greg Voigt*

Kooyumjian Gallery *through the Years*

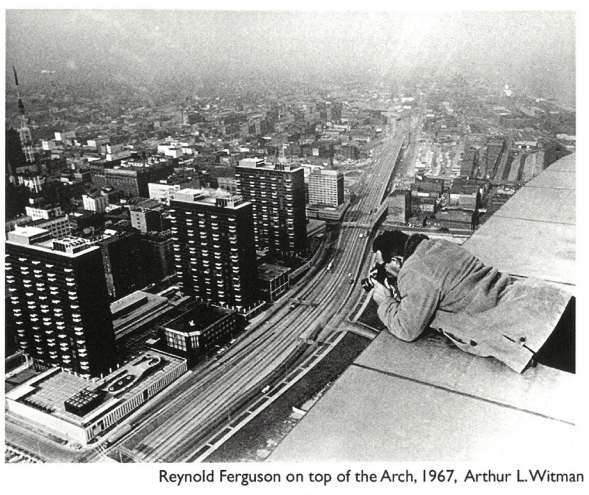
by Emerson Goelz
Culture & Lifestyle Editor

Webster University's photography gallery has been a showcase of local and national photography works for decades. Established in 1988, the Kooyumjian Gallery (formerly known as the May Gallery), started out as a simple hallway exhibit in Sverdrup Hall. Remodeled in 2022 with a generous donation from the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation, the gallery is able to provide professional and student-produced photography with the space it deserves.

Welcoming students, faculty and the public for opening receptions of exhibits has been a highlight of the Kooyumjian calendar. In addition to the featured exhibit, food, drinks and music greet those who venture in and peruse the art. With each opening, eye-catching postcards announcing the exhibition are distributed throughout campus and mailed to alumni – a tradition that's been in place since the '90s.



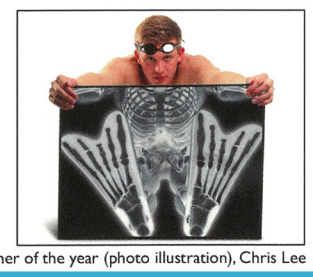
2012 The 2012 spring exhibit featured a variety of industrial scenes throughout New York captured by Stephen Mallon, including an image of a decommissioned subway car being dumped in the Atlantic Ocean.



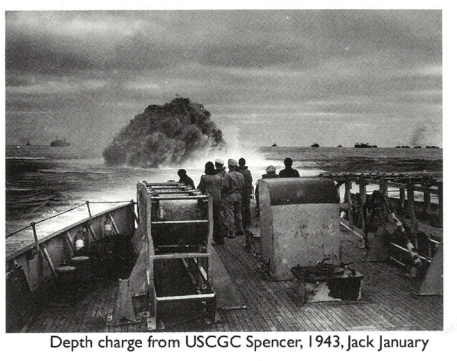
Reynold Ferguson on top of the Arch, 1967, Arthur L. Witman



Tactical team tear gas, Ferguson, 2014, David Carson



Swimmer of the year (photo illustration), Chris Lee



Depth charge from USCGC Spencer, 1943, Jack January

2014 The "Of the Post-Dispatch" exhibit showcased decades of photojournalism from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The Forgotten Photographs:
The Work of Paul Goldman from 1943 – 1961

David Ben-Gurion standing on his head, Sharon Hotel beach, Herzelia, 1957

from the COLLECTION OF SPENCER M. PARTRICH

2006 The first exhibit of the Fall 2006 semester featured photographs from Paul Goldman, an Israeli photojournalist whose work remained largely unknown during his lifetime, when photo credits were not a norm. This exhibition was presented in collaboration with Congregation Neve Shalom, a former Jewish synagogue in St. Louis.



Dr. King's family, Atlanta, Georgia, 8 April 1968 © Benedict J. Fernandez, 1968

2000 Images by award-winning photojournalist Benedict J. Fernandez were exhibited in the spring of 2000. Fernandez is most notable for capturing iconic photographs of the 1960s-era protest movements, including an image of Martin Luther King Jr.'s children viewing his body as it lay in state.



2024 The gallery's 2024-2025 season brought concert photographer and Webster alum Gaby Deimeke, nature and wildlife photographer Noppadol Paothong, and Matika Wilbur, who has dedicated her career to capturing the richness of Indigenous culture and life.

For more postcards, visit websterjournal.com

WHY WE CREATE

How Creating Helped Me Find Myself

by Skylar Powers
Contributing Writer



Skylar Powers in her first Webster dance professional photoshoot. *Contributed by Carly Vanderheyden*

I wish I could remember the first time I danced.

Growing up, my mom always told me, "you've been dancing since the moment you had legs." That felt like a lie until the first moment I stepped onto a stage to perform. I remember it so clearly, my first recital.

Our preschool dance class featured a ballet, tap and hip-hop piece. In the ballet piece, there was a partnering moment where we held hands and lifted our legs into arabesque. The stage lights came on and I turned to face my partner, but she was gone. I had no idea why.

Strangely enough, this was when I fell in love with the art of dance. In live dance, you never know what could possibly happen. My partner not showing up inadvertently gave me the confidence to go through the rest of the show. I survived without her. I overcame that challenge and I absolutely loved the thrill of it.

I've been dancing since I was 5, but I grew up in a competition studio. There isn't much creation going on there as a mini 6-year-old competitive dancer – yes, like the kind on "Dance Moms."

In time, I got to teach younger students, but it wasn't really my own creation; instead, it was a mosaic of how the teachers I grew up with taught. I wanted to be my own teacher, but I didn't have enough experience to do so. I needed to learn and explore who I was as a dancer first.

Eventually, a former dancer at the studio who later became my teacher and choreographer, Sammie Byrne, planted the idea of improv —, of creating movement as you go. It sounded fun, "creating." I had never been given that torch before. It was so thrilling to know that someone I looked up to my entire life thought I could benefit from creating on my own. Yet, at the same time, I felt this pressure to make her proud, as I owe her my beginning of love for creating.

Moving came naturally to me, but improvisation did not. I learned a lot by observing, so that's how I began. I watched the strongest dancers at my studio, both at competitions and online. Seeing what they did, I tried tirelessly to replicate it. Any chance I got, I would purposefully stand next to the strongest dancers and dance alongside them. I would watch them in the mirrors and try to match their lines and movement quality. It didn't work for me in the same way it did for them: I wasn't naturally flexible, my leaps were not great and my movement quality – while improving slowly – was poor.

So what to do? I couldn't replicate their movement and had no clue where to even begin. I was stuck in this improv rut for years. I didn't know myself as a dancer or a person, which made it impossible to authentically dance as myself.

I gave up and paused my improvisation journey.

As the older dancers graduated, I kept watching dance slowly fade from their lives and I knew I didn't want that to happen to me. I loved dancing, it felt like my safe place. I allowed myself to feel any and everything when I was dancing. I never wanted to lose that connection with myself, my body and my emotions.

I decided to research college dance programs. I went to dozens of dance team clinics to try and become the dancers I've admired, but it wasn't me. I no longer wanted to fit myself into the mold of competitive dance. But if my future was not in dance teams, where?

For some reason, I felt a pull to look into becoming a dance major. From my home studio, the pipeline was always dance teams, rarely ever dance majors. Because of this, I was anxious. Was there a reason no one else has done this? Should I just deal with dance teams like everyone else before me? No, I needed to find my own path. I needed to see what else was out there, where else I could go.

So, for three years, I went to intensives offered at Lindenwood and Webster universities. I was immediately drawn in by these programs because everyone brought themselves into the dancing. Every dancer didn't have to be the exact same as the others. It was beautiful and life-changing to watch.

I rarely felt that way with competitive dance. Competitive dance felt like a place where I stood out only for negative reasons. My leg was too low. My foot was sickled. I couldn't land the flip correctly. It always felt like I was in the wrong, even when I tried so hard to conform. Seeing those college-level dancers perform, I realized I could be on those stages dancing, while still feeling authentically me. I decided to audition for these dance programs, which both required solos.

For the first time ever, I took on creating the solo on my own. It was make or break, it could mean the difference between getting accepted or denied from these programs, and I didn't know if I had it in me.

I've never been confident in my dancing, even when other choreographers created the pieces. How could I create if I couldn't even perform others' pieces well? I walked into the empty studio with nothing except a playlist of 20 possible songs and my unyielding perfectionism in hand.

I struggled. I laid on the floor in between every run, questioning if I should have just asked the studio head to choreograph the audition piece for me. But something stopped me: I needed to prove that I could do this for myself. I wanted to feel confident and return to that joyous feeling that made me fall in love with the art all those years ago.

Within a month, I did it: I created a two-minute solo showcasing what felt authentic to the dance training I had up to that point, as well as demonstrating the type of dancer I wished to be.

When I went to my first audition to perform the solo, the judges were immediately impressed with the choreography and gave me a compliment that followed me through the rest of the audition process. I knew if these professionals in the dance world thought my choreography had potential, it truly did. I had searched for this validation growing up and I finally got it by creating, entirely on my own.

I got back into improvisation and started to explore different things that inspired me. Last fall, I began my first semester as a BFA in dance with an emphasis in modern.

I continue to create, forever inspired by my fellow classmates, as well as by nature and human connection. Creating is how I found myself as a person and a dancer, and how I discovered what I want to do for the rest of my life: I live to create. I create to live.

What Do You Consist of?

by Orion Agnew
Contributing Writer

For as long as I can remember, I've felt my emotions very deeply. I would always cry during sad or heartwarming parts of movies, even when I didn't fully know what was happening. When I was a kid, I would get so invested in the films' plots and characters that I fully convinced myself that they were real — yes, even the animated ones. I was a very imaginative kid.

There's something so vulnerable about crying during a movie, especially when you're watching with other people. You feel as though a part of yourself is getting exposed without you saying or doing anything. I've stifled many cries while in a theater, or even just watching at home with friends. I often feel embarrassed when that happens, even if everyone else is having the same reaction. I've learned that I'm a purist in that way; I prefer to watch movies for the first time by myself. I want to absorb the story and technical aspects fully, without any bias. I know the hard work that it takes to create a film, I don't want to get distracted for a single moment.



Graphic by Ethan Nieroda

Film, like all art, is a reflection of the society in which it lives — the people who make it and the people who watch it. It's inherently personal, regardless of what role you fulfill. Of course, it's personal for the creative team and for actors. But for the crew, it's personal because of the time they commit to the project – and as someone who's worked on many different kinds of film and video shoots, I know first-hand how it feels.

A lot of film production is sitting around and waiting – waiting for a lighting issue to get figured out, waiting for the director to finish talking to the actor, waiting for outside noise to settle down. It's odd because there's a lot of downtime, but somehow not enough. Depending on how long your day is, you could be absolutely exhausted by the end of it. But when you're working with kind and skilled people, it makes the whole process a lot better.

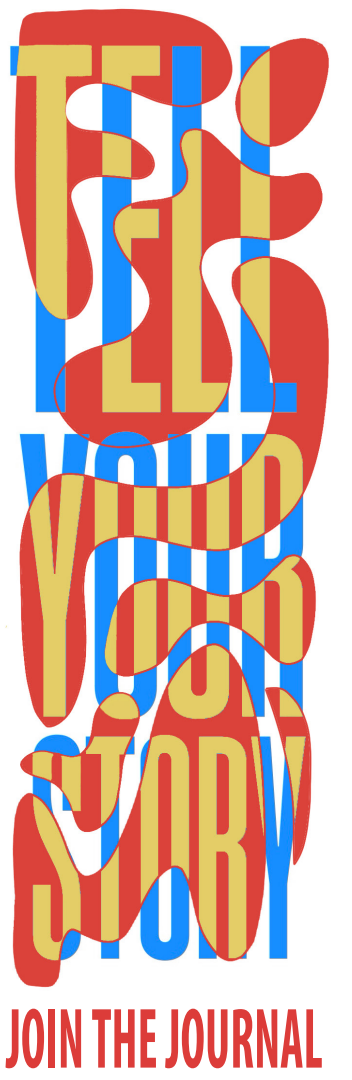
I've always thought the process of filmmaking is the most beautiful blend of creative energy and technical execution. You have your creative team: the director, writer, cinematographer, production designer, basically anyone who is helping directly with the "vision." And then there's the more technical and logical aspect of filmmaking: the electricians, the grips, the sound recordist. All of these people will likely have different mindsets and concerns, but they're able to come together and make something unique and remarkable.

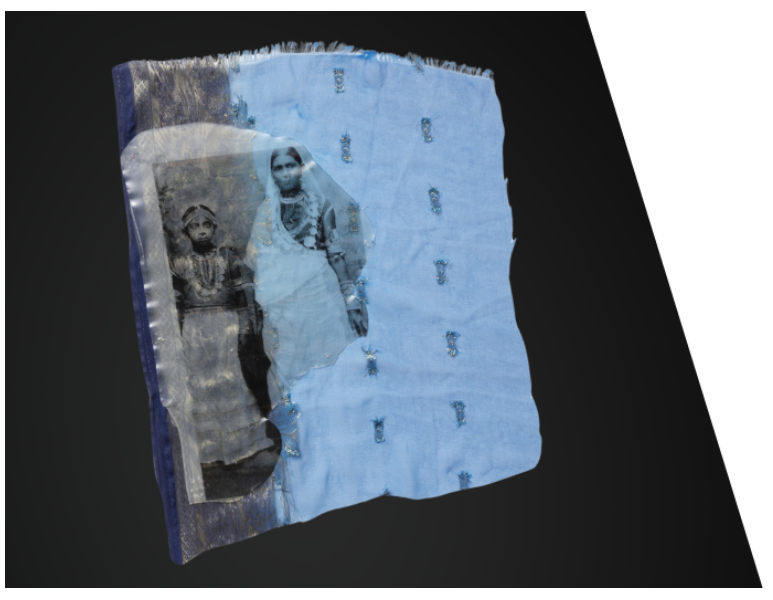
Just like in life, you have to have a balance of both. You have to learn how to execute the projects you want to do; but first, you have to know the story you want to tell.

I recently directed a short documentary called, "The Pressure of Conformity," in which I reached out to trans men and transmasc folks, asking them about their experiences growing up and their thoughts on the future of America. My interviewees covered a wide range of ages and labels and, despite the hardships they have faced, their hope remains in these dark times. All of them pointed to the community around them – their friends and family – when asked about where they turn to for support.

The short itself is very modest – just the subjects themselves with some childhood photos. I didn't need much else. I wanted the audience to pay attention to these real people who are being seriously impacted by our world today. I had one interviewee thank me for letting them talk about their identity and their life, but I thanked them back, because the stories are what make documentary what it is.

So now, the question goes back to you: What has made you into who you are today, for better or for worse? What has your life consisted of? What do you consist of? Because, as simple as it sounds, the most compelling stories you can tell are your own.





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March 21 - April 25, 2025

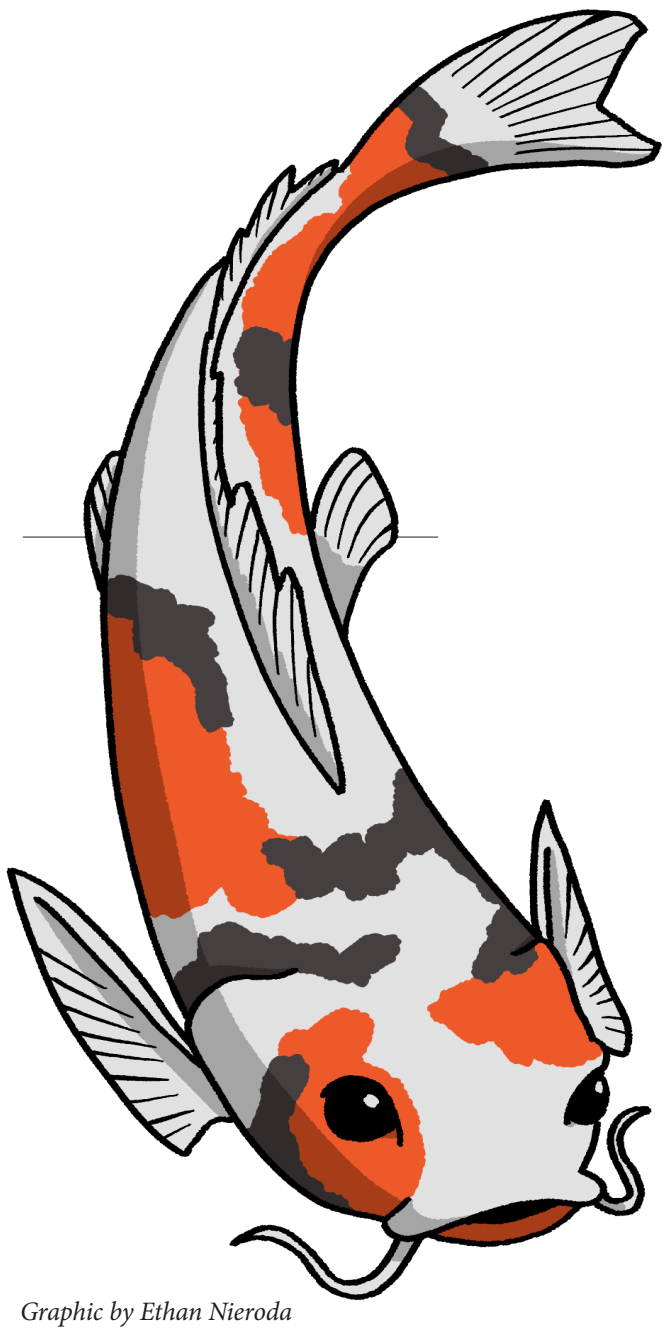
Exhibition opening reception:
Friday, March 21, 6:00-8:00pm

ATRA artists:
Saumitra Chandratreya, Mee Jey, Shreepad Joglekar, Priya Kambli, Shriyas R. Krishnan, Renluka Maharaj, Al-Qawi Nanavati, Udita Upadhyaya

Cecille R. Hunt Gallery
Visual Arts Studio
8342 Big Bend Blvd, Webster Groves, MO 63119

Hunt Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 5pm

Pulling through Trauma and Grief with Art Therapy



Graphic by Ethan Nieroda

by Craig Reynolds
Contributing Writer

When I was diagnosed with chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs many years ago, I really didn't know how to take it. I even went through the seven stages of grief, just to try and cope with the fact that I was not the same individual I was before I left for the military.

I joined the U.S. Army when I was 21 and lived outside of Fort Benning, Georgia (now called Fort Moore). The job opportunities were rather poor since it was mainly fast food or restaurant work, one or two not-great city colleges and a few corporations that required degrees.

Long story short, I went to one-unit station training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and was assigned my duty station at Camp Carroll in South Korea. I wanted to get as far away from the state of Georgia as possible.

A year later, my unit came up on orders for Baghdad, where I suspect much of the trauma contributing to my post-traumatic stress came from. After 17 months, I left Baghdad, I ended up in Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. From there, I got out and eventually returned back home to Fort Moore. On my father's suggestion, I scheduled an appointment with Veterans Affairs. That was the beginning of the end. I knew something was wrong, I just didn't know what it was at the time.

I was trying to get on with my life and get my act together while in a ward. One of the social workers came in and handed me a picture of a koi fish and some colored pencils. They asked me to just color and focus on the pencil movements and my breathing. Nothing else in the room mattered but the repetitive strokes of that pencil touching paper and the piece I was coloring.

That was my official introduction to art therapy which, apparently, I've been practicing for years – 29, for the curious-minded. I've been painting miniatures poorly since I was 13 for games like Dungeons and Dragons and Warhammer Fantasy. I doodle, mostly with pen, ink and paper. These include, but are not limited to, abstract shapes, weird caricatures of made-up characters, a lot of 3D shapes for points of references and, sometimes, popular characters from video games.

I've even started to consider photography a form of art therapy for me now, since it is my perspective and usually follows my view of nature. I like to be alone with my thoughts, hearing the wind blow, maybe joined by bullfrogs calling and crickets chirping. Even the dreadful cicadas are peaceful in their own right with the ambience they provide. Sometimes, being alone with our thoughts in nature grounds us, helping to clear the mind and refocus on what's important – and to just get away from the noise of work, school, family, home life, even a significant other … to just exist, while being in the moment.

The fun fact about art therapy is it doesn't matter whether you have any artistic skills to improve how you are feeling mentally. Sure, you'll get better at practicing any skill if you do it enough, but it's about doing something to make you happy, to make yourself feel better.

I'm not saying this particular type of therapy is the be-all and end-all – far from it. However, I feel it does work well in conjunction with other forms of therapy and support, and makes your "tool kit" for dealing with adversity that much stronger.

One of the best things about this type of therapy is you can just draw a circle and no one will be the wiser. It's just a circle drawn with a pen or pencil on paper – simple shapes – and bonus points for a good drink and good music to accomplish the task at hand. For me, music and drink vary. My go-to is coffee with a splash of milk, barring that hot chai with milk and sugar. When it comes to music, soft, ambient piano works wonders, especially if the drums are done with brushes.

While drawing, painting, coloring and photography are part of my tools for de-stressing and regaining some semblance of normalcy, I understand if those things aren't your jam. Try collages, pottery or whatever sings to you to give you that time and space to reflect. This is about you and finding a way to gain some peace of mind.

I am by no means a mental health expert, I'm just a guy who found what worked for him. And if this helps or inspires others, then I feel I made a difference.

There are three things I personally believe people with mental health problems should remember: One, you are not your diagnosis; this is just part of you and it will prove challenging, but you can get through it. Two, you are still a good person, even if the intrusive thoughts say otherwise. And three, those who really care will understand and will be there if you need them to lean on or just need a friendly ear.

A little compassion always goes a long way, so be kind to yourself and others. It took many years of crying, frustration, self realization and doubt – figuring out who I was, who I wanted to be and what I wanted to accomplish.

Art therapy allows self-expression – privately – if you're not keen on talking in groups or talking to therapists. Sometimes, it's about recognizing a problem you can avoid without letting it consume you. Some days are worse than others, but as long as you keep trying, it gets easier and there is nothing that cannot be overcome.

My journey with art therapy has taught me all that: to be a better person, a better husband, a better son, a better human and just to be.

Breaking the 'Boundary' between Sports and Art

by Sriram Chidambaram
Sports Editor

Last winter, while in my hometown of Bengaluru, India, I wandered into the Bangalore Football Stadium to catch a glimpse of a local football (soccer) game. Scattered across the only standing pavilion were about 30 old-timers, their eyes focused on the action. Whenever a commendable play was made, a wave of approval rang out among these onlookers – subtle applause, murmurs of appreciation and reserved compliments.

In larger sporting events, such reactions are often drowned out by partisan fandom, relentless marketing and the aftermath of a couple of beers. Yet, this quiet appreciation is universal – be it in a high school football stadium in Texas, a street basketball court in Brooklyn or a skate park in downtown San Francisco.

Significantly, it bears resemblance to the reverence shown to an artist – a singer hitting a difficult note, an actor delivering a powerful monologue or a dancer executing a challenging routine. While music, theatre and dance are firmly established as performing arts within the larger classification of the arts, sports are traditionally excluded.

C.L.R. James' 1963 book, "Beyond a Boundary," is considered one of the best books on sports ever written. James makes a compelling case for sports as an art form, a sentiment familiar to fans and athletes hopelessly given to the game. In it, he says, "Cricket [and by extension every sport] is an art, not a bastard or a poor relation, but a full member of the community," asserting that sport is both a theatrical spectacle, akin to opera and ballet and a visual art, with characteristics adhering to the aesthetic theory of "significant form."

While James dismantles the idea that sports is merely entertainment, he overlooks the argument that art is primarily concerned with expression; sports, with competition.

I, too, believe competition is paramount to sports, making it better categorized under "games" than "performing arts." However, the technical skills, tactical acumen and physical prowess displayed behind the veil of competition should not be ignored for their artistic qualities.

Within sporting circles, the parallels to art are frequently drawn. Famous examples include Joe Adams' legendary punt return against the Tennessee Volunteers, described by broadcaster Gus Johnson with the words, "Boy, Houdini is in the house! Wearing No. 3! And nobody is there to watch that house!" Similarly, Ray Hudson, described Lionel Messi on the ball, as "a weaver with a loom! Like a bejeweled rapier! An artist! Picasso at work!" And even in autosports, journalist Murray Walker said of Ayrton Senna's driving on rain-soaked tracks, "Senna paints his masterpieces at 200 mph, with a car instead of a brush."

The Oxford English Dictionary defines art as "the use of the imagination to express ideas or feelings, particularly in painting, drawing or sculpture." In sports, competition may take precedence, but expression is the runner-up, and there is certainly no lack of imagination.

As a collegiate athlete and a "sports tragic" who has spent countless hours watching games on television, I can confidently say most athletes find fulfillment, not just in winning, but in the aesthetics of their actions. As a soccer goalkeeper, I was sometimes accused by my coaches of prioritizing form over function, making a save look elegant rather than simply effective. I am obligated to refute this charge, but I will admit I took pride in a save that was not only successful, but also visually and emotionally stunning. This same artistic impulse drives a basketball player to go up for a bold, riskier dunk over the guarantee of a layup.

Coaches are notorious for sending players into battle with "Just go out there and express yourself." Luckily for them, every seasoned athlete knows exactly what that means: turning the week's daily practice and nightly visions into reality on game day. Is this not akin to a painter bringing a vision to canvas or a musician translating hours of practice into a live performance?

But good art is more than self-expression – it stirs deep emotion. A Shakespearean tragedy like "Hamlet" brings anguish, while the frescoed ceiling of the Sistine Chapel inspires awe. Modern pop concerts, like Taylor Swift's, spark joy, tears and nostalgia, forging powerful shared experiences with the audience. In sports, the analogies are never-ending, with commentators reaching for phrases like "pure theatre," "jaw-dropping," "bittersweet," "heartbreaking," "poetry in motion" and so on, to convey the depths of the circumstances it creates. Nowhere is emotion more viscerally felt than in sports itself.



Graphic by KP Benton

Beyond the intangibles, art always tells a story. In the 2011 Oscar-shortlisted French film "The Intouchables," the protagonist Philippe, stares at an abstract artwork, asking, "Why are people interested in art?" Unsatisfied with the response, he answers, "It's the trace of our passage on this earth."

From the earliest cave paintings of Lascaux, depicting early human life and hunting, to Picasso's "Guernica," which exposes the atrocities of war, art has always chronicled human history. Even contemporary works like Banksy's street art captures social and political commentary, reflecting the struggles and dynamics of modern society.

So too do sports mirror societal trends of their respective eras. Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in 1947 was a harbinger of the Civil Rights Movement and the shift away from racial segregation. Billie Jean King's 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" victory, following the passage of Title IX, marked a cultural shift toward gender equality in all walks of life. And in this day and age of social media domination – blamed for contributing to short attention spans – sports has responded by instituting changes to hasten games, such as the introduction of pitch clocks in baseball.

Regardless of whether these uncanny parallels are matters of cause, correlation or retrospective speculation, sports undeniably chronicles human history – our struggles, triumphs and trajectorial shifts.

While their primary undertakings may vary, the characteristics that define art are no less applicable to sports. They are both powerful mediums that offer a glimpse into the human experience, be it as a mode of expression, a source of exotic emotion or a tool for storytelling.

My argument started with James, and while I may have not satisfied him in the time since, I will attempt to compensate by restating his still-pertinent assertion: "We may someday be able to answer Tolstoy's exasperated and exasperating question: What is art? – but only when we learn to integrate our vision of Walcott on the back foot through the covers with the outstretched arm of the Olympic Apollo." (Clyde Walcott was a celebrated West Indian cricketer, while the Olympic Apollo is an ancient Greek statue representing classical artistic ideals.)

In other words, sports is better understood using art, but art can be better understood only when sports is not overlooked.

WEBSTER GROVES ARTS COMMISSION

2025 Achievement in the Arts Award

NOMINATIONS OPEN IN APRIL

Dual Exhibits on Display at Kooyumjian

by James Pepper
Contributing Photographer

The Kooyumjian Gallery in Sverdrup Hall has two exhibitions on display through April 22. Photographer Matika Wilbur's "Project 652: Changing The Way We See Native America" celebrates Native American life and cultures. Local artist Simiya Sudduth's sideshow spotlight includes cards and illustrations as part of a tarot-card based illustration series titled "The Confluence Tarot."

The gallery hosted a public opening Feb. 28, with Sudduth in attendance.



Artist Simiya Sudduth presents "The Confluence Tarot" in the Kooyumjian Gallery.



Eileen Cheong holds Sudduth's hand in front of the piece, "Justice," during the exhibition's opening.



Guests applaud Sudduth's remarks during opening festivities.

For more photographs from the event, visit websterjournal.com

THE JOURNAL

The Journal is an award-winning, student-run media outlet covering news and events of interest to the worldwide Webster University community. With consistent, frequent uploads online, daily social media posts and print editions published each semester, the publication values truthful, fair and quality independent coverage. The Journal also acts as a learning lab for students, creating hands-on opportunities in reporting, multimedia, photography, advertising and more.

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For any inquiries, contact us at websterjournal@gmail.com

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Student Clubs Step Up to Foster Student Arts

by Brian Rubin
Staff Writer

Hundreds of students, faculty and professionals have piled into art related events at Webster University like Kinematifest, Webster 48 and Central Region Audio Student Summit (CRASS) hosted by student clubs.
Senior Esha Vij, who has served as treasurer of the Webster Film Association (WFA) since her freshman year, considers the Senior Showcase one of her favorite events.

"It's the end of a finish line for our seniors," Vij said. "The past two years, it's been our most attended event from the student body. It's such a privilege for WFA (through SGA) to be able to fund that for our seniors. Previously, seniors have had to fund it for themselves."

Outside of its major events, WFA also hosts workshops and networking opportunities, which Vij says is crucial to the purpose of the organization.

"The two big things [about WFA] are network and community," Vij said. "Film is something that is so reliant on networks. You can't make a student film – to the extent that we try to make student films – by yourself. You need a camera, you need audio, you need light. There are so many different roles that need to be filled."

Another student organization that draws big crowds to its events is the Audio Engineering Society (AES), whose Student Section hosts weekly meetings on Tuesdays with a variety of events, from pizza parties, networking, live recordings in the studio and album reviews.

"We all listen to music, so it's cool for students to come in who love listening to music, but don't know what happens behind the scenes," junior Beth Davis said.

Davis, an audio for media arts major, is on the executive board of the AES Student Section.

"The CRASS [summit] is the biggest thing we do," Davis said. "Our [AES] section is well known because of CRASS. A lot of professionals admire what we do and are willing to support us, which is amazing. Because of that, we are able to build connections with them. We wouldn't be able to do that without the student section because we run it."

One thing that both WFA and AES have the opportunity to do is allow students to share their artwork with others.

"It is one thing showing [a student film] to friends and family, but [another] to get an outside perspective to a more general and broad audience," Vij said. "Getting the feedback really helps push you to make better art and hone in on your craft. When I say art, that can be journalism, that can be film [or] communication, in general."

Whether it be the AES, WFA or one of the other student organizations on campus, there are plenty of options for students to express their art. Students can find information on any of the organizations on Involved@Webster.



Webster students attend the 2024 AES Show in New York City. *Contributed by AES*