

CONFLUENCE

2021-2022 FEATURES STUDENTS, FACULTY, DONORS, AND ALUMNI WHO ARE IMPACTING THEIR WORLD



Dr. Wendy F. K'ah Skaahluwaa Todd (Smythe) (left) and her mother (right) in front of Haida mural

UMD

College of Arts,
Humanities, & Social Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH
Driven to Discover

CONFLUENCE

The Newsletter of the College of Arts,
Humanities, and Social Sciences at the
University of Minnesota Duluth

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DEAN'S CORNER

Adaptation really has been the name of the game over these past two years. We've learned to adapt (whether we wanted to or not) to Zoom meetings, working remotely, and wearing masks in public. We may have taken up new hobbies, and many of us have had to take on extra caring and educational responsibilities.

These changes have by no means been easy, and I don't think I'm alone in wishing that we didn't have a global pandemic to force these changes on us. However, the fact is we have adapted—and we will continue to adapt.

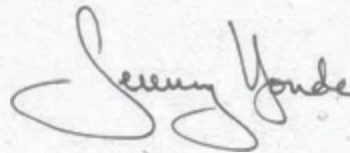
In many ways, adaptation is at the heart of what we do and who we are in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. We adjust and change because the world around us adjusts and changes, and this is the sort of nimbleness we instill in our students. We adapted to the creation of our new college by finding a new name that better reflected our combined identity, and we even adapted the name of this very publication!

There's a statistic that often gets cited about the jobs of tomorrow—that between 50 and 80 percent of the jobs 20 years from now don't yet exist. Students who study the fine arts, humanities, and social sciences are the ones who will be poised to take those jobs because they will have the critical thinking skills, cultural competency, and emotional intelligence that will allow them to thrive in new environments and situations.

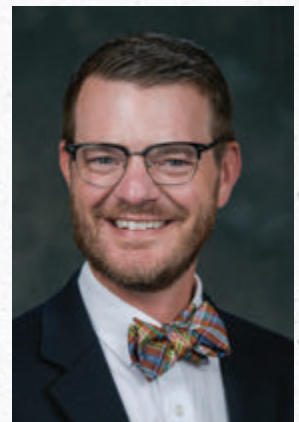
CAHSS students, staff, and faculty consistently make adaptation a hallmark of their work, and the stories included in this issue of *Confluence* present excellent examples of such tailoring. From our student Erin Cain, whose State Department internship in Germany had to be virtual (but follow German hours while in the US), to alumna Nancy XíaoRong Valentine's art examining themes of being Asian in rural America, to Dr. Sara Blaylock's exploration of how East German artists found space to express themselves in the face of cultural oppression from the government, to UMD Theatre finding unique ways to stage live productions, CAHSS consistently presents a model of adaptation and resilience.

There's one other big change happening right now that I know will excite many of you. AB Anderson Hall, long the home of Art & Design, Communication, History, and Philosophy, is finally undergoing a renovation! When it is ready for us to move back in, it will have significantly improved heating and cooling systems, updated classrooms, and spaces where students can gather to collaborate and study together. This project has been a long time coming, so we are all anxious for the renovations to be completed.

Stay safe and healthy out there!



Jeremy Youde
Dean, CAHSS



EDITOR'S NOTE



Whitney Jacobson

Whitney Jacobson
Editor, *Confluence*

Welcome to *Confluence: The Newsletter for the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences!* In last year's *CLArion*, I forecasted change in the upcoming year, and here we are.

After the new college name was confirmed last summer, Karley Schoenberg (*Confluence's* designer) and I collaborated in Fall 2021 to propose a fresh name for the publication. We liked "Confluence" for many reasons including its definition as "a coming or flowing together, meeting, or gathering at one point" (Merriam-Webster) which coordinates well with the merging of the former College of Liberal Arts and School of Fine Arts, the intersectional relationships and research in the college, the way art (whether in a gallery, on a stage, in a video, or on paper) brings people together, and the confluence of the St. Louis River with Lake Superior and other nearby rivers.

Coinciding with the publication's name change was another forged connection; this year's newsletter staff includes a student intern: Kiana Yarbrough. It was important to me to provide a student with experience in publishing and hopefully propel them to future successes. Kiana has been a pleasure to work with and an asset to the team.

Beyond those exciting developments for the present and future, this past year, I eagerly searched for the earliest issues of *CLArion* because we didn't have an organized archive of the publication. I am thrilled to announce you're reading the tenth anniversary issue of the newsletter, and UMD Librarian Laura Vavrosky has crafted lovely web archives for *CLArion* and *Confluence* in the UMD Digital Conservancy Collection. Thanks to Karley Schoenberg, links to all previous issues can additionally be found on the newsletter's website: cahss.d.umn.edu/confluence. I encourage you to peruse the collection to witness the publication's evolution, seek out familiar faces, and remember activities and accomplishments from the past decade.



CLArion, 2011

Furthermore, if you have a story, accomplishment, publication, milestone, or comment to share, please send an email to me at newsedit@d.umn.edu to help carry the publication into its next decade!

"Confluence." Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, INC., 2022, z.umn.edu/7lg2.

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AN INTERNSHIP WITH THE US STATE DEPARTMENT PROVIDES A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

By: Jack Weidner and Cheryl Reitan

Erin Cain (Political Science and Philosophy '23) entered her freshman year at UMD with a unique perspective; she had recently returned from a self-funded backpacking trip through Europe. Inspired by her favorite stop, Germany, Cain decided to take an introductory German class during her first semester. Through that class, Cain would discover a way to reconnect to the country she had come to love.

However, Cain's first day of German class didn't go quite how she had expected. "Dan Nolan, the professor, came in just rattling off German," said Cain. "It was like a full immersion class; I was really thrown into the water."

Early on in the semester, Dr. Nolan (German Studies) announced an internship advisor named Tom Hanson would be meeting with UMD students over a couple of days. Hanson is the University of Minnesota Duluth Alworth Institute Diplomat

in Residence and a retired Foreign Service Officer for the US State Department. Intrigued, Cain decided to talk to Nolan after class to learn more about this opportunity with Hanson. "I was told that if I'd like a career in international affairs, he's the man to talk to," said Cain. "Tom and I hit it off right away."

In her first meeting with Hanson, Cain realized the true scope of this internship opportunity. Hanson explained that through the US State Department, students would serve in US embassies and consulates around the world. These interns take the place of actual diplomats and serve under the title of Foreign Service Officer (FSO).

Most students wait until their junior year to apply for the prestigious internship, but Cain wanted to get in early. With Hanson as her advisor, Cain began working towards an internship in Frankfurt, Germany.

Hanson was especially helpful. "I thought I was supposed to write a 2000 word personal statement," said Cain, who had crafted a long, heartfelt essay, "but around 10 o'clock the night before it was due, I realized it was 2,000 characters, not 2,000 words." Panicked, Cain emailed Hanson hoping he could be of some assistance.

Much to her relief, Hanson was writing a book at the time and happened to be up late as well.

"I kept telling him, I am so sorry for keeping you up," said Cain, "but he was totally fine with it. It was so nice to have somebody be so willing to help me out." After a night of reworking, Cain had her personal statement ready for submission.

In December 2020, Cain found out that she had gotten the internship. There was, however, a change. The internship would be virtual given the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the summer following her sophomore year, Cain was officially serving as an intern for the US Consulate in Frankfurt, Germany. She worked closely with her mentor, Hamda Yusuf. Yusuf made Cain feel comfortable, ensuring she could ask questions and figure out what tasks suited her.

"I discovered I was quite good at condensing information," Cain said. Her assignments often required her to summarize documents and reports. "I would spend a few days researching and combing through information, and then I presented it as bullet points on one page."

Cain had found her niche at the consulate and became a useful addition to the team. The time difference was sometimes difficult, though. She'd often work from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. Nevertheless, Cain found the meetings to be especially engaging.

"Meeting virtually gave me some really good insight, as the state department is becoming more and more virtual," said Cain, "It was quite an interesting opportunity."

Cain is now a junior at UMD, studying political science and philosophy with a minor in German studies. Hanson, who guided her throughout the application process, continues to serve as an advisor to Cain.

Cain's time with the US State Department allowed her to discover her own interests within foreign policy. "I've been considering going to grad school, focusing on policy and violence against women," said Cain, "I think the state department made me more interested in how problems are expressed globally."





“EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED”: Mural Inspired by UMD Professor Celebrates Traditional Haida Knowledge

On September 12, 2021, Dr. Wendy F. K’ah Skaahluwaa Todd (Smythe) (Alaska Native Haida) (American Indian Studies and Earth and Environmental Sciences) and UMD students Arianna Northbird (Ojibwe) and Teague Ozhaawaashkwa Miigwan Goodsky (Ojibwe) were present in Seattle, Washington for a ceremonial blessing of “Everything Depends on Everything Else,” a mural created by internationally recognized artist and former neuroscientist Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya and inspired by Todd’s background as a Haida woman working in science.

The mural depicts three diverse Haida women, the three elements of air, water, and earth, and the common Haida phrase, “Áajii ‘wáadluwaan uu gud ahl íiwaagang,” meaning “Everything is connected.” The mural is the first time the Haida language has been publicly displayed; to put some of the Haida spirit into the art, Haida artists Chessaly Towne, Seri Sims, and Lisa Ka’illjuus Lang painted the phrase. Todd appreciates how the public artwork honors an Indigenous knowledge system without exception.

Todd’s piece is part of the mural series, “Findings,” Phingbodhipakkiya began creating in 2020 in places across the U.S. to celebrate women who have advanced science. A mutual friend, Lisa White (University of California Museum of Paleontology), connected the artist with Todd while Phingbodhipakkiya was working in San Francisco and experienced trouble finding diverse women scientists for her upcoming mural.

After two 3-hour interviews, Todd shared her body of work from the past fifteen years. In reviewing the materials, Phingbodhipakkiya noticed when Todd talked about traditional knowledge, she often referenced air, land, and water as well as the Haida’s matriarchal society and cycles of knowledge—themes that became inspiration for the mural.

Phingbodhipakkiya then drafted her vision for the mural and shared it with Todd, who asked for only a few changes, such as making sure each woman had different eye, hair, and skin colors to ensure the mural was representative of all Haida women and

conveyed the value of their community in Todd's success.

Ultimately, Todd was surprised and pleased with the mural. "The Haida people only use red, black, and white in their traditional artwork", so when Todd saw the piece, she thought, "OH! We're colorful.' It was interesting to see how Amanda understood Haida people after researching us." Additionally, the artist had woven in references to Todd's past, such as a depiction of her childhood friend in one of the women, fish eggs as an allusion to Todd's membership in the Xáadas (Haida) Nation of the Sdast'as clan, a raven and eagle representing the two matriarchal lines of the Haida people, and rocks for her work with metamorphic green schist.

Phingbodhipakkia had asked Todd for images of Haida regalia, but the artist didn't end up incorporating it into the mural because she didn't want to be extractive of native culture when she's not native. Todd appreciated how much respect, consideration, and awareness Phingbodhipakkia displayed while working with another culture.

Todd obtained a grant from Sealaska Corporation to bring elders and community members from Alaska to the ceremony in Seattle. Around thirty people from Alaska and other parts of the country were present at the ceremony to perform a song and dance blessing. While Seattle was simply the next place on Phingbodhipakkia's mural list, it coincidentally has a large Haida community, and a group of nearby Fond du Lac Ojibwe community members also joined in the ceremony and shared in the food, prayer, and stories.

Teague Goodsky reflected, "The Haida women are so powerful, and they lead their culture in so many ways...The Haida women, who this mural was dedicated to, seemed to have no fear. They were bold, they were loud, and they were so completely happy to be together that they gave strength to everyone in the room. The way they laugh (and the things they laugh about) is wildly infectious.

"The most memorable moment for me was when we were all invited to participate in 'The Friendship Song.' We were taught the basic gestures and words, but the Haida women led. You couldn't help but feel loved and connected in that moment."

Todd hoped the elders, who were part of the boarding school generation and associate education with pain, would see the mural as a sign of respect for their knowledge systems and help them heal from their past. She also wanted the youth to connect with elders, see the knowledge systems displayed in a positive way, and empower them to keep moving knowledge forward. Todd stated, "The Native youth often hide in academia because it's uncomfortable to navigate two knowledge systems, but I hope they realize our knowledge systems are valid and they are proud."

The mural will be displayed for five years, and Todd hopes everyone will see a different way of communicating science to the public and Indigenous viewers will take heart in it: "Someone from the village can do it! You can make an impact."

"ÁAJII 'WÁADLUWAAN UU GUD AHL ÍIWAAGANG"



Todd (right) and friend (left)



Arianna Northbird (left) and Teague Goodsky (middle)



Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt and Guillermo Deisler, *Mail Art Collaborations*, 1987, courtesy of the Artist and ChertLüdde, Berlin.

UNKNOWN, BEHIND THE WALL: The Rediscovery of East German Experimental Art

By: Cheryl Reitan

Dr. Sara Blaylock (Art History) is sharing her rediscovery of East German artists of the 1980s in a recent publication. Her book, *Parallel Public: Experimental Art in Late East Germany* (MIT Press, March 2022), is currently being celebrated with an art exhibition at the Tweed Museum of Art and the presentation of several lectures, including events at the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Unknown at the time to most of the world, hundreds of artists in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) created works of art through performances, photography, Super 8 film, graphics, and other media. Away from the eyes of Western art critics and art historians, these experimental artists practiced their art in front of the public. They performed in full view of the GDR police in those final decades before the Berlin Wall fell.

Blaylock's book highlights the work of dozens of these artists.

She calls out the story of one woman who was constantly in the eye of East Germany's secret police: Gabriele Kachold Stötzer.

A photographer, filmmaker, and writer, Stötzer was a rebellious and radical artist. She spent a year in jail for circulating a petition that contested a state decision to expatriate a beloved artist, the singer Wolfgang Biermann.

"She went into prison as an activist, and came out an artist," Blaylock says. Stötzer coordinated the GDR's first feminist art collective, the Women Artists Group Exterra XX. She is just one of the artists profiled in Blaylock's *Parallel Public* as well as in the exhibition at the Tweed.

"She started to bring women together to create art," says Blaylock. "One of their films was called *Frauenträume* or *Dreams of Women*." It's a series of vignettes that begins with an image of women



Dr. Sara Blaylock

sitting in rocking chairs with their backs to the camera. “At one point, Stötzer’s sister Ingrid is wearing a kaftan as she stands on top of the roof,” Blaylock continues. “The music in the background is an ethereal sound of birds. [Ingrid is] standing, she’s pretending to fly, and she feels really free, and that’s her dream.”

From Stötzer’s release from prison in 1978 to the present, she has been a force in the art world. In fact, Stötzer was part of the first group of people to occupy a Stasi headquarters in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall in Fall 1989. It is thanks to these efforts that the GDR’s secret surveillance files are available to us today. Blaylock addresses Stasi legacies in her book as well as in her exhibition at the Tweed.

ART ON DISPLAY

UMD is featuring a unique exhibit as a companion to the book. Blaylock, along with Dr. Sarah James, a Gerda Henkel Professorial Fellow and recently named senior curator at the Tate Liverpool, has curated the exhibit in the Tweed Museum of Art. Entitled “Anti-Social Art: Experimental Practices in Late East Germany,” the exhibit debuted in January and runs until May 15, 2022.

The work in the Tweed references another exhibit in East Berlin which opened on May 30, 1989 and ran for an entire month at the state-run Galerie Weißer Elefant (White Elephant Gallery). “That opening was held just a few months before the Berlin Wall fell in November,” Blaylock says. “It was evidence that things were changing in East Germany in terms of what was permissible. I can’t stress enough how public this work was.”

Few were aware of the cutting edge of East German performance art. Blaylock says the 1989 exhibit featured an artist “wearing a sadomasochistic mask made out of a sort of a plaster, and he cut holes in it to show the brains behind it. Probably the most shocking piece,” was another artist “dipping her head in pig’s blood.”

The art was a product of the frustration of artists who were locked in a city behind a wall. At the same time, “the official culture [authorities] permitted East German artists to put on an exhibition for a whole month with lots of programming,” Blaylock says. The 1989 exhibit was a clear example of the political climate leaning toward freedom.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING MORE

Other events related to the exhibition included:

- A UMD Visual Culture Lecture Series event, February 8
- “Culture and Social Value in Postwar Britain and Communist Germany,” a book reading by Blaylock at the UMD Library, featuring Dr. Paula Derdiger (English), April 5
- A Zoom interview with Gabriele Stötzer, held in two languages, English and German, April 20

Blaylock’s work has been supported from the start by national and international funders, including the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the College Art Association. Additionally, a Grant-in-Aid from the University of Minnesota has funded Blaylock’s exhibition at the Tweed.

The Historians of German, Scandinavian and Central European Art have just awarded her its Emerging Scholars Prize for her text on Cornelia Schleime’s Stasi Series.



Poster designed by Kayla Anderson
Graphic Design & Marketing / Art History major

ZOOMING TO THE TOP: Jay and JL Jackson Make an Impact

By: Cheryl Reitan

It took Jay Jackson three interviews to get Zoom founder Eric Yuan and his team to hire him in 2013. Jay didn't get the salary he wanted, but he got something more valuable, the ability to sell to any kind of company. "Don't restrict my dirt," he said during the negotiations. "That's the only restriction I had. I needed to be able to sell anywhere." He sold and sold, and Zoom grew and grew!

THE START AT UMD

Jay and JL (JL is pronounced Jay-El. It stands for Jody Leigh.) hardly knew each other at UMD. Jay studied communication ('86) and was the skating hockey mascot, the Maroon Loon. He was so good at bringing out fans, he received a three-year scholarship for his efforts.

JL graduated from UMD with an undergraduate degree in education in 1986. She met and married Jay, and earned her master's degree in training and development from the UMN-Twin Cities in 1994.

LIFE WITH ZOOM

After landing the sales position with Zoom, life went into hyperdrive. Jay's first sales were large. "I sold Michigan State. That was 45,000 licenses," he says. "Then I landed Brigham Young University, another 40,000 licenses." Word was getting out, and the contracts were "starting to really add up...I had clients coming to me."

Jay stayed with Zoom for six years. He concentrated primarily on educational institutions and healthcare networks. He's proud to have played a part in, as he says, "The highest quality unified meeting experience to the world at large."



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Jay and JL haven't stopped making a difference. They recently presented a gift to UMD to use for experiential learning offerings. It's added a new dimension to UMD.

In 2021, faculty in the UMD College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences submitted proposals for student-centered experiential learning opportunities that included applied or hands-on learning outside the classroom. The grants are substantial, \$1,000 per student with a \$10,000 maximum. Applicants were notified in March 2022, and projects will begin for Summer or Fall 2022. The UMD Labovitz School of Business and Economics has followed suit, with a similar experiential learning program.

JL, with her strong teaching background, says, "Companies are eager for young talent, and students want real-world situations. Experimental learning makes sense."

Eva Jackson, Jay and JL's daughter is an example. Eva studied supply chain economics. She interned with and later was hired by a golf shirt importing company in Minnesota. That experience led to a position at the Boeing Company.

The Jacksons have seen the success first hand. They are excited about the new opportunity they have created at UMD. It will give students a head start but it will also provide assistance for companies. "A young person will come in with fresh ideas because they are living it," JL says. "It's great on so many levels."





A MESSAGE FROM THE CAHSS DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Wow, what a year it has been. I am continually surprised by all the twists and turns of our world. Just as we think we are finding a flow, there is something new we must adapt to and navigate to keep going. This occurrence has been especially true here in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Yet, our students, faculty, and staff have found ways to stay engaged and innovate. It's inspiring!

You have helped us get here. This past year, hundreds of students benefited from scholarship and award dollars. This financial support eased their burdens and lifted their spirits, motivating them to keep pushing through. We also launched new projects through our Experiential Learning Opportunities Fund. Through this fund, students had the opportunity to work hand in hand with faculty creating video game consoles in Communication, work to better our community with the First Ladies of the Hillside in Duluth, and explore careers by pursuing meaningful internships.

Furthermore, we launched a new scholarship program to enhance the diversity of our student body. A diverse student body enriches the learning experience for all by invigorating the academic dialogue. After careful consultation with students, faculty, and staff, the Aequitas Scholarship will be awarded to returning students who contribute to creating a more diverse student body in our college. If you are interested in learning more about this program, please reach out.

Lastly, we are excited to announce the long overdue renovation of AB Anderson Hall! More to come on this exciting project that will make this space more comfortable for students studying History, Communication, and Art and Design. We have several naming opportunities available to help secure your legacy at UMD.

Again, thank you for all you do to make UMD a fun and engaging place to learn, grow, and create. Our faculty, students, and staff are enriched by the support of our alumni and friends. If you wish to learn more about any of the opportunities available for you to join us, please contact me at jberges@d.umn.edu or at 218-726-6708. I'd love to hear from you!

Warmly,

Jennifer Berges
Director of Development, CAHSS



STRENGTH IN ARTISTRY: The Audacity to be Asian in Rural America: We owe you no apologies

By: Kiana Yarbrough



Snake
Watercolor & Chinese Ink
27 x 40 inches



XiaoRong Valentine

From December 1-17, 2021, alumna Nancy Valentine's art series "The Audacity to be Asian in Rural America: we owe you no apologies" was displayed on the second floor of UMD's Kathryn A. Martin Library and Lake Superior College's Harold P. Erikson Library in a co-hosted exhibition. For nine years, UMD's Library Director Matthew Rosendahl had looked for an inspiring image to fill the empty walls of the library's second story leading up to the Annex; after being recommended to view Valentine's empowering artwork, he knew her story would be the one to attract and inspire UMD's community.

Valentine's collection is a part of "Artists Respond, Equitable Rural Futures," a project of Springboard for the Arts supported by the Blandin Foundation. It proudly features the 12 Chinese zodiac animals through the intricate, yet expressive mediums of Chinese ink and watercolors activated by local lake water on rice paper; each painting vividly portrays the stories of the "Hao Family's (her maternal side) Chinese American immigrant experience in rural, western Minnesota."

All animals are outlined with black, prominent Chinese Ink with lingering watercolors filling the blank space, as if to give spirit. To represent her family, Valentine painted "her mother (ox), brother (dragon), grandmother (dog), grandfather (pig), and herself (monkey)." Through each representation, she hopes to convey the many stories of her family through "each animal's reputed attributes, symbolism, expressive brush strokes, and color choice."



Dragon
Watercolor & Chinese Ink
27 x 40 inches



Tiger Mom
Watercolor & Chinese Ink
27 x 40 inches



Rat
Watercolor & Chinese Ink
27 x 40 inches

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and as a response to the tragic Atlanta shootings, Valentine (Communication & Writing Studies '13) turned her pain into art and uses the traveling exhibition as an invitation for folks to see the scrolls and hear her family's stories through her artist talks. As an artist, Valentine understands her art is personal and does not represent all members of the Asian American Pacific Island community. She believes in the importance of giving voices to rural-residing Asian Americans. "Asian' and 'Rural' are two identities that intersect and foster a unique experience, but that experience is not new." Asian folks have long lived in rural areas, and they deserve equitable representation.

Valentine was raised in Fergus Falls, a rural community where roots run deep. Despite having a connection to this close community and her family, at times it was difficult to embrace and appreciate her Chinese identity. According to Valentine, it is difficult to form a concrete idea of your heritage culture without direct exposure. To deepen this connection, after graduation, she returned to China to visit her aunt who helped revive her cultural identity. In the words of Valentine, the time spent with her aunt provided, "Appreciation, adoration, and a deep respect for everything I knew was valuable, but I didn't value throughout my life."

A year after this trip, Valentine was given a residency opening at Kaddatz Artist Lofts on the commitment that she would dedicate herself to an art medium. With a hobbyist's background in art, she committed herself to watercolor painting. Valentine self-taught using materials affordable to her: Crayola watercolors and Canson paper sourced from a big-box store.

From there, she was able to secure a Career Development Grant from the Lakes Region Arts Council to obtain professional grade materials for her growing pursuit in becoming a professional artist.

After hearing word of her artistry, Dr. David Beard (English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies), former professor of Valentine, connected her to Matt Rosendahl, UMD's library director, and Kate Rolfe, LSC librarian. From there, Rosendahl and Rolfe collaborated and coordinated Valentine's exhibition while Beard spread the word and obtained support from various entities.

With support from a Career Development Grant received from Lake Region Arts Council, Valentine plans to finish her artwork of "The Audacity to be Asian in Rural America: We owe you no apologies," by mounting the rice paper scrolls to silk brocade, archival and conceptual embellishments used in traditional Chinese scroll paintings. The finished art collection will be on display at the MacRostie Art Center in Grand Rapids in April & May of 2022 and will be open for exhibition invitation starting in June 2022 with priority given to rural communities.

To stay updated with her latest endeavors, Valentine invites those interested to visit her website nancyxvalentine.com and follow her on Facebook and Instagram [@nancyxvalentine](https://www.instagram.com/nancyxvalentine).



“LET’S DO OUTDOOR THEATRE” UMD’s Theatre Community Goes Down the Rabbit Hole

When the Theatre Department proposed *Alice in Wonderland* as part of the 2021-2022 play slate, Dr. Jenna Soleo-Shanks (Theatre) embraced the opportunity to take on the stylized play and surprise the audience while challenging students and helping them succeed. She said, “If we have to do things differently, and we have a window to be outside, let’s do outdoor theatre.”

However, Soleo-Shanks didn’t want to simply move the stage outside due to COVID-19 safety recommendations. Instead, play attendees walked through Wonderland with Alice in an immersive experience at the Glensheen Mansion. Rather than building the set, the cast created a site-specific performance by playing with and embracing the natural stages at Glensheen, like the path to the boathouse and various framed open areas. Moving outdoors wasn’t the only adaptation to the production. Tickets (which quickly sold out) were limited to 50-60 people

per show, as attendees needed to walk from one scene to the next and circle closely around the actors because no microphones were used. “Many audience members were hesitant to get close like we wanted, but school kids were great!” Soleo-Shanks reflected, “At times, it was hard to read the audience—they looked scared, but later conversations revealed they were actually engaged.”

Soleo-Shanks emphasized those adaptations were a group decision: “Students knew we weren’t doing this just to be different or try something new—we were trying to solve the problem, and they embraced it. The best decisions were not from the top down.” When someone initially proposed doing the play at Glensheen, the group instantly responded with: “Yes, and....”

Students, whether actors, designers, or technicians, rose to the occasion and contributed to the success of the play. Soleo-

Shanks noted, “Everyone had to reinvent their job. Each scene was its own mini-play: characters and technicians became their own team.” The final scene consisted of the White Rabbit running off to the boathouse to fight the Jabberwocky for Alice, and it was so successful the smoke, thunder, and fire effects spooked some of the attendees enough to check with the crew that the White Rabbit actor was safe.

Though Alice was easily recognizable in her blue dress, actors were pushed to reinterpret characters and play with the new environment. For instance, the Cheshire Cat actor largely remained in the dark with lighted neon goggles and a neon handheld mask, so she could disappear and reappear. During the tea party scene, the Mad Hatter actor so embraced the chaos of the spectacle that he literally jumped over one of the play attendees.

Additionally, light and sound technicians needed to carry speakers in backpacks and lighting instruments from one scene to the next. “Usually, backstage, you press a button,” Soleo-Shanks said. “The technicians did so much more for this play than what you’d usually expect them to do.”

Problem solving was a consistent feature of the production; the play had to cancel one show due to rain and struggled with the wind on two other occasions. However, Soleo-Shanks asserted, “Every play has hiccups, even Broadway—those problems push students to apply their creativity, be

resilient, critically analyze situations, adapt, and function as a team. Those are skills you need in any field.” One problem was Alice’s quick change in the opening scene. Alice started out as a regular person in the audience and needed to change into her blue dress in under a minute while outside. Luckily, the crew found a private place in the woods. Additionally, during rehearsals, the Humpty Dumpty scene changed location three times before settling on its final location shortly before the play opened.

While Soleo-Shanks emphasized UMD’s theatre community is eager to return to traditional spaces in the 2022-2023 season, she also noted they will continue to adjust and embrace opportunities as they present themselves: “Although it was a difficult project on many levels, *Alice* was rewarding in the way it stretched everyone’s creative muscles. If students want to go outside again in the future, we will go outside.”

In considering adaptations of the past year, Soleo-Shanks said, “Theatre tells stories. We tell stories about history, politics, literature, cross-cultural experiences, etc. But putting on a play is like a capstone—it’s ephemeral. We finish and must recover even as we’re working on the next play. But we also must make space to be able to reflect on the play and learn from it. The Liberal Arts develops those reflection skills and can help the Fine Arts articulate goals and how theatre connects with all parts of society. The goal of the humanities is to ask questions and articulate answers. Theatre plays a part in that endeavor.”

For those planning ahead, below is a preview of next year’s play slate:

Main Street

September 30–October 8, 2022

Stupid F*ing Bird

November 4–12, 2022

Dancing Home Dance Concert

December 2–4, 2022

Twelfth Night

February 3–11, 2023

Silent Sky

March 3–19, 2023

Singin’ in the Rain

April 14–22, 2023

For more information visit tickets.umn.edu



AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT: Transdisciplinary Engagements with Contemporary Indigenous Thinkers Seeks to Transform the Work of the University

Dr. David Syring (Anthropology & Multidisciplinary Research and Creativity) had long wanted to expand his engagement and work with Indigenous thinkers beyond his classroom. In December 2020, his musings got the spark needed to create Transdisciplinary Engagements with Contemporary Indigenous Thinkers (TECIT).

While reflecting on all the engagements academic life makes possible but which the COVID-19 pandemic had deterred, he thought of one of his favorite writers, Linda Hogan, a Chickasaw novelist, essayist, and environmentalist, and questioned, “With all of the possibilities of Zoom, I wonder if Linda Hogan would be open to doing a virtual event?” He immediately sent a message to what he assumed was Hogan’s agent’s email address, inquiring if Hogan was doing virtual events during COVID-19. Twenty minutes later, Hogan herself responded, saying, “I would love to do this. Let’s talk.”

Syring didn’t want to do a one-off book reading but create a chance to engage “contemporary Indigenous thinkers to explore how Indigenous thought can be made more central to education and research. The goal is to make this inclusive of diverse perspectives and to influence thinking on a wide range of topics, from how research and education are carried out, to who benefits and participates.” His prior conversations on the Campus Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Committee with Dr. Jennifer Liang (Integrated Biosciences) about bringing specialists to campus and supporting scholarship had laid a rich foundation for TECIT.

The Integrated Biosciences Graduate Program Liang directs at UMD encompasses all biological sciences, from biochemistry to

global warming. Having that range of focus in the same room promotes forging connections rather than dividing into specialties. Syring reflected, “One of the fundamental commentaries from Indigenous cultures and thinkers is the separation of disciplines is nonsensical, not only from a cultural perspective but from the perspective of good science, making good empirical observations. Excising all those ways of thinking means you miss things.”

After Dr. Melissa Nelson (Professor of Indigenous Sustainability at Arizona State University and member of Turtle Mountain Band Chippewa Indians) presented on February 3, 2022, Liang considered: when we write scientific papers for other scientists, we take the position we are writing from an objective point of view. There’s no acknowledgement we’re also telling a story, or when we make tables and figures, we’re considering the aesthetic beauty of those. They’re supposed to be objective. But the reality is we are telling a story and want them to be beautiful.

Liang asserts, “Scientists are worried we’re not doing a good job of communicating the importance of our work to people in our community, so this project is a good opportunity for us to learn how to do that better.”

Peter Murdock Levin, ABD (Institute on the Environment), Dr. Katy Chapman (Math, Science & Technology, UMN Crookston), and Dr. Rebecca Webster (American Indian Studies) have also shaped the events. The group received \$12,000 from the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) and another \$3,000 from the Institute on the Environment (IonE). Dr. Laurie Moberg (IAS) has been instrumental in helping connect the collaborative with UMN systemwide communities.

“The goal is to make this inclusive of diverse perspectives and to influence thinking on a wide range of topics, from how research and education are carried out, to who benefits and participates.”



Robin Wall Kimmerer | Photo Credit: Dale Kakkak

After much planning, Transdisciplinary Engagements with Contemporary Indigenous Thinkers held its first event on January 20, 2022 when it hosted Vern Northrup (Fond Du Lac Band of Ojibwe), artist and retired wildlands firefighter. Since then, Mohawk Nation seedkeeper Rowen White spoke, and this year's Overman Lecture events featured Dr. Robin Kimmerer, best-selling author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Dr. Kimmerer is a member of the Potawatami Indigenous nation, and a botanist. As they plan events for Fall 2022, TECIT welcomes speaker recommendations from the community, and graduate students have already made suggestions.

In addition to organizing speakers, the collaborative has set up “learning communities” so that people interested in going beyond hearing a virtual talk may connect with others who wish to read and discuss the work of the Indigenous thinkers who present.

When considering how the project came together, Syring remarked, “It’s all improvising.” As a systemwide project, TECIT has needed to navigate different campus common times for events, but they’ve embraced and are energized by the adaptations: everything is virtual, so there’s little carbon footprint, and people from Minnesota to international locations can attend either synchronously or asynchronously via the recording.

The group hopes this project will grow and serve as a model for other universities to imitate. When they introduce speakers at events, they have been stating: “Our collaborative grows out of the conviction that land acknowledgments without action are hollow symbols. We are taking action to invite Indigenous thinkers to share with the university community and beyond because we want to transform the work of the university to do more than acknowledge—we want the material and intellectual activities of the university to benefit and include Indigenous individuals and communities.”

“Our collaborative grows out of the conviction that land acknowledgments without action are hollow symbols.”

UMD ART MAJOR GIVES LIFE TO A POPULAR CARTOON SERIES

By: Eva Moua and Cheryl Reitan

Trevor Klueg (Graphic Design '08) works as a composer and technical director at Warner Brothers Studios in Burbank, California. His career path took him from working with friends, to four years at Titmouse Animation Studios, and now to Warner Bros. He credits his zeal for creativity, innovation, and originality with much of his success.

"Titmouse is famous for their litany of Adult Swim and alternative cartoons," he says. "When I worked there, once a year, they would do a thing called Five Second Day." They closed down the studio for a whole day for employees to work on a new project.

Klueg made a big impression on the cartoon scene in the Los Angeles animation community. Eric "Eerock" Erickson, an editor for Warner Bros., noticed and lured Klueg away to work on *Teen Titans Go!*. He's been on the team for nearly seven years, but Klueg's story goes back a lot farther than that.

Klueg attended the University of Minnesota Duluth, majoring in graphic design. His career at UMD allowed him to grow and learn from many professors including Associate Professor Steve Bardoff (Graphic Design), who taught Klueg's interactive design class.

The computerization of animation was so new, Bardoff and the students were learning out of the Adobe Flash book together. "Who knew I would one day be making a living off of Flash," Klueg says.

After graduating from UMD, Klueg had a few friends in Long Beach, California. They offered him a place to crash for a few months. When Klueg first arrived in Los Angeles, he had a meeting with Kirk Tingblad, a UMD alumnus, as well as cartoonist Alex Kirwan, who is from Duluth and is currently in California and a supervising producer of the Warner Bros. animation "Looney

Tunes Cartoons." Amazed at connecting with animators from UMD and Duluth, Klueg says, "I was just a kid growing up; the Kirwans literally lived on the same street as me." Klueg was impressed. "I got the 'whoa,' this could be a job, this is a thing you can do."



"I realized I wanted to learn more about animation," Klueg says. "I created my own 'poor man's' masters." He signed up for a variety of classes at Santa Monica Community College. He started an animation club with his friends, and they made animated pilot episodes. Their animated film *An Awkward Situation* won Best Student Film at the Burbank International Film Festival in 2011.

Because of the Burbank Film Fest win, he was recruited by Shannon Prynosi to become a composer intern for Titmouse, working on the animated show,

Metalocalypse. Afterward, a friend of Klueg's began working on *Teen Titans Go!* and hired him.

Being a composer is one of the most essential roles in creating a film. They are responsible for making sure all visual elements flow easily. These components include background editing, physical compositing, digital image manipulation, and green screen and color correction.

It is easy to be lifted up by Klueg's enthusiasm and dedication. His motto is...

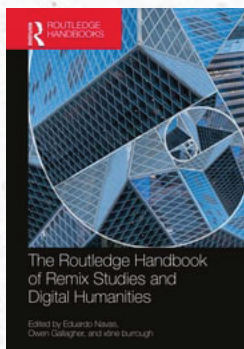
"[YOU] GOTTA HAVE FUN AND ALSO GET THE JOB DONE."

CAHSS NEWS

Share your news here—recent research, publications, events, achievements, and/or accolades. Email your announcements to newsedit@d.umn.edu.

Alumnus **Kaleb Anderson** (Theatre and Communication '04) cut the ribbon at UMD Theatre's newly renovated ADA compliant Box Office at Marshall Performing Arts Center on October 15, 2021.

The College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences is the new home of *The Bark* (formerly *The Statesman*). The student news organization turns 75 this year; staff launched a new weekly newsletter, moved their offices, and gained a new editorial adviser and administrative home in 2021. They also continue to win awards for their reporting, garnering 11 awards in 2020-21 from the Minnesota Newspaper Association.



Dr. David Beard and Dr. Lisa Horton (English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies) published a chapter, "The Critical Role of New Media in Transforming Gamers Into Remixers," in the book *The Critical Role of New Media in Transforming Gamers Into Remixers* (Routledge, 2021).

Dr. Teresa A. Bertossi (Environmental Studies and Geography) along with UMD students helped host Healthy

Lives Day on October 30, 2021 in support of adequate access to healthy food.

Assistant Professor **Thomas Jacobsen** (Theatre) composed the musical of *Maxa: The Maddest Woman in the World* which premiered in the Marshall Performing Arts Center on October 14, 2021. *Maxa* is also a Participating Production in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

Assistant Professor **Whitney Jacobson** (English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies) interviewed author Andrea Gilats about the memoir, *After Effects: A Memoir of Complicated Grief*, and published two book reviews in *Split Rock Review*.

Professor **Tadd Johnson** (American Indian Studies) received NAFOA Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his decades of work as a faculty member, liaison, tribal court attorney and judge, and the University of Minnesota's first senior director of American Indian Tribal Nations relations.



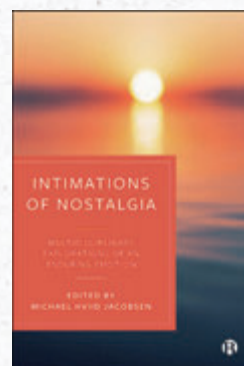
Current student **Seeley Mangelsen** (History and Professional Writing '22) published two poems in *Bringing Joy: A Local Literary Welcome*, released by Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College.

Alumna **Siona Roberts** (Geographic Information Science and Cartography '18) was awarded the first ever "Young Professional Award" from the MN GIS/LIS consortium.

Associate Professor **Joellyn Rock** (Digital Art) created *MASKING*, an experimental video with mixes of Zoom-remote and in-person interviews, to document the evolution of COVID-19 through 2020-2021. The visual narrative draws from historical imagery of plague and pandemic masks, theatrical and ritual masques, protective masks designed for science and medical use, and homespun mask-making rising to meet the supply demands of the COVID-19 crisis.

Dr. Diana Shapiro's (Music) article, "Forging Relationship in Two Minutes - Getting to Know Your Instrument Before Performance," was selected for publication in the *American Music Teacher Journal* and her presentation, "Congratulations! You Have a Partner, Now What....," was selected for the World Piano Conference in Serbia (October 2021).

Dr. Krista Sue-Lo Twu (English) organized an event in commemoration of 700 years since the death of Dante, author of the *Divine Comedy*. It included participation from students at UMD and high school students enrolled in Mater Dei, a local Catholic college preparatory experience for high schoolers.



Dr. Janelle L. Wilson (Studies in Justice, Culture, & Social Change) collaborated with Michael Hviid Jacobsen (Aalborg University) on "Sociology and Nostalgia: Micro-, Meso- and Macro-level Dimensions of an Ambiguous Emotion," published in *Intimations of Nostalgia: Multidisciplinary Explorations of an Enduring Emotion* (Bristol University Press, 2022).

Dr. Elizabethada Wright (English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies) contributed to and co-edited with Christina R. Pinkston (Norfolk State University) the anthology *Catholic Women's Rhetoric in the United States* (Lexington Books, 2022).

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Raymond Dodge Comstock, teacher of viola and violin and conductor of UMD's symphony orchestra until retirement, passed away on Tuesday, December 14, 2021, at his home in Baldwin City, Kansas.

Dr. Karissa White Isaacs, Tweed Museum of Art curator and tribal member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, passed away on Monday, December 13, 2021.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH

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A MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Among the things I will remember about college, my internship with *Confluence* will be a fond recollection, for it taught me the delights of communication, collaboration, creation, and publication.

Before participating in this internship, I had always dreamt of working for a publication. I admired, and continue to admire, those who work in the publishing industry, as they hold the ability to create something intricate and powerful via a collection of words. So, with my dream in mind, I seized this once in a blue moon experience.

While working for *Confluence*, I was responsible for writing the story about alumna Nancy XiáoRong Valentine's exhibition, "The Audacity to be Asian in Rural America: We owe you no apologies," and the CAHSS News. Both writing pieces challenged me to adopt a new writing style that would attract

and enhance the experience of our newsletter's audience. Honestly speaking, I feared this change, but with time, I adapted and overcame my fears with my passion for writing. As a result, I gained more confidence in my writing skills. What's even more, I was left with a better and more confident version of myself.

It is truly wonderful to contribute to such a creation, one with the capacity to inform and touch the hearts of friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. With this transformative experience, I want to give my sincerest thanks to Whitney Jacobson, who guided me through every step of the process and kindly treated me as an equal, and Nancy XiáoRong Valentine, who generously shared her empowering art, thoughts, and story with me.



Kiana Yarbrough

Kiana Yarbrough
2022 *Confluence* Intern