Making the Moon Beast

Alums shake up TV

A new paint for artists and astronauts

How a 3-D printed monster helped save stop-motion animation. See page 30.
A NOTE FROM HARVEY

Arriving in January 2018 as the new dean of College of Fine Arts at Boston University, I quickly learned that people asked three questions with regularity. First, “How do you like Boston?” Second, “What is your vision for the college?” Third, often in a whisper, “So… what does a dean do?”

I love Boston’s energy and the sense of possibility it offers students. It is a city that celebrates education and embraces those who dedicate themselves to the pursuit of knowledge. It also acknowledges its complicated history as both a trailblazer (e.g., the revolutionary spirit of the 1770s) and a laggard (e.g., the painful slowness of racial integration in the 1970s). Today, Boston is in the midst of a renaissance. The arts are flourishing. Buildings are reaching new heights; the skyline is changing every year. Boston is amazing.

I went every BU student, as well as their friends and families, to have a meaningful arts experience—to see a play at Booth Theatre, an exhibition in Stone Gallery, a concert at Tsai Performance Center or Symphony Hall. CFA should be a beacon for the arts on campus, in Boston, and throughout the nation. It should attract not only the very best artist-scholars to study and teach at BU, but also neighbors from Brookline, Boston, and beyond to encounter the future of theater, music, and the visual arts. At all times, CFA must commit to championing diverse and inclusive work and serve as a model of professional ethics and excellence.

As dean, I help people understand that there is no better investment of their energy, money, and time than the arts. Imagine a wedding without music; dancing, photography, brilliantly designed cakes and invitations; Halloween without costumes; summers without movies; commuting without songs on the radio. Almost every aspect of our lives is touched by the fine and performing arts. Numerous studies have evidenced the power of the arts. Engineers perform better academically when they study on an arts-rich campus. Medical patients experience less pain when they can listen to their favorite songs. Children develop a more profound sense of empathy when they encounter a story presented onstage rather than within a book. The arts define our lives.

I love talking about BU and sharing stories of the successes of our students, staff, faculty, and alumni. It is this desire to spotlight your excellence in a more dynamic manner that led to the retirement of our former dean. The arts define our lives. Engineering—creating a world of art.

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WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN

Artist of abstraction Howardena Pindell ('65) ponders identity and memory in a career-length retrospective

By Mara Sassoon
WHEN HOWARDENA PINDELL recalls her BU days, her time spent in professor emeritus Conger Metcalf’s drawing class is especially vivid. “We were always drawing eggs,” she says. All those eggs had a purpose, of course. “It helped us learn to control our use of value,” the lightness and darkness of a color. “BU had a really excellent program for learning figuration—I was trained as a figurative artist,” says Pindell (’65), a 1983 Distinguished Alumni Award winner who teaches in Stony Brook University’s department of art.

After BU, Pindell earned an MFA at Yale, which challenged her training in figuration. It was the late ’60s, a tumultuous time for the art world, when new and radical movements were gaining ground—abstraction, minimalism, pop art. Grad school exposed Pindell to all of them. “Some people frowned on anyone who was a figurative painter, and so I had kind of an inner struggle about my work,” she says. Representational imagery wars with abstraction throughout her work, now on view at the Brandeis University’s Rose Art Museum in a career-length retrospective, Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen. The chronological exhibition, which spans more than 50 years of Pindell’s career, premiered at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

In the exhibition’s 144 works—from a self-portrait she composed during her time at CFA (Self-Portrait, 1963–64) to more recent vibrant and abstract collages—Pindell pays homage to her experiences as a female artist of color.

In 1969, Pindell was the first African American woman to become a curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. “Working in a major museum made a big difference in my own art,” she says. “I could go into the museum to study the work on the days when the public was not admitted, and in some cases if I needed to catalogue something I would have hands-on access to a work.”

At the museum, she became enthralled with the art of abstract painters Wassily Kandinsky and Larry Poons—whose pieces embrace geometric shapes and rely heavily on mark making—and with the more figurative, intensely colored pastels of Odilon Redon. Their influence is especially evident in Pindell’s Video Drawings series, a hybrid of figuration and abstraction. She would affix drawings she made on acetate to an image playing on a television screen, and then photograph the composition. In Video Drawings: Abstract (1976) ambiguous figures in white robes that appear to be participating in a parade are disrupted by Pindell’s crisscrossing black arrows and red circles. The curve of the television set is visible at the top of the composition, imbuing it with more movement.

In Video Drawings: Swimming (1975), Pindell endows the frozen image of a blurred man diving into an illuminated pool with frenetic Kandinsky-like marks composed of random dots, arrows, and numbers.

A native of Philadelphia, Pa., Pindell grew up during segregation, and many of her works touch upon racism, inequality, and identity. She recalls a childhood visit to a root beer stand in Kentucky, where she and her father “were given these chilled mugs, and at the bottom of the mugs were giant red circles. I was stunned when I asked my father why that was, and I learned that it meant it was dishwasher reserved for black people. So, I like to say that I was scared by a circle,” she says. The circle recurs in many of her pieces, including two abstract collages, Untitled #4D (2010) and Untitled #8B (Krakatau) (2007). Both works comprise circles and ovals punched out of colorful drawings she’d created over
several years (the hole punch is a prominent tool in her arsenal—she has them in a variety of sizes). The circles overlap to form a larger amorphous shape, which gives works like Untitled 88B (Krishna) a three-dimensional quality, with many circles standing on their edges, bursting out of the composition.

“To make them stand up, I used Jade glue. I’d prop the pieces up with Play-Doh, and then the glue would set and I’d remove the Play-Doh. It’s very secure and also archival,” Pindell says. The type of glue is made specifically for archival book and canvas repair. “I’m interested in archival materials since work can deteriorate—that’s something I got from my museum job, seeing how work deteriorates over time.”

A series of mixed-media works, including Autobiography: India (Lakshmi) (1984) and Autobiography: Water (Ancestors/Middle Passage/Family Ghosts) (1988), are influenced by a car accident that left Pindell with short-term amnesia that affects her to this day. For these works, “I’d lie down on a canvas and trace my body, cut it out, trim it, and sew it back into the canvas,” she says.

The pieces, like memory, are visually fragmented, with torn imagery collaged on paper. Pindell has painted the spaces in between. “The presence of my body is very clearly in the works throughout this series—the feeling was, I could have died in the car accident, and I just wanted to express myself and my points of view.”

HOWARDENA PINDELL: WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IS ON VIEW AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY’S ROSE ART MUSEUM FROM JANUARY 24 THROUGH JUNE 16, 2019.
Rock ‘n’ Roll Baritone

By Andrew Thurston

First time you sang solo for an audience? Dieter Schlumpf by Mettalec. I played in a rock and metal band in high-school.

Most embarrassing bum note? I did this audition and it still haunts me. I was starting with a Russian piece and I didn’t remember any of the words, so I just did lip trills for 30 seconds. I stopped and I restarted—and I did the same thing. I said, “Thank you,” and walked off.

Role you’d love to do? Figaro in Barber of Seville. I did this audition and it was so tough, but so rewarding when you do it.

“The Red Carpet

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

CFAs 2018 Distinguished Alumni Awards honored three exceptional alumni for their artistry, dedication, and activism.

KELLY KADUCE (’91) performed Silvio’s Aria from Pagliacci in Santa Fe Opera’s 2018 production of Madama Butterfly, about which Broadway World wrote: “Kaduce gave a performance filled with beautiful tone quality, exquisite phrasing, and dramatic conviction.”

SEDRICK HUCKABY (’97) performs at the Broad Street circus in Brooklyn. “The show of compassion and empathy for those who are less fortunate is as needed today as it ever was,” he says.

KATY RUBIN (’07), founder and executive director of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC, is a self-described “jobbing circus artist” who leads theater workshops for homeless adults and youth, LGBT teens, people living with HIV/AIDS, and recent immigrants, among others.

INaugural Season at Booth

THE 2018–2019 inaugural season at the BU Joan & Edgar Booth Theatre “reveals an eclectic and stirring exploration of powerful stories, told with intense theatricality inspired by the creative possibilities of our new artistic home,” says Jim Petosa, director of the School of Theatre.

ANGELS IN AMERICA, PART ONE: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES
October 17–21, 2018
By Tony Kushner
Directed by pilgrimage (’12)

ANGELS IN AMERICA, PART TWO: PERESTROIKA
October 26–28, 2018
By Tony Kushner
Directed by Jeremy Ohringer (’12)

DOLORES CLARIBONE
February 21–24, 2019
By Tal滕 Pickler
Conducted by William Lumpkin
Stage Direction by Jim Petosa

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN
April 26–May 5, 2019
By Ursula Le Guin
Adapted by Natsu Onoda Power

CFA   Winter 2018/19
COMPOSER TO COMPOSER

VALERIE COLEMAN AND MISSY MAZZOLI DISCUSS THE PRIVACY OF COMPOSING AND THE VULNERABILITY OF PERFORMING

Edited by Lara Ehrlich

Photo by Benedict Evans

GRAMMY-NOMINATED composer and flutist Valerie Coleman uses her “skillfully wrought, buoyant music” (New York Times) as a form of storytelling: in one chamber work, nomadic Roma tribes traverse dusty roads while a flute sonata gives voice to slaves trafficked from West Africa. Coleman (BUTI’89, CFA’95) premiered her latest piece, Shot Gun Houses, a suite for clarinet and string quartet based on the life of Muhammad Ali, in 2018.

Missy Mazzoli’s “savage, heartrending and thoroughly original” (Wall Street Journal) music is distinctive for its ferocity that veers into horror, like her opera dismantling the American dream through the story of 19th-century Nebraskan homesteaders and an operatic work reimagining the story of Lot’s wife. Recently named composer-in-residence at Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Mazzoli (BUTI’98, CFA’02) premiered her newest opera, Proving Up, in 2018.

Mazzoli and Coleman were both listed among the top 35 women composers in classical music by the Washington Post. Their work has been performed at Carnegie Hall and Kennedy Center, among other venues, though never in the same season. Mazzoli is the founder of (and keyboardist in) the all-female chamber music ensemble Victoire. Coleman is the founder of (and flutist in) the Grammy-nominated all-female chamber music ensemble Imani Winds—which has performed Mazzoli’s music.

Although their paths have crossed musically time and time again, they’ve never met. They’ve never even spoken, until they connected by phone to talk about the addictiveness of the flow state, how motherhood influences creativity, and finding inspiration while surfing.

Missy Mazzoli: I’ve known of you for so many years. It’s nice to talk to you, finally.

Valerie Coleman: Yeah! This is great.

MM: In my own work, performing, teaching, and writing are all essential. I can’t give any of it up because it’s all part of the puzzle. If I weren’t performing, my writing wouldn’t be as rich and I’d feel like I was losing touch with my performers. How do you look at the puzzle of your life?

VC: I would say that one has to celebrate the imperfections of juggling all of it. For example, motherhood is a wonderful thing, but it’s also a challenge to find headspace when your daughter’s decorating the house with bits of paper—but even in that moment, there’s an energy that can be inspiring.

MM: I love this idea of embracing the imperfection of it all. Similarly, a long time ago, I accepted that I would not be the greatest pianist in the world, and that’s actually good because it forces me to come up with creative pieces, turning these quote-unquote imperfections into an asset and creating something new out of them.
I feel really energized, really clear, like we should talk every morning.

This conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity.

VC: Your music touches on the human experience and juxtaposesเสื้อที่มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงและความรู้สึกของท่าน—ที่มีอยู่ในทุกๆวันและช่วงเวลา—มันเป็นเรื่องที่น่าตื่นเต้นและน่าดู

MM: I think human beings are the most inspiring thing in the world. I’m interested in how we’re flawed, how we try to communicate and open our minds to another’s experience. It seems more relevant than ever for creators to be empathetic, to step out of our own comfort zone to be that mediator.
In an industry dominated by men, women are changing the culture

Tanya Saracho (’98), the creator and showrunner of Vida, on Starz

Krista Vernoff (’93), wrote for seven seasons of Grey’s Anatomy and returned as showrunner for season 14.

By Abigail Cain
anya Saracho was not even an hour into her first day writing for the Lifetime show Devious Maids when a male coworker looked down at her and said, “You know you’re the diversity hire, right?” Saracho (’36) had no idea what he was talking about. She called her agent, who explained: most major broadcast networks subsidize one entry-level writer of color for each scripted show. Although it meant to foster inclusion in writers’ rooms that are overwhelmingly white and male, those “diversity hiring” are rarely hired permanently. Showrunners will trade them out for another subsidized writer the next season. “For the rest of the year that tainted how I spoke, how I pitched, how I had agency in that room,” says Saracho, who was born in Mexico and raised along the Texas border.

Saracho was ready to throw in the towel after Devious Maids, but she agreed to one more meeting, for the HBO series Looking, which first aired in 2014. There, she found herself surrounded by other writers still new to television; the experience was so supportive that “I was like, wait, maybe I do want to do this,” she says.

“Everywhere I hire, I hire with an eye for them to run their own show. I’m nurturing showrunners.”

TANYA SARACHO

Since then, she’s risen rapidly through the writers’ room to become the creator and showrunner of Starr’s break-out hit Vida. Following two Mexican American sisters who return to their Los Angeles neighborhood after their mother’s unexpected death, the show deftly and frankly interleaves themes of class, race, and sexuality. Vida wrapped up its first season in May to enthusiastic reviews (“Life may be too short, but Vida is just right,” wrote the New York Times) and was renewed for a second season. Saracho also signed a three-year deal with Starz to develop new projects—and she’s bringing other women with her.

During the 2016–17 television season, only 10 percent of showrunners were women; AMC, CBS, and TNT had no women at all running their shows. Industry pioneers like Saracho and fellow CFA alums Krista Vernoff (’93), showrunner of Grey’s Anatomy, and Nina Tassler (’70, Hon.’16), founder of ParMi Productions, are changing the narrative of showrunners. Although the show followed the lives of four Latina maids in Beverly Hills, Saracho was initially the only Latina writer and one of two women in the room.

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She wasn’t quite sold on the idea, but took a few meetings in Los Angeles, and “Devious Maids just sort of happened,” she says. Looking came next, followed by Girls and How to Get Away with Murder. In 2016, Starz put out a call for showrunners for a series about “gentrification,” the gentrification of a neighborhood by wealthier Latinx people. Saracho, whose plays tackled racial and socio-economic divides, was uniquely suited for the subject matter. She answered the call, and Vida was born.

Showrunning may have been new to Saracho, but the term has been in the television lexicon since the early 1980s to describe a particular breed of supercharged executive producer. Previously, creative direction had been controlled by the studios, which hired contract writers to flesh out ideas handed down by higher-ups. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, shows began offering directors. Shonda Rhimes, who helms several small-screen blockbusters including Scandal and How to Get Away with Murder, signed an estimated $150 million deal with Netflix in 2017. In February 2018, Ryan Murphy—of Nip/Tuck and American Horror Story—followed suit when he inked a $500 million contract with the streaming giant, in what’s believed to be the biggest deal in TV history.

Despite the industry prominence of showrunners, most people outside of Hollywood have only a hazy idea of what they do. In short, they are the boss, with the final say on all creative and managerial decisions concerning a television series. Depending on the project, a showrunner’s responsibilities could include developing the concept for a show; hiring cast and crew members; steering a writers’ room, counseling directors, dealing with studio and network executives, and balancing the budget.
In 2005, she was hired by Shonda Rhimes, at the time a Wonderfalls, the short-lived, and Law & Order than half-hour sitcoms and went on to write for Grey's. It was her first time showing an active show, and she worked 80 hours a week for months on end. One day, she was so physically worn out that she woke up and couldn’t stand; a doctor had to come to her house and hydrate her with an IV. Vernoff even called up EW’s Wells to make sure she wasn’t doing something wrong. Nope. And, answered, sounds like a first-year show—which, in some ways, it was.

**BREAKING UP THE BOYS’ CLUB**

Before landing at Grey’s, Vernoff spent three years working for WB’s Charmed, where her boss once told her “I bet you’ve go good in bed” in front of the rest of the writers’ room. She left, despite a major raise, because “the show had gone from being a girl power show to being ‘How do we get the guys in pitchingle fairies, and I left pitching stripper demons.”

Historically, the writers’ room has often been a deeply uncomfortable place for nonwhite, nonmale writers. According to studies conducted by UCLA and San Diego State University, 67 percent of writers in the 2016–2017 television season were men; 86 percent were white. And these trends are even more pronounced among those leading the shows—during the same season, 81 percent of showrunners were men; 96 percent were white. The lack of diversity is due in part to a closed feedback loop. Showrunners typically work their way up through a series of writers’ rooms before finally helming their own show. Then they tend to hire people who look and sound like them or those they’ve worked with before, and that’s almost always white men.

During an interview with a potential writer, Vernoff says, showrunners have already reviewed the candidate’s resume and writing samples. What they want to find out during the interview is “If you’re someone they can hang with for 10 hours a day,” she says. More often than not, that translates to someone who makes them comfortable, who has shared life experiences. “One of the things that we’re all talking about now is that we have to be willing to be uncomfortable,” Vernoff says. Research shows that shows with at least one female creator also hire for more women than other shows, and Grey’s and Vine’s are no exception. Saracho’s writers’ room is staffed with seven women and one man, while Vernoff made a point to have a male writer on staff when her blind read turned up 14 scripts written by women. She also hired people of color for the three open writer slots for season 15, since she’d “inherited a lot of writers who were white,” she says.

Women showrunners are not just waiting for change to come from the top down—they’re changing the culture from the inside. “Everyone I hire, I hire with an eye for them to run their own show,” Saracho says. “I’m nurturing showrunners.” There are eight Latina showrunners across the entire television industry, she says, and “that’s not enough. That’s not even one percent. We have to make more.” To bring her writers up the ladder along with her, she often recruits the participants of the writers’ room, like interviewing script coordinators.

At Uva, Saracho’s all-Latina writers’ room includes Puerto Ricans, Salvadorians, Dominicans, Mexican Americans, and LOTTTQ writers. No one is a diversity hire, she says, and no one person is expected to speak for an entire country or culture.

**A NEW FRONTIER**

Since Harvey Weinstein’s alleged sexual abuse went public in 2017, Hollywood has become a hub for conversations about power and representation and a locus for the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements. More than 1,000 women in the entertainment industry—including Uzo Aduba (315), Geena Davis (79, Hon’99), Julianne Moore (80), Maria Tovino (96, Hon’02), and Alfie Woodard (74, Hon’04)—signed the Time’s Up open letter published by the New York Times in January 2018, which called attention to the misogynist work environments faced by women in all walks of life. Vernoff herself has written several articles for the Hollywood Reporter, speaking out about her experiences in the television industry, including the sexist behavior she encountered while working on Charmed.

“Hollywood has admitted that there is a major gender problem and that it’s unmanageable. We’ve named it. We’re talking about it, and now we have the power to begin to change it.”

**KRISTA VERNOFF**

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**LISTEN TO VERNOFF ON A BU ALUM’S PODCAST AT BBU.BU.EDU/CFA**

**VERNOFF ON A NEW FRONTIER**

Krista Vernoff

2016 Executive producer and writer for Grey’s Anatomy
2013–2017 Executive producer and writer for Shameless
2010–2011 Consulting producer and writer for Grey’s Anatomy
2004 Producer and writer for Wonderfalls
2003 Co-producer and writer for Charmed
2000 Writer for Time of Your Life
1999 Writer for Law & Order

“Showrunning, in a way, is a bit like when I was running Teatro Luna,” Saracho says of the all-Latina theater company she founded and led for a decade in Chicago, “except with higher Hollywood stakes.” Rather than Teatro Luna’s $150,000 yearly operating budget, she says, there are “millions of dollars on the line.”

For all its power and prestige, showrunning is a punishing profession. “It is an extremely difficult job. It is extremely time-consuming in a way that I wasn’t quite prepared for,” says Krista Vernoff, showrunner of the hit ABC medical drama Grey’s Anatomy.

As an acting major, Vernoff took a playwriting course with Jon Lipsky, a much-loved professor of playwriting and acting at CFA who passed away in 2011. She found she had a talent not only for performing dialogue, but for writing it. In the spring of 1998, she moved to Los Angeles with several sample scripts in hand, and was promptly hired by ABC with several sample scripts in hand, and was promptly hired by ABC after an audition. “It sounds like a first-year show—macho, I think it’s important that you encourage women to be not only showrunners, but also be in an overseeing capacity, to have multiple projects on the air at one time,” says Tassler, who left CBS in 2015 to start her own company, PatMa Productions, which employs women and people of color, specifically. “Can we find more opportunities for women directors? Can we find more opportunities for women casting directors? Can we find more opportunities for female line producers?” she asks. “We’re looking to populate as much of our work as possible with female voices, leaders, creators, storytellers.”

For her part, Vernoff is optimistic. “We are becoming more and more comfortable telling the truth,” she says. “Until you’ve named a problem and spoken the truth, you cannot fix it.” Hollywood has admitted that there is a major gender problem and that it’s unmanageable. We’re named it. We’re talking about it, and now we have the power to begin to change it.”
Designing angel wings. Rigging lights. Dyeing dress shoes. Here’s what it takes to stage a show at the new Booth Theatre.

By Andrew Thurston
Photos by Natasha Moustache and Jason Kimball
The two-part Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes is an intense production: during seven hours of total stage time, lead actors are also required to take on a couple of minor roles and help shuffle props during rapid scene shifts. Tony Kushner’s multi-award–winning exploration of AIDS in 1980s New York is the perfect showcase for the Joan & Edgar Booth Theatre, which was built as a shifting, fluid space—seats rise, trapdoors disappear, runways emerge. One moment it can be a traditional theater with an end stage, the next a theater in the round.

CFA staged Angels in America at Booth in October 2018, splitting the production’s two parts into consecutive runs with different directors and casts—though not sparing the actors multiple parts. A fortnight before opening night, CFA magazine was given exclusive behind-the-scenes access to watch the play take shape.

Stepping backstage at Booth is like peeking into Narnia. The black box of the theater is 21,000 square feet, but the theater complex itself is 75,000 square feet. Entire worlds emerge from behind almost every door: a mini millinery with mannequin heads, hats, and fabric; a hanger-like set design workshop full of whirring machine tools; rooms stuffed with wigs and clothes. Some clash with noise; students and faculty swirl around each other as they build props or test lighting setups; others, like the classrooms that double as workshops (or is it vice versa?) for set and costume designers, charged with quiet concentration.

The double-height scenery and paint shop is big enough to accommodate the production of sets for two shows at the same time—even while another is being staged. Raw materials arrive on a loading dock and are milled down on-site, then shaped and assembled. A section of the space has a wooden floor to mimic the theater. “Not only can we assemble scenery here,” says Johnny Kontogiannis (’02,’20), Booth’s production manager, “we can actually do a setup of the whole set. That way, we can see how it all goes together and work out the kinks right here.” The theater complex also has classrooms and studios for scene designers. “A big part of our teaching is getting on our feet and doing,” says Kontogiannis. “Our ideal situation is to say to students, here’s a theater, here’s some money, go put on a show; then, we help guide it.”

Booth’s ceiling holds a grid of nine lighting rigs. Each one can be moved independently, flying to the ground for lights to be hung, then set at different levels to alter the atmosphere or focus onstage. Kontogiannis calls the space a playground: “In a proscenium theater [a theater with a frame, or proscenium], you have a more defined relationship, you’re looking through a frame; here, you’re behind the proscenium and we’re inhabiting one space. That’s an important part of how we approach the storytelling—we’ve brought the audience into the space of the story.” Backstage, there’s a lighting and sound design lab for students to practice.
“Imagine your grandmother’s attic,” says Kontogiannis of Booth’s costume shop, stocked with props and costumes. In one room, tables, couches, phones, typewriters, and every conceivable kind of knickknack fill shelves and storage bins; in another, a two-story dry-cleaning storage system holds clothes sorted by gender and period. Kontogiannis, who formerly taught at Ithaca College and has also worked on Broadway, admits it would have been easy for BU to have stuck it all in a suburban warehouse, but says there’s something compelling about being able to browse the rooms, to touch the objects and be inspired. “We actually think of these rooms more as libraries than storage. You could click through clothes on a computer, but it’s not the same as feeling them.” If a costume isn’t quite right, students can also dye or tailor them to fit the actor or time period.

The costume shop does double duty. During the day, a partition is pulled across the room: on one side, faculty teach classes; on the other, students work on their projects for upcoming shows. At night, the entire room is dedicated to production preparation. “We teach it and then we make it,” says Kontogiannis. Small side rooms have space for actors to step in for fittings. All the students can also head into the lighting and sound design lab to see how a costume looks when plunged onto the spotlight. “A student will take the thing they’ve learned and implement it very quickly,” says Kontogiannis.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BOOTH AND WATCH BEHIND-THE-SCENES VIDEOS AT BU.EDU/CFA-MAGAZINE.
NASA uses a new pigment to absorb light in space. What will artists do with it?

By Joel Brown

LIGHT GOES IN. IT DOESN'T COME OUT.

The paint defies reflection, rendering invisible the surface detail of an object coated in it. The object becomes a chromatic black hole. Even the paint's name has a cool, slightly ominous vibe: Singularity Black.

Developed for NASA to reduce incidental glare on telescopes and other equipment used to study faint, distant stars, Singularity Black sucks up 98.5 percent of the light that enters it. A typical matte black paint absorbs only about 80 percent. Star-gazing scientists aren't the only ones geeking out over the potential applications of this sci-fi wonder. For one of the first nonscientists to be given access to the pigment, it was "one of the most interesting and revolutionary things I'd ever looked at," says Jason Chase ('03), artist-in-residence at NanoLab, the Waltham, Mass., firm where materials scientists created Singularity Black.

Jason Chase ('03)
created this piece, Black Iron Ursa, by coating a cast iron Gummy Bear with a new black pigment that absorbs 98.5 percent of all light.

Courtesy of Jason Chase

By Joel Brown
While still learning how to use it, he has created a light-defying little black dress—the paint renders wrinkles virtually invisible—and a sort of optical-illusion photo booth where a hanging disc painted with Singularity Black makes the pose appear headless. Now, he’s teaching other artists how to use the paint to help inspire more work that deceives and intrigues.

**SCIENCE, NOT MAGIC**

Singularity Black is a formula built around carbon nanotubes, chemical structures 1/1,000 the width of a human hair. They’ve been used since the 1990s to improve the strength of plastic and provide thermal and electrical conductivity, and more recently in “ultra black” coatings like Singularity Black.

CfA "Vertically aligned nanotubes are the blackest thing on earth, but it’s not magic, it’s science,” Chase says.

“A couple of years earlier, Preston had been given a present from his girlfriend (now his wife): a “Drawing in Pairs” class through the Museum of Fine Arts. Attendees worked on their drawing skills while enjoying drinks, and Chase was the instructor.”

In 2017, Preston invited him to visit the lab.

“He told me what I was looking at and asked me, did I want to make some art with it? says Chase, who has shown his pop-avant-garde American oil paintings (like his rendition of the infamous Nagasaki mushroom cloud composed of Jiffy Pop Popcorn) at Atelier Gallery in Newport, R.I., and Bromfield Gallery in Boston’s South End. “I couldn’t wait to figure out how to use Singularity Black in my own work. And I’m excited to see how other artists are going to use it.”

A BLACK Blob

Chase’s wooden easel is an anachronism perched in a corner of the NanoLab offices, near high-tech equipment including an infrared spectrometer (used to identify chemicals) and a thermogravimetric analyzer (which measures a material’s mass throughout a change in time and temperature).

Lately Chase has used this spot to work on paintings with Singularity Black and other paints NanoLab is experimenting with, including Morgan White, a variety of black paint that lightens any color blended with it without changing the color’s hue.

From the start, Chase found using Singularity Black to be tricky, as it requires special spraying procedures, a dose to 50 coats, plus a final heating process. “It’s also “fume-y,” Chase says, requiring proper ventilation. After application, the surface is easily marred with normal wear. “It looks like a fuzzy nail polish,” says Chase. “It sprays on and then it dries, and even if you just peel up your masking, it will still lift and tear. You have to cut every edge with a rounded blade.” And one milliliter of pigment covers one square centimeter of surface area, so the learning curve is costly.

“I had a bunch of bad ideas, and it took me two weeks to come up with something I could do,” Chase says. For his first project, Black Iron Ova, he coated a cast iron Gummi Bear candy (which he’d made a few years earlier) with Singularity Black, placing it on a rainbow-striped carousel for contrast. Everything within the bear’s outline disappears before the eye, so from most angles it just appears to be a black blob.

The paint has opened up his art to new types of conceptual thinking. “Light and color is a huge percentage of what a painter’s concern is,” says Chase. “We are always thinking about light and color. Singularity Black is an important tool to incorporate in my work. It gives me a new level of freedom in terms of color, and I love using it.”

Chase and the NanoLab scientists have also created a version that’s much cheaper. “It’s 1/400 the cost of the original,” Chase says. “There are a lot of people who would like to use it but can’t afford it. So we’re working on making Singularity Black easier to use—and more affordable. Currently, 20 milliliters costs $80, so even enough pigment for a modest project would be out of the reach of a lot of artists.

“We get calls from artists who want to do, like, a 10-foot sculpture,” Chase says, “and we want to see that too, but hang on! Your first version should probably be a lot smaller.”

For those impatient to get started on their own light-absorbing art, Chase and the NanoLab scientists have also created a version that’s easier to use. Gravity Black is a regular oil paint using nanotubes, and working with it is more wallet-friendly: $150 per 30 milliliters of oil paint, which spreads normally and can cover much more area than a similar amount of Singularity Black. Soon, anyone will be able to try it out.

“Artists have always been the first to get ahold of new material and technologies and push them to limits that the engineers and scientists didn’t even know were possible,” Chase told Hyperallergic. “To be a part of that is so exciting.”

**PAINT FOR ALL**

In 2016, a British company that debuted a similar paint incited controversy by initially licensing it to a single artist, Anish Kapoor. With Chase’s help, NanoLab is going in the opposite direction, making the pigment available to all artists. They’ve even started regular workshops for interested artists, sort of a Singularity Black boot camp, and offer a coating service for artists who want to use the paint without the fuss. In opening up the pigment to wider use, the scientists’ first goal is to make Singularity Black easier to use—and more affordable. Currently, 20 milliliters costs $80, so even enough pigment for a modest project would be out of the reach of a lot of artists.

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**“NANOTUBES ARE THE BLACKEST THING ON EARTH, BUT IT’S NOT MAGIC, IT’S SCIENCE.”**

JASON CHASE
The fanged serpent erupts into the sky, lashing its skeletal tail as it spirals toward the moon. It twists back on itself with a roar and streams toward the camera, writhing like an eel above the night-soaked street. Its eyes gleaming, the Moon Beast strikes. Although the beast moves with seemingly effortless agility, it’s powered by painstaking visual effects. Stop motion—a form of animation pioneered in 1898, in which animators manipulate physical models by hand between frames—gave cult classics like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1964) and the Wallace and Gromit films a distinctive charm. The process is so laborious, however, that stop motion faded with the advent of computer-generated imagery (CGI) in the 1990s, and all but died out. LAIKA Entertainment is bringing it back.
IT’S AMAZING WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO创造性地 WHEN YOU COMBINE TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES WITH EMERGING TECHNOLOGY.”

BRIAN MCLEAN

The studio’s 2016 film *Kubo and the Two Strings* follows young Kubo’s quest to defeat his evil grandfather, the Moon King Raiden, who transforms into the Moon Beast for their final showdown. To create the awe-inspiring monster, the Oregon-based studio merged tried-and-true stop-motion techniques with 3-D printing and CGI. The studio’s rapid prototyping—3-D printing—department, headed by Brian McLean (’99), is leading the stop-motion revolution.

McLean has been with Laika since its inaugural project, *Coraline* (2009), the first-ever film to use 3-D printing in stop-motion animation, an achievement celebrated with an Academy Award nomination for Best Animated Feature Film. McLean has since helmed the rapid prototyping for 2012’s Oscar-nominated *ParaNorman* and 2014’s *The Boxtrolls*, also short-listed for an Academy Award. In 2016, McLean was recognized for pioneering the use of 3-D printers in stop-motion film with a Scientific and Engineering Oscar plaque.

McLean is no stranger to unusual materials and techniques. Prior to Laika, he was an environmental sculptor for Disney theme parks (“Most of the world—whether it’s Vegas or theme parks—is sculpted out of foam,” he says. “It’s sickening how much foam!”). He also worked with Warner Bros. to produce a holiday window display featuring foam sculptures of Harry Potter and Hagrid in the Chicago department store Marshall Field’s.

McLean considers 3-D printers yet another tool in his sculptural arsenal, like a rasp or a chisel, he says. “It’s amazing what people can do creatively when you combine traditional techniques with emerging technology.” The Moon Beast, in particular, is a triumph of engineering. While it dominates the screen for fewer than 10 minutes, it took 80 artists more than 6 months just to build the model (not counting the time involved in animating it).

“The Moon Beast looks different, it looks creepy and scary, and you can’t quite put your finger on how it was created. It feels like a great homage to the old masters of stop motion who created these crazy creatures,” says McLean, who shares with CFA how his rapid prototyping team brought the beast to life.

PHYSICAL TO DIGITAL AND BACK AGAIN

Before Coraline, animating a character’s face was reliant on manually adjusting the movements and expressions of models composed of either clay or silicone stretched over metal frames. Both methods produced “jittery, jerky” films, McLean says. “They’re beautiful, but you’re constantly reminded of the craft; you’re seeing the process and seeing the animator’s hand. Our idea was to try to find a way to make it as perfect as we can, so you don’t get drawn out of the story.”

Laika’s method, 3-D printing replacement animation, harnesses the power of traditional methods and new technologies. The animators use 3-D printing to design and print limitless versions of a character’s facial features, which they swap out with different iterations between each frame to achieve subtle expressions. The effects team uses CGI to erase the evidence of manual manipulation, like the seams connecting removable sections of the model’s face. Kubo alone had 23,187 faces with 48 million potential expressions.

Laika uses 3-D printing “not because it makes it faster or cheaper, or takes fewer people or it’s easier to do by any stretch,” McLean says. “The reason we do it is because it allows our actors, which are these little nine-inch puppets, to perform in really realistic ways.”

To establish the Moon Beast’s realism, they started with character sketches (figure 1) and a physical model (figure 2) inspired by *Dunkleosteus*, a serpentlike prehistoric fish.
with plates of bony armor. They scanned the preliminary monster into a digital program (figure 3) that allowed them “to control not only the external surface of a sculpt, but the inside of the object,” McLean says. “You can create something in a 3-D printer that would be impossible to manufacture any other way.”

The team developed the beast’s textured glow by digitally infusing sections of the Moon Beast with a “cyan-like glow and salmon-colored shimmer” beyond the scope of even the new 3-D printer, which could only print in one color. That’s how the title character in Coraline was printed; every iteration of her face was hand-painted, a process so time-consuming that it limited the scope of her expressions (She had only 3,333 faces and 207,000 expressions, compared to Kubo’s 23,187 and 48 million.)

“You couldn’t have too many faces, or too much detail because that detail had to be repeated thousands and thousands of times,” McLean says. “And if it wasn’t repeated exactly on each face, it would come across as chatter. It limited how that character could look.”

A BEAST IS BORN

Laika’s reputation for innovation “gave us a lot of clout within the 3-D printing industry. We were responsible for pioneering a whole new use of the technology,” says McLean, who asked the company that provided the printer for Coraline for a machine that could print more colors. That’s how he secured exclusive access to a printer still in development.

Other 3-D printers print in compressed powder, which produces fragile pieces in a single color. The new printer (figure 5) employs durable plastic and prints in three colors simultaneously; a combination that produces detailed pieces that are also strong enough to withstand the wear and tear of production. McLean’s team used the new printer to produce the 881 individual parts that comprise the Moon Beast’s segmented exoskeleton. They backed the pieces with gold Mylar to give the creature its distinctive translucence, and achieved its shifting, shimmering glow with ultraviolet paints (figure 7) illuminated by different lighting combinations.

They printed for 147 days to deliver 1,417 different faces (figure 6) that could be swapped between frames to achieve the monster’s expressions and rigged the puppet onto a flexible frame (figure 8) so animators could manipulate it against a green screen. Every 50 hours of work resulted in approximately 4 seconds of footage (figure 9).

The effort paid off, McLean says. “By photographing a real object bathed in real light, we’re giving it a wonderful sense of depth and texture and vitality. CGI animators spent literally decades trying to find a way to render something that feels real. We have the benefit of photographing something real that feels like it has a personality and a life breathed into it. That’s what drew me to sculpting to begin with. I grew up with effects done practically, like Star Wars, Indiana Jones, and ET. Nowadays, kids come out of the theater and think, ‘That was done on the computer; it was easy.’ They forget that artists and technicians brought those things to life.

“What I love about being involved in Laika is that it brings back the magic we grew up with, leaving the theater thinking, ‘How did they do that?’”

Additional reporting by Angelica Frey

WATCH A VIDEO OF THE MAKING OF THE MOON BEAST AT BU.EDU/CFA-MAGAZINE.
WRITE TO US!
We want to hear what you’ve been up to. Send us your stories and photos, and we’ll share the highlights here.
Email: cfaalum@bu.edu

1950s
Elaine Burky ('50), a retired fine arts director for the Falmouth Public Schools, recently directed performances of the Choraliers in Falmouth, Mass.
Edward Avedisian ('59, '61) received American University of Armenia’s inaugural Presidential Commendation award in recognition of his role in the advancement of education in Armenia.
Sidney Hurwitz ('59) was one of three artists who presented work at the exhibition Vanished Landmarks from Boston and Beyond, held at Don Gorvett Perkins Cove Gallery in Ogunquit, Maine.

1960s
Brice Marden ('60), Hon.'77, presented work at the Gagosian Gallery in New York, N.Y., for the European Fine Art Fair in 2018.

1970s
Stewart F. Lane ('73), a six-time Tony Award-winning producer, co-owner and operator of the Palace Theatre on Broadway, was inducted into the Manhattan Jewish Hall of Fame in May 2018. The 1970s
Peter Edwin Krasinski ('80, Hon.'07) presented a lecture before Middlesexmen in Spring at Charlottesville Opera in Charlottesville, Va.

January 2019
Jason Alexander ('81, Hon.'95) received American University of Armenia’s inaugural Presidential Commendation award in recognition of his role in the advancement of education in Armenia.

1980s
Peter Edwin Krasinski ('80, Hon.'95) presented prints at the Montserrat College of Art Gallery in Beverly, Mass., in summer 2017.

1990s
Gretchen M. Pusch ('77) performed with Cecil B. DeMille’s The King of Kings at St. Mary’s Church in Newport, R.I., in spring 1998.

2010s
“IT’S FUN TO DELVE INTO THE WIDE-EYED INNOCENCE OF THIS CHARACTER. HE’S THIS JOYFUL OBJECT OF LOVE.”

GREG HILDRETH ('05)
Disney’s Snowman Showman

THE AUDIENCE GOES WILD when Olaf the snowman bumbles onto the stage in Frozen, the Broadway Musical, the $30 million stage version of Disney’s smash hit film. Children cry out Olaf’s name like he’s a rock star. Although Greg Hildreth has portrayed the snowman who loves warm hugs since the show’s pre-Broadway run in 2017, he says the audience’s adoration never gets old. It also helps sustain him in a challenging role that requires serious physical effort and deftness. Hildreth (’05) mans a four-foot puppet harnessed to his lower waist; the 16-pound rig takes two people to put on. With his right hand, he operates levers in the snowman’s foam head that make Olaf talk, blink, or wiggle his eyebrows, while he uses his left hand to control his twiggy arms.

Hildreth says learning the role was like “learning to spin plates,” and to prevent injury, he sees a physical therapist twice weekly. “It’s a physical strain, but it’s also this extreme mental challenge as well,” Hildreth says. “It’s a full-body experience.”

Frozen is Hildreth’s fourth appearance on Broadway, where he has played roles in other musicals, including Newsies, Les Misérables, The King of the New York Musical Theatre, and South Pacific. He has also performed in Bedroom Farce and Broadway’s first production of Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson. None has received quite like Frozen’s snowman star.

“It’s fun to delve into the wide-eyed innocence of this character. He’s this joyful object of love.”

GREG HILDRETH ('05)
Disney’s Snowman Showman
about the legacy of state terrorism in Latin America. In spring 2018, the play was presented by the SALT Theater in New York, N.Y.

Jeff Mosca ('93) was nominated for a 2018 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Production Design for a Narrative Contemporary or Fantasy Program (One Hour or More) for his work as a designer on FX’s American Horror Story: Cult.

Suzaan Wiggin ('94) presented oil paintings and ink monotypes in 20 Pursuit at the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House in Taos, N.M.

Kerry Ni ('94) was elected to the Hingham, Mass., school committee in spring 2018.

Margo Saulnier ('70/73, CA/93) is the cultural coordinator for New Bedford, Mass., and will be overseeing the development and implementation of the New Bedford Arts and Cultural Plan.

Susan "Gus" D. Wagner ('93) was the producer of the musical Hello, Dolly!, which won a 2017 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical.

Courtney McDonald Bottoms ('99) performed with Chix with Stix at Row After Row in February 2018.

Abigail’s Party, a 1977 British play by Harold Pinter, was performed at the Barrow Group Theatre in New York, N.Y.

Daniel J. Rabone Memorial Fund

Educator and actor Daniel J. Rabone ('93) was a mentor to young theater artists, who, when he died in 2016, his husband Richard J. P. Trevino (SPH’06), director of finance at BU’s National Foundation for Research in the Arts 30th annual concert at the Riverway, Hingham, Mass., was inducted into the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame in August 2017. Poole has served as an adjudicator for Drum Corps International, Drum Corps Associates, Winter Guard International, National, New England Scholastic Band Association, Maine Band Directors Association, Mid East Percussion Association, United States Scholastic Band Association, and Bands of America.

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Jessica Dickey ('06) presented her play Row After Row in February 2018 with The Comrades at the Apollo Studio Theater in Chicago, Ill.

Abiko Fujimoto ('08), assistant conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra in Minneapolis, Minn., directed the orchestra at the Phipps Center for the Arts 10th annual concert at the Lifeline Park bandshell in Hudson, Wis., in summer 2018.


Daniel Zaltzkin ('02) wrote the book, music, and lyrics for the musical Darling Grenadine. His Adauba ('05) was named Heifer International’s first ambassador to Africa in 2018, through which she will assist the organization’s mission to end hunger and poverty. In 2017, she received the Ally for Equality Award at the Human Rights Campaign National Dinner and the Point Courage Award. Adauba also contributed to America Ferrera’s book American Like Me: Reflections on Life Between Cultures (Gallery Books). In 2018, she appeared in the HBO series 2 Dope Queens and in Netflix’s Candy Jar and in Hulu’s Candy Jar, which premiered in November 2018.

She voiced Queen Novo in 2017’s Justice League. The movie will appear in Beasts (2018), and portrays Suzanne “Crazy Eyes” Warren on the Netflix series Orange Is the New Black.

Sara Chase ('05) worked on the pre-Broadway workshop of Romy and Michele’s High School Reunion and on the musical adaptation of the movie Roman Holiday.

Rachel Hellmann ('05) curated the exhibit Self Portrait: The Original Selfie at the Arts Alliance Gallery in Terre Haute, Ind.

Matt Otto ('05) created the sound design for the play Alagda’s Party, a revival of a play by Mike Leigh, at the Barone Group Theatre Company in New York, N.Y.

Liam Molulone ('07) performed in Inua Nue Theatre Company’s American premieres of Lee Cofﬁffy’s Laper and Chip at Louis Blayer Theatre at The Drake in Philadelphia, Pa.

Craig Swan ('07) created the seven-foot sculpture Sundial as part of his collection of public art for the town of Norman, Okla. He also recently accepted an appointment as an artist-in-residence at The University of Oklahoma College of Engineering.

Kevin Chi-Sing Leong ('08) is the music director of Masterworks Chorus in Cambridge, Mass., and led the group in their 78th season. He is also the music director of the 120-voice Concord Chorus and was previously the artistic director and conductor of the 180-voice Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus and associate conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Choruses at Harvard University.

Ben Ratliff ('08), a lighting designer, joined the theater arts department at Colorado State University in Winter 2018.


Adrienne Boris ('15) participated in a Hungarian music performance at Cornerstone at Canton Assisted Living and Memory Support Community in Canton, Mass.

Annis Wiegand ('10), one of few deaf professional lighting designers based in the New York City area, recently became a teaching artist at Roundabout Theatre Company in New York, N.Y.

Stephen Merzillo ('11/13), a cellist, joined the new music ensemble Sound Icon, and presented motion Palmer’s rarely performed piece, Patterns in a Chromatic Field, at the Great Music at St. Bart’s concert series in New York, N.Y., in May 2018.


Vera I. Rubin ('10), a violinist, participated in a Hungarian music performance at Cornerstone at Canton Assisted Living and Memory Support Community in Canton, Mass.

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Marvel Rising: Secret Warriors, voiced Captain Marvel in Marvel Animation’s Grey’s Anatomy, starred in CBS’s drama pilot. In 2018, he also narrated the 2017 documentary appeared in the 2018 film Michael Chiklis (’85) was the guest artist in Gabriel, a soprano, dissertation Prize. 2017 American Choral Directors Association’s Julius Herford Dissertation Prize. Margherita Roni (’19) directed the Youth Symphony Orchestra’s spring concert in May 2018. Matthew Macca (’16) starred as Dromio of Ephesus in Shakespeare’s The Comedy of Errors at the Hartford Stage in Hartford, Conn. Jonathan Stewart (’19) joined the Choral Society as a soloist for Handel’s Messiah concert in December 2017. Tatiana Gill (’17) had her first full-length work, Lithosphere Heart, a semi-autobiographical piece, premiered in North Reading, Mass. Nicholas A. Marconi (’17) displayed his paintings at the bust of the Northeast exhibition at Helan Day Art Center in Stowe, VT. Matt Scaio (’17), conductor of the Cape Cod Chamber Orches- tra, is establishing an estimated 25-member ensemble intended to bring classical music to new venues, play works by young com- posers, and help foster younger audiences. Arden Cone (’19) exhibited work in Looking Away: Arden Cone and Glen Miller in a 1930 concert. He says, “I explored a remembrance of South- ern history in oversized paintings about Confederate monuments.” Kendall Driscoll (’18) played the Rute for the symphonic debut of the Alum Civic Orchestras in Akron, S.C. Stephen Pick (’18) was named the executive director to the staff of the performing arts organization Journey Theater Arts Group in Vancouver, Wash. Baron R. Pugh (’18) was the scenic designer of The War at the Lyric Stage Company of Boston in Boston, Mass. How a Photo of a Violinist Who Died in Auschwitz Inspires Grammy-Winning Conductor Bramwell Tovey In 1943, Austrian violinist Alma Rosé was taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where she was made conductor of the women’s orchestra that performed for prisoners and officers. She died of illness in Auschwitz in 1944 and is remembered for bringing her fellow prisoners and musics an spiritual escape amid the horrors of the Holocaust. A decade earlier, Rosé had been an inter- national star. The niece of composer Gustav Mahler and daughter of a celebrated con- cermaster, Rosé was the founder of the all-women Wiener Walzermädeln (The Vien- nese Waltzing Girls), a salon orchestra that toured internationally to great success until escape amidst the horrors of the Holocaust. said that music takes over where words cease function.” — LE
Boston University Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, and Symphonic Chorus

David Martins, conductor
Paul Hindemith
Symphony in Bb

Bramwell Tovey, conductor
Francis Poulenc – Gloria
Gustav Holst – The Planets

Monday, April 1, 2019