School of the
ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE : World Arts and Cultures / Dance

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September 4, 2025

Dear WACD Community,

Welcome to the 2025 - 2026 academic year. To our returning students, faculty, and staff: Welcome back! To new students, faculty, and staff: Welcome!

As usual, our community has accomplished all kinds of amazing things over the summer. Our department has some exciting news:

> The Art and Global Health Center will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. Over the summer, staff members Wilna Julmiste Taylor, Isaiah Baiseri, and Andrew Cawley organized a week-long Activist Theater Workshop building on the Center's Sex Squad methodology. A dozen students from Los Angeles Unified School District high schools participated in the workshop's performance, supported by interns from UCLA and Harvard University.

Our graduate students have presented at conferences, carried out fieldwork, published articles, received grants and awards, and created choreographic work in a wide range of settings:

> Gunindu Abeysekera co-directed a performance and exhibition series with Sri Lanka's renowned Chitrasena Dance Company, commemorating the one-year death anniversary of the company's co-founder Vajira Chitrasena.
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> Mihika Banerjee presented her paper "Choreographing Culture and Heritage: Dance, Festivals, and State-Identities at Khajuraho, India" at the AMPS (Architecture, Media, Politics, Society) conference at the University of Greenwich, London. Mihika was also selected for *Digital Archiving in Performing Arts – South Asian Context,* organized by the Department of Performing Arts, Presidency University, Kolkata, India from June to September 2025.
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> Sophie Capobianco's article "Utopia in D Yard: Prefigurative Politics and the Attica Prison Uprising of 1971" was published in the June 2025 issue of *TDR: The Drama Review* and reprinted in Cambridge University Press's special release on the Politics of Performance. This article won *TDR*'s 2024 Student Essay Contest.
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> Sabine Escuro's musical arrangement/video clip *Si me Matan [If They Kill Me]*, addressing femicide in Latin America, was selected for the 2025–2026 exhibition at the Broad Art Center. She also published *Culpa y Sombras [Guilt and Shadows]*, a composition emerging from her research on nadaist music.
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> Arpit Gaind received UCLA's Center for India and South Asia's Dr. Sambhi Memorial Summer Fellowship for summer 2025. Gaind also has two publications forthcoming:

"Cameras as Drums, Dance as Maps: Decolonial Visions in Adivasi Media Production in Jharkhand" and "Can the Adivasi Create? The 'Subject' of Adivasi-Media Production" and will be presenting at several conferences.

Gilberto "Gilmtzm" Martinez presented choreographic works including *The Timeline of a Spider's Web, I Surrender,* and *Ni Era Mi Fiesta y Yo Con Las Manos Llena de Arroz*. He is presenting research at this year's UCLA QGrad "Glittering Rage" while also teaching contemporary and modern dance at the John Wooden Center's FITWELL program.

Laura Smith's article "Performance and making material histories of racializing violence in medicine" was published in *BMJ's Medical Humanities*.

Recent alumni also have much to be proud of:

Mika Lior is a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at York University, in the School of the Arts, Media, Performance, Design.

As a participant in Contra Tiempo's FUTURO program, Xochitl Loco presented their choreography, "Super They," at the programs' culminating performance in July 2025. Xochitl also joined the first cohort of Camino al Arte's Social Impact artist residency and will perform at The Ford in L.A. with Contra Tiempo as part of *Direct Address.*

In March 2025, Christina Novakov-Ritchey (PhD 2022) joined New York University as the Associate Director of College-in-Prison Programs. Christina works closely with A.A. and B.A. students in NYU's Prison Education Program at Wallkill Correctional Facility to support degree completion, curriculum development, program expansion, and student transitions to NYU's Washington Square campus following release.

Upon completion of her Culture and Performance PhD, Lili Flores took up a postdoctoral fellowship with Dana Cuff in the Architecture department.

Miya Shaffer is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Postdoctoral Fellow in English at York University, Toronto, Canada.

The WACD Faculty have been busy over the last few months and have some exciting projects coming up:

WACD faculty have engaged in some exciting intradepartmental collaborations. The *Oxford Handbook of Indian Dance*, co-edited by Anurima Banerji and Prarthana Purkayastha will come out later this year. It includes chapters written by SOAA Interim Dean Lionel Popkin, WACD's Aparna Sharma, and me (department chair Janet O'Shea), along with an introduction by the co-editors. Arpit Gaind helped bring this project to fruition as its research assistant.

Anurima Banerji, Aparna Sharma, and our incoming Hawkins Chair Bijayini Satpathy are working on a site-specific dance film set in the Ranigumpha caves in India, a place site that putatively holds the oldest evidence of Odissi.

Anurima Banerji's special issue on new research in Odissi for the journal *South Asian Dance Intersections,* co-edited with Kaustavi Sarkar, will come out later this year.

Alex Ungprateeb Flynn's co-curated exhibit *Construction, Occupation,* which explores the connections between art and activism, is on view at the Fowler Museum through January 11, 2026. Alex's new book, *Pathways to Utopia: Time and Transformation in the Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil* was published by Indiana University Press on August 1, 2025.

Susan Leigh Foster (Emerita) has a new book out: *Knowing as Moving: Perception, Memory, and Place*.

Dan Froot (Emeritus) will undertake the Bogliasco Fellowship in early 2026 to work on two research projects: *One Word*, a performance project focused on the plastics revolution and plastics pollution; and *Dan Froot's Low Standards*, a set of saxophone-stories about the urge to communicate and the inadequacy of language. Froot's current work, *Arms Around America* will show at Kingsbury Hall, Salt Lake City on April 9 & 10, 2026.

David Gere organized a new *Through Positive Eyes* exhibition in the UK for 2026. Fall 2026 will see the premiere of the AGHC's new documentary *Eyes on Ukraine.*

In January 2025, Miguel Gutierrez premiered a new work, *Super Nothing*, which toured to ODC/San Francisco, MCA Chicago, On the Boards/Seattle, CAP/UCLA and American Dance Festival, and created a collaborative work *Frankenstein* presented at Avram Finkelstein's art exhibition *Something Terrible Has Happened* at Smack Mellon in Brooklyn, NY.

In 2024–25, Kate Ladenheim premiered *Lamentation: Dancing the Archive,* an interactive take on Martha Graham's iconic solo, at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Their performance *COMMIT!*—which explores resilience, judgment, and digital mediation—was presented at the Brown Arts Institute. Ladenheim also spoke about their research at ISEA 2025 in Seoul and received a 2025 Creative Capital Award to support their forthcoming project *Gestural Publics.*

Victoria Marks serves as the Artist Laureate for Culver City (2025-2027), planning Action Conversations and creating site work that centers civic engagement. Marking the history of Rowland House, she will create a performance slated for November. Recently, Marks presented *A Deer Walks into a Dance*, an evening-length dance in progress at The Odyssey Theater. Her essay on dance and disability will appear in the *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* later this year.

David Roussève (Emeritus) was the commencement speaker for UCLA's School of the Arts and Architecture graduation. Roussève will premier *Becoming Daddy AF*, his first full-evening dance/theater solo in over 20 years, at CAP UCLA's Nimoy theater on October 17-18, 2025, followed by a performance at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in Pittsburgh September 26-27.

Peter Sellars' projects staged several projects this summer, including *Nine Jeweled Deer,* Festival d'Aix-en-Provence*; Music to Accompany a Departure*, *Music for New Bodies*, Lincoln Center, Tanglewood, Meany Center; *One Morning Turns Into an Eternity*, Salzburg Festival with several others forthcoming: *Adriana Mater*, Opera di Roma and *Perle Noire*, Adelaide Festival and Paris Opera.

Jason Tsou's recent projects integrate traditional Chinese martial arts into modern dance education, reimagining them as a vital part of contemporary performance. Recent work includes *Polaris*, shown at Highway and *Butterfly* at the TCMAF Annual Awards Banquet. In the upcoming year, Tsou's work will feature *Beyond Borders – The Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Transformation and Legacy of Chinese Martial Arts* in Taipei.

Will Rawls' digital-live collaboration *[siccer],* is traveling to New York this fall after a five-city tour with events at The Kitchen and Performance Space. Rawls' new work *Unmade*, which examines resource-sharing, material allocation and accumulation, and spatial displacement and placemaking as the grounds for performance, will appear in the Hammer Museum's *Made in LA* exhibition.

Based on her research from her second book on Asian faciality and facial recognition technologies, Wendy Sung has a publication forthcoming in *LIMN* in November 2025 and research talks at University of Minnesota and University of British Columbia.

Gracie Whyte completed a third year of touring with her contemporary floorwork education business, Ground Grooves, traveling to thirty cities and offering workshops across Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US.

And, I was interviewed on *Hope for the Animals* and *Fighting Matters* podcasts and have an article forthcoming in *Dance Research Journal*.

We are delighted to welcome a new faculty member: Rebekah Kowal, whose work focuses on dance and mid-twentieth century US national identity, will be joining us as Professor of Dance Studies.

We are also delighted to have staff members Ana Galvan and Will O'Loughlen back with us!

WACD faculty have also graciously stepped into new service roles. Alex Ungprateeb Flynn will continue to serve as PhD program head as Vic Marks steps into the MFA program head role. Will Rawls will continue to serve as program head for the BA in Dance while David Delgado

Shorter serves as WAC BA program head. In addition to serving as the director of WACD's MFA program, Marks is also the chair of the IDP in Disability Studies.

We will also be joined this year by special guests:

> Renowned Odissi artist and choreographer Bijayini Satpathy will be our Alma Hawkins Chair for this year. She will join us during fall quarter so be sure to register for her D117C and D174B courses!
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> Idris Eresan Kucuk, Assistant Professor at Ege University Turkish Music State Conservatory, in the Turkish Folk Dance Department, will join us as a visiting scholar.

As always, our year will be filled with special events, performances, guest presentations, and lectures. Here are some to keep a look out for:

Alma Hawkins Chair Presentation
Monday, October 27th, 3:30 – 6:30pm
Glorya Kaufman Hall Room 200

***First Hand* Faculty Concert**
Works by: Bijayini Satpathy, Jason Tsou, and Milka Djordevich
December 4th and 5th 7:30pm
Glorya Kaufman Hall Studio 200

Becoming Daddy AF
Presented by David Rousseve & CAP UCLA
October 17th and 18th
Nimoy Theater

Made in LA
Presented by Will Rawls & The Hammer Museum

October 5th	January 17th
November 1st	February 7th
December 6th	February 28th

Exhibition Walk-Through: *Construction, Occupation*
Curated by Alex Ungprateeb Flynn
October 16th 12:00 -1:00pm

Fowler in the City: *Art, Land, and Urban Memory in Downtown LA*
November 16th 12:30 -3:00pm

Closing Program: Construction, Occupation
Curated by Alex Ungprateeb Flynn
December 6th 2:00 - 4:30pm

As always, we owe a huge thank you to the WACD staff who keep the department moving forward.

Thank you all for being a part of the WACD community. I look forward to seeing what the year brings and what our many interests and passions produce.

Sincerely,



Jay (Janet) O'Shea
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