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*Cinematic Arts Newsletter*

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# IOWA

**Department of Cinematic Arts**



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## Letter from the Chair

*Michael Cowan*

Dear Friends of Cinematic Arts,

Welcome to the seventh instalment of the Cinematic Arts Newsletter. As I round out my second year at the University of Iowa, I feel incredibly lucky to work in a department driven by such a unique synergy between humanities-based inquiry and artistic creation in both filmmaking and screenwriting. A hallmark of UIowa more broadly, this vision of research-creation is particularly strong in Cinematic Arts, where – as our mission statement puts it – “Artists are scholars and scholars are artists.” It was also evident in the diverse roster of exciting events we held over the past academic year, which included a stellar line-up of film and media scholars, filmmakers, actors and screenwriters, as you can see from the list of events we’ve included below.

Of course, the pandemic continues to pose challenges to university life. But I am also struck by the sheer resilience I have witnessed among faculty, staff and students in Cinematic Arts, who are determined to support each other through these difficult times and maintain the exceptional community of learning and intellectual collaboration that our department has long been known for. Our faculty and students continue to produce superb work and obtain an array of scholarships, grants and major awards, which you can read about in the list of faculty accomplishments below. They also continue to make Cinematic Arts a truly exceptional space of teaching and learning. One big change in 2021-22 was the return to in-person classes, and while this transition has not been without a few bumps, I have no doubt that the net effect has been beneficial, especially for students. Having sat in on numerous classes in our department at all levels of instruction, I am quite simply in awe of the energy, dedication and deep sense of care that every one of our instructors bring to the classroom.

This year was also a time of significant change in faculty and staff, and I want to welcome two new members to Cinematic Arts: incoming Departmental Administrator Liz Cecil and Assistant Professor Hayley O'Malley, about whom you can learn more below. This fall, we will also be welcoming a new Associate Professor, filmmaker Hope Tucker, who brings with her a deep expertise in experimental documentary. We look very forward to the next academic year with these new colleagues on board. Highlights for the coming academic year include a major [symposium on Afro-Brazilian Cinema](#) organized by Professor Chris Harris and a series of public events around Professor Corey Creekmur's Mellon Sawyer seminar “[Racial Reckoning through Comics](#),” as well as various new research projects. Please keep an eye on our “events” page for announcements.

Michael Cowan

Professor and Chair, Department of Cinematic Arts

Please tell us a little bit about yourself! Where did you study and what are your research interests?

My work is very interdisciplinary. I'm a film historian and a literary critic, and my research focuses on African American film, visual culture, and literature, with a particular emphasis on Black women's filmmaking and film criticism. I am always fascinated in how art gets made, and I have become increasingly interested in studying the formation of alternative film cultures. I earned my PhD from the University of Michigan in 2020, and before coming to Iowa, I was a postdoc with the Black Arts Archive Sawyer Seminar at Northwestern. I grew up in Los Angeles, but I clearly like the Midwest!

What drew you to the University of Iowa?

Many things! First and foremost, I knew I'd have fabulous colleagues. I'd met Chris Harris previously, and I can say now that his generosity – he's always sending me interviews and links

## Faculty Spotlight: Q&A with Haley O'Malley



related to my book project – is definitely representative of the department as a whole. I was also excited by the department's approach to film studies which integrates critical and creative perspectives and leans into interdisciplinarity. And finally, I wanted to be at an R1 university. With the ongoing pandemic, last year was obviously not a typical year at any university, but the intellectual community at Iowa has been fantastic.

How was your first year at Iowa? What did you teach and how are you enjoying Iowa City?

I had a busy and exciting first year. I taught Intro to Film Analysis, which is the large lecture course required for all Cinematic Arts majors and minors, and in the spring, I also taught an interdisciplinary graduate seminar on Black women's filmmaking and writing. I was able to arrange a number of Zoom calls with filmmakers on our syllabus, and those conversations were really inspiring for the students and for me. Another big highlight of the year was my work as the department's Director of Graduate Studies, a position I began in the spring. I really love working with our department's graduate students – all of whom are fabulous – and I'm excited about welcoming a new cohort of students in the fall. As for Iowa City, it's been great. The arts scene is terrific, and I'm a big fan of the city's many parks, especially Hickory Hill Park – my dog is too!

SPRING 2022

# CINEMATIC ARTS

DEPARTMENTAL SPEAKER SERIES

All events will take place from 3:30-5:00pm on Zoom  
<https://uiowa.zoom.us/j/98259066290>



**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH**  
Alison Griffiths  
"The Foreign Body of Adventure: The Explorers Club, Cinema, and Counter-History"



**FRIDAY, MARCH 4TH**  
Courtney Stephens  
"The Decentered Film: Geographic Form in Non-Fiction Cinema"



**FRIDAY, APRIL 8TH**  
Chrystel Oloukoï  
"Black Nocturnal: An Anti-ethnography of Lagos Nights"



**FRIDAY, APRIL 15TH**  
Patrick Jagoda  
"Mediating Climate Futures: Collective Speculative Design through Alternate Reality Games"



**FRIDAY, APRIL 29TH**  
Ana Vaz  
"The Camera is the Body"

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact Haley O'Malley (hayley-omalley@uiowa.edu or 319-465-4372) with any questions.

**IOWA** Department of Cinematic Arts



**Tell us about your current work or book project or any recent accomplishments.**

My current book project is entitled *Dreams of a Black Cinema: How Black Women Writers Reimagined Filmmaking in the Twentieth-Century United States*, and it's an archival history that reconstructs the myriad ways that African American women writers, including Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, and Maya Angelou, experimented with film and worked to build a new Black women's film culture from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. This summer, I had fellowships at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City and the Huntington Library in Pasadena, California. It was great to get back in the archives after many of them were closed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I was able to do a lot of new research for the book. My other big project this summer has been finishing an article about the 1976 Sojourner Truth Festival of the Arts, which appears to have been the first Black women's film festival and was co-organized by an amazing group of Black feminist artists, including Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, Patricia Spears Jones, Margo Jefferson, and Monica Freeman. The best part about that project is that I'm now helping to organize a film series and symposium, to be held in spring 2023 in Chicago, that will pay homage to the original 1976 festival. I'm also in the early stages of co-editing a collection of Kathleen Collins's screenplays and plays, about half of which have never been published. I like to keep busy, and I have a couple other projects in the wings, but those are the big ones!

## Scott Beck and Bryan Woods Offer Screenwriting Advice to Majors

*Emelia Wenzel, Freshman, Screenwriting major*

It's hard to take a cinema class at the University of Iowa without the mention of how Scott Beck and Brian Woods, the writers of *A Quiet Place*, attended UIowa before going on to write one of the most popular horror movies of the last 10 years. But, then again, what school wouldn't want to brag about that? This spring, a lucky group of students in Professor Anna Morrison's Foundations of Screenwriting course were visited by Beck and Woods. The students were able to ask the writers



some questions about the industry, their writing process, and what it's like to be rejected. While they were able to de-mystify the film industry by discussing the ways one may rise through the ranks, Beck and Woods also talked about the ways they have made their scripts appealing to producers and directors by making the grand ideas and worlds they create manageable through scalability. They suggest finding a balance between what you love to write about, and what has a commercial appeal. The co-writers also discussed what it's like to face rejection in the industry and how to embrace your failure. They say there is a truth in all criticism, and by being open to it you can then find ways to improve your script, even if you do not agree with the critiques. Afterward, the students agreed Beck and Woods felt "down to earth" and that they had learned so much from the writers during their visit. Scott Beck and Brian Woods are currently directing and producing *65*, a film they wrote starring Adam Driver. The film is set to release in April of 2023, making this their fourth feature film since 2018.



# Auden Lincoln-Vogel at the Cannes Film Festival

Congratulations to Film and Video Production MFA student Auden Lincoln-Vogel on the acceptance of his short film *Bill and Joe Go Duck Hunting* into Cannes Film Festival's Cinéfondation Selection.

*More photos on pg. 5*

## Undergraduate Student Accomplishments

- **Lola Knight** received the Harmeyer Award for her short screenplay, "Boil Order."
- **Dalton Bantz** (Cinema and English Creative Writing double major) was awarded the Margaret Leuzand Fred Einspahr Scholarship, which is awarded to English majors who plan to devote themselves to teaching after graduation.
- Cinema and Screenwriting major **James Altschul's** feature film called *WRITTEN ON A SUGAR HIGH* was an official selection at the Festival of the Arts: of Starved Rock County as well as Reel Cinema Fest.
- **Jacob Smithburg's** script, *ENAMEL ROLEPLAY*, was accepted and produced in the UIowa 2022 Theater Production lineup. His art installation was accepted in the 2022 Open Air Media Festival.
- **Makenna Mumm** (a Cinema and Journalism double major) was accepted into the American Pavilion student program and will be traveling to Cannes, France in May to intern at the Cannes Film Festival—possibly the first UIowa student to do so.

## Graduate Student Accomplishments

### Film Studies

- **Dana Alston** presented a paper at the 13th Annual Research, Art & Writing Graduate Student Conference at the University of Texas at Dallas. Dana's paper was entitled, "'At one point, we stop': Desire and Autonomy in *Mesher of the Afternoon* (1943) and *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2018)." Dana organized a panel on "Myths of Authorship in the Contemporary Period," which has been selected to be part of the annual conference of the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present (ASAP). Dana will present his paper "'Tell the story you know': Chronological Orientation and Historical Narrativization in David Fincher's *Mank* (2020)" alongside co-panelists Elizabeth Alsop, Alfred Martin, Adrien Sebro, and Joshua Miller.
- **Ben Coldwell** received an Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award from the University of Iowa Council on Teaching in spring 2022. In fall 2022, Ben will begin a PhD degree in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Washington
- **Alex Denison** acted in Iowa alum Auden-Lincoln-Vogel's 2021 film *Bill and Joe Go Duck Hunting*, which was part of the Cinéfondation competitive program at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival.
- **Ben Dulavitch** earned a Graduate College Summer Fellowship for Summer 2022.

## ANA MENDIETA THE NATURE INSIDE

April 21st, 2022 6pm - 8pm

Films of Ana Mendieta  
Screening and Conversation  
with **Raquel Cecilia Mendieta**



Featuring faculty panelists  
**Claire Fox, Elizabeth Rodriguez, Isabel Barbuza**

Sponsored by the University of Iowa Cinematic Arts Department,  
Vertical Cinema, The School of Art and Art History,  
and the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies

University of Iowa, Art Building West, Auditorium 240  
141 N Riverside Dr, Iowa City, IA 52242

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact the School of Art and Art History in advance at 319 335 1378



## Graduate Student Accomplishments (continued)

- **Matt Hipps** participated in the annual SCMS conference, presenting a paper entitled, “‘Twister: Ride It Out’: Movie Ride Systems, Peripheral Spaces, and Contemporary Theme Park Phantasmagoria”
- **Jonathan Lack** earned a Stanley Summer Scholarship for Asian Language Study at Beloit College in Summer 2021, and he earned a Graduate College Summer Fellowship from the University of Iowa for Summer 2022. Jonathan presented a paper at SCMS, which was entitled, “Safe and Sound: How Video Games Confer Security and Subjectivity Through the Mechanics of Saving”
- **Chris Wei** hosted, filmed, edited, and co-wrote a pedagogical video miniseries project about research, bias, and disinformation. The project was part of a collaboration with the UIowa Libraries and the Rhetoric Department. Chris presented a paper at the 24th Annual Film Studies Association of Canada Graduate Colloquium (hosted by the Cinema Studies Graduate Student Union and co-sponsored by the University of Toronto). His paper was entitled, “Speakers for the Dead: Examining Subalternity and the ‘Stolen Gaze’ in Documentary Film.” He also organized, co-wrote, and edited *Mormonism and the Movies*, an anthology book which was published by BCC Press in 2021. The book explores how Latter-day Saint (LDS) theology, culture, and history interacts with thematic, narrative, and aesthetic ideas in film. Three of the book’s fifteen main chapters are by Chris.

### Film & Video Production

- **Trevon Coleman’s** films – including *BLS: Black Liberation Space*, *Paper Bag Test*, *Difficult Donuts*, and *The Oracle Project* – were shown at the 2021 New York Independent Cinema Awards, the 2021 Paris Independent Film Festival, the 2021 Film Streams Local Filmmaker Showcase, the 2021 Onion City Experimental Film + Video Festival, the 2022 Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, the 2022 Slamdance Film Festival, the 2022 S&I Open House, the 2022 PSI Random Generator Exhibition and Auction, and the 2022 Florida Film Festival. Trevon’s thesis installation, entitled “My Imagined Nations,” was on view from May 9th to 13th in BCSB 245/Studio A. This fall, Trevon will begin an MFA degree in Studio Art at the University of Maryland – College Park
- **Rachel Lazar’s** film *Stereo Moment* was part of a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee showcase of U of Iowa short films in April 2022.
- **Jenelle Stafford** earned Digital Scholarship & Publishing Summer Fellowship which will help fund her work on a digital video entitled, *Haunting of Johnson County Jail*. Jenelle’s film *myopic pandemic* was part of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee showcase of U of Iowa short films held in April 2022.

pg. 4 cont.



The Cannes Film Festival is an extremely prestigious and highly competitive showcase of short films has been running as an official section of Cannes Film Festival since 1998. It has been devoted to discovering, introducing and supporting new voices in the world cinema. Renowned filmmakers, writers and artists have been serving as jury members every year to view and evaluate the works.

## Faculty Accomplishments

- **Paula Amad** was invited to give a lecture on her aerial book project and conduct a workshop on related research at UWisconsin Madison by the Film Studies program and the Center for Visual Culture November 18-19. She was also invited to give the annual Keynote Lecture for the Symposium for the research network Archive/Counter-Archive: Activating Canada's Moving-Image Heritage, (December 9-10, 2021) whose theme this year was "Living Archives."
- **Alessandra Bautze** was one of six writers selected to participate in the 2021 Nanjing International Writers' Residency Program, where she engaged in a virtual cultural exchange with Chinese writers. After winning Best Screenplay at the 2021 Anchorage International Film Festival in December, Alessandra will return to Alaska for the month of July to participate in the Storyknife Writers Residency Program.
- **Michael Cowan** published an in article, co-authored with Katharine Loew (UMass-Boston), titled "Augmenting Cinema: the Kino-Variété 1913-14," which appeared in *Early Popular Visual Culture* as part of a special issue on Media Archaeology. He also presented a paper at SCMS for a panel on Global Movie Magazines and will present at the Annual Domitor conference in June.
- **Corey Creekmur** is incoming President of the Comic Studies Association. He also received two grants this year for his work in Comic Studies: a grant from the Mellon Sawyer foundation for his project on racial reckoning in comics (with UI faculty members Ana Merino and Rachel Williams) and an Arts & Humanities Initiative Grant from UIowa to work on his book dealing with the material history of comic books.
- Chris Filippone was awarded a Mountainfilm Commitment Grant for my next doc project, Keep the Last Light on and was cinematographer and editor on a doc film called Since you arrived, my heart stopped belonging to me, which was nominated for Best Short at the 2021 IDA (International Documentary Association) Awards.
- Anahita Ghazvinizadeh's essay in Farsi titled "I Was Travelling Underground When They Buried You-- the Story of the Resurrection of Rodia and Sonia in Exile" was published in March 2022 in "SAAN" literary Magazine which is a major literary publishing in Iran. The essay is a close reading of the relationship between Rodia and Sonia in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment. Anahita was commissioned by the Core Residency Program at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston to produce an artwork in 10 limited editions, for which she created a digital Persian miniature. The miniature contains a poem by the 15th Century Persian Sufi poet Jami accompanied with an image that is inspired by eastern and western iconographies. The work was completed and delivered in December 2021. Anahita is in the process of casting and pre-production of a short narrative film that is to be filmed and edited in 2022.
- Chris Goetz completed a book review for Daniel Reynold's book, Media in Mind for the journal Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind. He participated in an Obermann Center Book Ends workshop in the fall and am in the process of finalizing revisions on my own book manuscript, The Counterfeit Coin: Videogames and Fantasies of Empowerment.
- Chris Harris will be awarded the second annual Ground Glass Award for outstanding contribution in the field of experimental media in May 2022 for his film, Prismatic Ground. In January 2022, the Museum of Modern Art presented the solo show Modern Mondays: An Evening with Christopher Harris.
- Anna Morrison's screenplay, Toothache was either a finalist or a winner in four different Screenplay awards: The S.F. Independent Film Festival Screenplay Competition; the L.A. Independent Film Festival Awards; the Hollywood Shorts and Screenplay Competition; and the Chicago Screenplay Awards. Anna also received an Arts & Humanities Initiative Grant for a creative project and her poetry has also been selected to appear in the forthcoming edition of Best American Poetry for 2022.
- Hayley O'Malley published an article titled, "Another Cinema: James Baldwin's Search for a New Film Form," James Baldwin Review and a shorter, online piece, commissioned by the UCLA Film & TV Archive entitled "Anita Addison's L.A. Rebellion Roots." She presented at the annual conferences of ASAP (Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present), ASA (American Studies Association), MLA, and SCMS.
- Andy Owens presented new research at SCMS and finalized a chapter in the edited collection Camp TV of the 1960s: Reassessing the Vast Wasteland, which will be released this fall from Oxford UP.



To support the Department of Cinematic Arts make a gift today!  
[cinematicarts@uiowa.edu](mailto:cinematicarts@uiowa.edu)