

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

FALL '23  
ARTS IN REVIEW

# MC Art Beat

Visual, Performing, and Media Arts News at Montgomery College



**MC**  
MONTGOMERY  
COLLEGE



Cover photograph by Julia A. Smith

Courtesy of "Shadow Cortex and Unfathomable Depths"



## Message from the Dean

### DEAR FRIENDS OF MONTGOMERY COLLEGE ARTS,

Fall 2023 was an exciting time in the Visual, Performing, and Media Arts at Montgomery College. In addition to our extensive class offerings, an outstanding array of performances, exhibitions, and workshops showcased the immense talent and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff.

Our special events this fall included the interdisciplinary Afghan Project, which explored the vibrant arts and culture of Afghanistan with an emphasis on Afghan women's voices. *Shadow Cortex and Unfathomable Depths* brought a mesmerizing fusion of traditional Japanese calligraphy and avant-garde dance to MC audiences. And Artist-in-Residence Charlotte Richardson-Deppe worked with MC students to create a vibrant installation that explored themes of social and environmental justice in the Sarah Silberman Gallery.

We have devoted extra time in this issue of *Art Beat* to recognizing the outstanding achievements, milestones, and contributions of our Visual, Performing, and Media Arts faculty and staff. As we look forward to the future with new faculty member and Theatre Coordinator, Irene Alby, we reflect on the contributions of our colleagues who have been awarded the Bronze Medallion by the Board of Trustees, and express our appreciation for Outstanding Staff Award recipients, Michelle Brink and Zainab Ali. Whether they are embarking on their first semester with us or celebrating decades of service, we honor and appreciate the invaluable impact our faculty and staff have on our community and are immensely grateful for their passion, dedication, and unwavering support.

The Spring 2024 Arts Calendar will be out very soon. Please be sure to check our exciting schedule of theatre productions, dance performances, music concerts, lectures, workshops, gallery exhibitions, and other arts programming at [montgomerycollege.edu/artsinstitute](http://montgomerycollege.edu/artsinstitute).

We wish you a wonderful semester and hope to see you at an arts event very soon.

### Frank Trezza, PhD

Dean for the Visual, Performing, and Media Arts

[frank.trezza@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:frank.trezza@montgomerycollege.edu)

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Collegewide Dean for the Arts

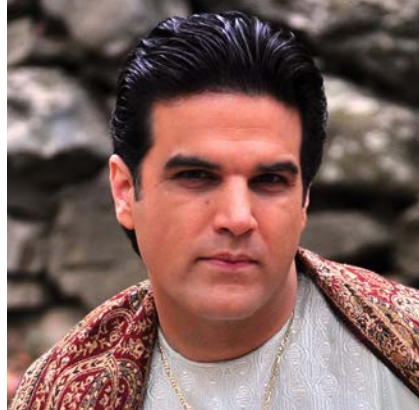
Dr. Elizabeth Melanson, Writer  
Professor of Art History

Katherine Hubley, Writer & Designer  
Professor of Graphic Design

Kai Fang, Writer & Designer  
Professor of Graphic Design

## Special Thanks

Music Professor, Dr. Dawn Avery  
Department Chair, Dr. Norberto Gomez  
Theatre Professor, Irene Alby  
Dr. Frank Trezza, Collegewide Dean of  
Visual, Performing, and Media Arts  
Dr. Elizabeth Benton, Collegewide Dean  
of English and Reading  
Professor Lucy Derickson  
Roberta Gasbarre, Artistic Director,  
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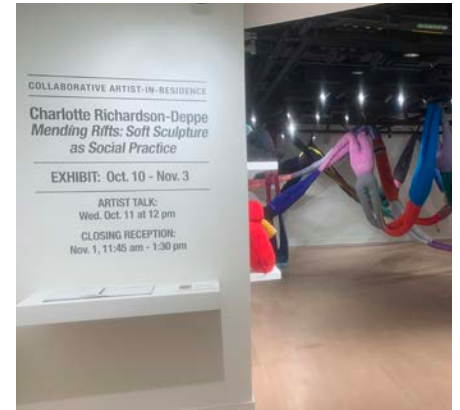
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*The Afghan Project:  
Nurturing Afghan Arts and Culture at Montgomery College*

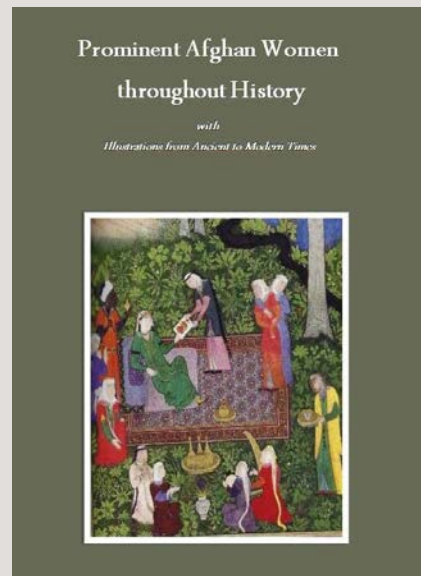
“ In the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Montgomery College (MC) embarked on a remarkable journey known as ‘The Afghan Project.’ ”

This initiative was born out of a desire to support the college’s growing refugee population and to keep Afghan arts and culture vibrant and cherished. The project’s visionary leader, Dawn Avery, has been dedicated to the sustainability of Afghan arts and culture for several years. Her collaboration with the New Music Theatre Alliance laid the foundation for a project that focuses on Afghan Women’s Voices and explores the multifaceted tapestry of Afghan culture.

“The Afghan Project” was not confined to a single department or discipline; it involved cross-campus and multi-disciplinary collaborations that enriched the project’s scope. Several departments played vital roles, including the Paul Peck Humanities Institute, led by Jamie Gillan, and Gender and Women’s Studies, overseen by Leah Sneider.

These departments, in collaboration with Professor Megan Howard’s WMST 101 class, provided students with a unique opportunity to study a new book,

*Prominent Afghan Women Throughout History.* They also hosted a mid-semester presentation and book signing by the book’s author, Fawzia Etemadi, founder of Window of Peace and former head of the Gender Unit for Peace at the Afghanistan High Peace Council.



Book Cover  
Photo courtesy of Fawzia Etemadi



Master Dervishes of the Refa'i Sufi order. Photo courtesy of Stacia Roesler

The project also featured two music workshops by Humayun Khan, an Afghan musician and educator, during the MUSC 117 World Music Classes. Khan, an extraordinary vocalist and harmonium player, added depth to the educational workshops, enhancing students’ understanding of music from Northern India and Afghanistan. “Afghanistan, Islam and Sufism have a rich and diverse culture and unfortunately, due to world events, Islamic extremists get a lot of media attention so I think it’s important to balance it out by showing the more artistic and beautiful aspects of our part of the world. Music with its universal language of melodies and rhythms is a wonderful way to connect us all,” said Khan.

In collaboration with Professor Andree Betancourt’s FILM 220 class on the TP/SS Campus, Susan Galbraith, director of the New Music Theatre Alliance, and her collaborator Airokhsh Faiz Qaisary, a women and youth rights activist and filmmaker, conducted a workshop on culturally sensitive processes for documentary-making.

“The Afghan Project” was not limited to lectures and presentations. Educational workshops were designed to engage students actively in learning about Afghan culture and history. These workshops provided valuable insights into the world of Afghan women, their contributions, and the challenges they face. Service learning opportunities were

integrated into the project to inspire students to make a positive impact in their communities.

One of the highlights of “The Afghan Project” was the Rumi fest, a celebration of Mevlana

Jelaleddin Rumi, the great poet, scholar, and mystic who lived in Afghanistan, Turkey, and Persia. This free event, hosted by the Montgomery College World Arts Festival, was a vibrant and colorful evening that featured food, music, gifts, vendors, and the mesmerizing whirling dervishes. Chiara Marchelli, a MC student who attended had this to say about her experience,

“Rumi fest was an amazing event that gave me the opportunity to experience the beauty of Afghan music and culture. I am

so glad I had the chance to witness such an incredible show, starting from the instruments, the music, to the amazing and colorful whirling dervish dancers.”

The musical ensemble Parwaz, led by Humayun Khan, performed a piece titled “Ornaments” with a 30-piece choir. The event celebrated Afghanistan’s rich culture with bright colors, enchanting music, and the ceremonial whirling of the dervishes. The atmosphere was electric, with approximately 400 attendees captivated by the performances, food, and cultural items.

“The Afghan Project” aimed to showcase the beauty of Afghan

and Islamic culture through a series of events, residencies, and educational

workshops. The project embraced the multi-cultural unity and educational values championed by Montgomery College. The project’s goal is to counterbalance the negative portrayal of Afghan culture, often overshadowed by geopolitical conflicts.

“The Afghan Project” at Montgomery College is a shining example of how educational institutions can serve as catalysts for cultural preservation and

celebration. It is a testament to the power of collaboration, multi-disciplinary engagement, and the commitment to amplifying marginalized voices. Through this project, Montgomery College is not only supporting its refugee population but also offering a platform to celebrate the beauty and resilience of Afghan arts and culture. It brings the spirit of unity, learning, and cultural appreciation to the forefront, making it a symbol of hope and understanding in challenging times.



Afghan Children’s Choir and Parwaz Ensemble, with a leading dervishes of the Mevlevi Order of America. Photo Courtesy of Stacia Roesler



Members of the Mevlevi Order or America and the Refa’l Sufi Order whirling together Photo Courtesy of Stacia Roesler

# VISUAL, PERFORMING, AND MEDIA ARTS FACULTY AND STAFF AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS BRONZE MEDALLIONS BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Above: MC President, Dr. Jermaine F. Williams and Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Michael A. Brintnall present the Bronze Medallion and Tribute Award in honor of Dennis Mulligan to Dean of Visual, Performing, and Media Arts, Dr. Frank Trezza

**S**ince 2021, seven faculty and staff members from the Visual, Performing, and Media Arts have received the prestigious Bronze Medallion Award from the Montgomery College Board of Trustees. The Bronze Medallion recognizes distinguished service to the College, academic profession, county, state, or nation. It is awarded based on satisfaction of rigorous criteria including proof of distinguished leadership, outstanding service, and exceptional achievement demonstrated over an extended period. Award resolutions are subject to intensive review by College officials before being approved by the College President and presented to the Board of Trustees for a vote. Medallions are generally conferred upon retirement, though they may be granted posthumously or to longtime employees who have left the College. For faculty, the Bronze Medallion can be awarded in conjunction with emeritus/emerita status, which recognizes extended or exceptional service to the College.



## 2021

At their meeting in February 2021, the Board of Trustees voted to award Bronze Medallions and Emeritus/Emerita status to two retiring professors, both of whom taught Graphic Design.

- **Professor Robert (Bob) Helsley** retired from the College in 2020 after 17 years in the Visual and Performing Arts Department at Takoma Park/Silver Spring and 5 years as chair of the Department of Visual Communications at the Maryland College of Art and Design before it was acquired by MC. Before beginning his teaching career, Bob spent over 25 years in the television industry as a designer and art director and was the recipient of three Emmy Awards. For more



Professor Robert Helsley

on Bob's many achievements, see the [fall 2020 issue of Art Beat](#).

- Professor **Martha Vaughan**, who also retired in 2020, taught in Rockville's Media Arts and Technologies Department for 16 years (after 8 years as part-

time faculty), during which she was the coordinator of the Graphic Design and Illustration program as well as an academic advisor and director of the Media Arts Gallery. A beloved teacher and colleague, Professor Vaughan received the Outstanding Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2019. For more on her career at MC, see the [spring 2020 issue of Art Beat](#).



Professor Martha Vaughan Assists a students with an illustration project



## 2022

Two more faculty members received Bronze Medallions and Emeritus status in 2022.

- Professor **Peter Zakutansky** taught design and production in the Performing Arts Department at Rockville for 25 years, where he designed costumes, makeup, and hair for more than 200 theatrical and dance productions. From 1986 until his retirement in 2021, he was also the costume designer for Montgomery College's Summer Dinner Theatre, working on over 70 shows and mentoring generations of student design interns. His career at MC was profiled in the [winter 2022 issue of Art Beat](#).



Costumes by Professor Peter Zakutansky

- **Michael Farrell**, who served as chair of the Rockville and Germantown Art Department, was a professor of drawing and design at MC for 21 years. Farrell oversaw the restructuring of the College's Art discipline degree offerings and was a recognized leader college-wide, particularly for his work on the

General Education Committee and his role as a General Studies Advisor.

You can read more about him in the [summer 2022 newsletter](#).



Professor Michael Farrell

## 2023

In 2023, Debra Fyodorov, KenYatta Rogers, and Dennis Mulligan were honored with Bronze Medallions.

- **Debra Fyodorov**, who managed the Parilla Performing Arts Center (PAC) for 37 years, brought world-class artists to MC, including Sophia Loren, Smokey Robinson, Aretha Franklin, the London and New York City Operas, Stars of the Bolshoi Ballet, and the LVIV National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine. She played a key role in the initial planning and construction of the PAC in the 80s and oversaw significant renovations to the building in 2021. In addition, she was a consultant on the construction of the Cultural Arts Center on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus and served as its first manager. She was profiled in the [summer 2023 issue of Art Beat](#).



Debra Fyodorov with Sophia Loren

- Professor **KenYatta Rogers** was the theatre coordinator in the Rockville Performing Arts Department for 22 years. He was named 2014 Maryland Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of



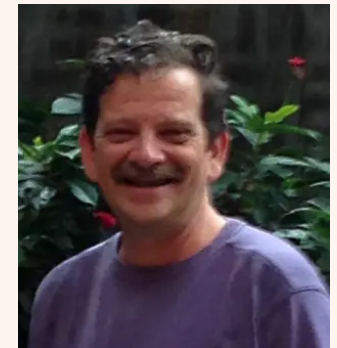
Professor KenYatta Rogers as John Williamson in Glengarry Glen Ross at Round House Theatre

Teaching and was recognized by the Board of Trustees in 2015 for excellence in teaching and his development of interdisciplinary programs. Professor Rogers, who earned Emeritus status in addition to the Bronze Medallion, is also an award-winning actor who has been nominated for three Helen Hayes Awards and has directed and performed at almost every major professional theatre in our area.

- In December 2023, the Board awarded a posthumous Bronze Medallion and Tribute to **Dennis Mulligan**, who passed away unexpectedly in June after 38 years at the College. Dennis, who began his career as a student assistant

in the Rockville Theatre Department in 1985, joined the Performing Arts staff as a full-time theatre production technician in 1989, and became the technical director of the College's celebrated Summer Dinner Theatre program in 1999. A talented actor, singer, director, and technician, Dennis is remembered most for his mentorship of students. See our tribute to Dennis and his legacy in this issue of Art Beat.

The Bronze Medallion is one of the highest honors bestowed by the College and is reserved for individuals who have demonstrated distinguished and sustained service to MC and the academic profession. We are thrilled to recognize seven such individuals here. Please join us in celebrating Bronze Medallion recipients Robert Helsley, Martha Vaughan, Peter Zakutansky, Michael Farrell, Debra Fyodorov, KenYatta Rogers, and Dennis Mulligan.



Dennis Mulligan

# *Shadow Cortex and Unfathomable Depths:*

*Exploring the Confluence of  
Japanese Calligraphy and  
Butoh Dance*

*Photo by Julia A. Smith*

*...a testament to the power of collaboration, cultural exchange, and artistic experimentation. !!*

This past Fall, Montgomery College's Cultural Arts Center hosted a captivating and thought-provoking event, "Shadow Cortex and Unfathomable Depths," featuring the mesmerizing collaboration of Japanese Calligrapher Setsuhi Shiraishi and Butoh Dancer Azumi OE. This unique fusion of traditional Japanese calligraphy and avant-garde dance took the audience on a journey into the unknown, exploring concepts of mourning, death, mystery, and vulnerability through the expressive mediums of Shodo and Butoh.

As the Takoma Park Arts department chair, and an interdisciplinary artist and scholar himself, Professor Norberto Gomez was the driving force behind this event, aiming to introduce Montgomery College students to alternative perspectives within the performing, visual, and media arts. The goal is to showcase diverse artists, performers, and academics from various backgrounds, fostering an appreciation for radical and experimental genres that may

be harder to encounter outside the college setting.

The idea to combine Japanese Calligraphy and Butoh Dance was born from the creative minds of the performers and Michael Young of OTS Productions. OTS Productions, founded by Michael Young, has a rich history of representing Japanese artists and presenting at numerous festivals, contributing significantly to the introduction of Japanese culture to a broader audience.

Coordination to bring this event to the Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center involved close collaboration with Jason Bruffy and his dedicated team. The department's partnership with OTS Productions, brought invaluable expertise and support, ensuring the success of the event.

Japanese Calligraphy (Shodo) and Butoh Dance share a deep connection with meditation and embodiment. Shodo, often referred to as "the way of writing," involves a meditative process rooted in Zen Buddhist philosophy, emphasizing the state of "mushin"

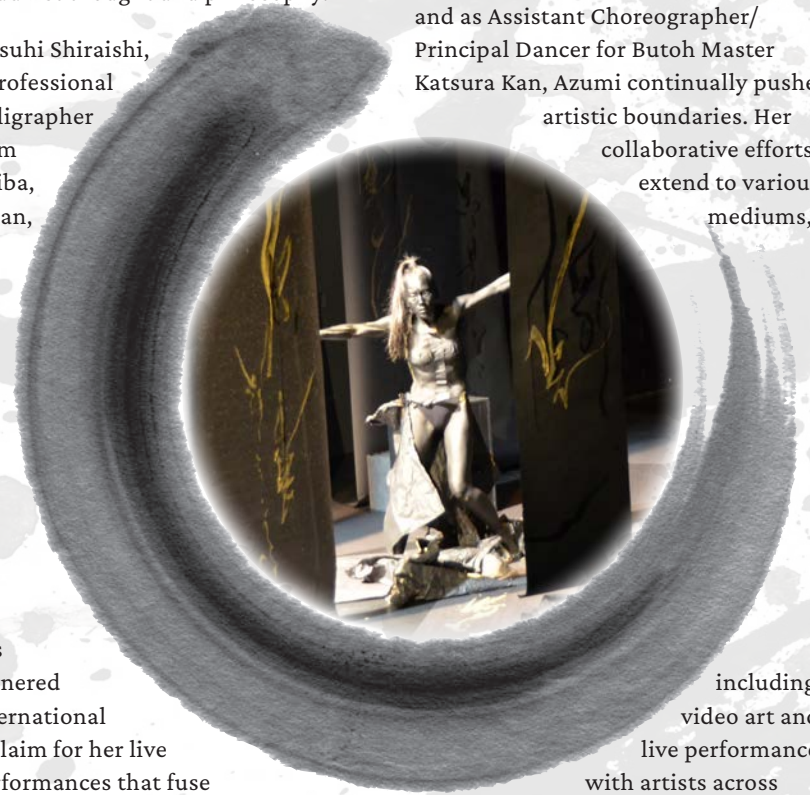
or "no mind." Butoh Dance, known for its precise engagement with time, space, and body, requires patience and an experience of the present moment. Both practices intertwine with themes of suffering, a foundational concept in Buddhist thought and philosophy.

Setsuhi Shiraishi, a professional calligrapher from Chiba, Japan,

has garnered international acclaim for her live performances that fuse traditional calligraphy with various art forms. Her work transcends boundaries, collaborating with live music and contributing to diverse projects, from designing the concept for the 2014 FIFA World Cup Japan National Team uniform to creating

installations at Expo Milan.

Azumi OE, a Butoh dancer from Kyoto, Japan, and NYC, brings raw intensity and playfulness to her performances. Having spent eight years with the New York-based Vangelina Theatre and as Assistant Choreographer/Principal Dancer for Butoh Master Katsura Kan, Azumi continually pushes artistic boundaries. Her collaborative efforts extend to various mediums,



including video art and live performances with artists across disciplines. "For several years now I have been fascinated by the dance theatre Butoh, which was partly a reaction to the trauma of WWII, a turn away from Western dance traditions (Modernization/Westernization), and an embrace of avant-garde (See Kazuo



Photo by Julia A. Smith

Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata), “ added Professor Gomez.

“Shadow Cortex and Unfathomable Depths” weaves a narrative exploring concepts of mourning, death, sadness, mystery, and vulnerability through Japanese Calligraphy and Butoh Dance. The performance, enriched by sound, lighting, and set design by Setsuhi Shiraishi and Azumi OE, was an unforgettable exploration of these themes within the context of Japanese and Eastern cultures.

The organizers express a hope that future generations will take

away a renewed appreciation for the embodied practices of Shodo and Butoh. In a world increasingly dominated by technology, the event aims to encourage a “return to the body” and a reconsideration of our relationship with technology, the virtual, nature, and each other. The performance serves as a moment of reflection on our collective journey, exploring the potential for radical, discursive practices to shape our understanding of the present and the future. “This event is timely, in the age of further cyborgian-integration with our communication technology,

we may argue of a disappearing body; yet through this technology we also capture the murder of the innocent, and the final breathes of the mortally ill; bodies/persons extinguished via live stream; all the while politicians enact laws to limit control over one’s own body and identity(ies),” Professor Gomez expressed on social media.

“Shadow Cortex and Unfathomable Depths” stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, cultural exchange, and artistic

experimentation. Montgomery College’s commitment to showcasing alternative perspectives and fostering interdisciplinary connections is embodied in this captivating event. Through the expressive mediums of Japanese Calligraphy and Butoh Dance, the audience is invited to explore the depths of human experience and cultural expression, creating a space for reflection and appreciation of the rich traditions these art forms represent.



Photos by Julia A. Smith



IRENE ALBY'S  
THEATRICAL ODYSSEY:  
FROM ITALY TO MC



Photo of Irene Alby

In the world of theatre, stories are the lifeblood that courses through its veins, captivating audiences, and actors alike. Each artist, with their unique experiences and perspectives, adds their own distinct narrative to the tapestry of this ancient art form. The fascinating journey of Irene Alby is no different; an artist whose tale takes us from Italy to Canada and eventually to the heart of New York City, before she found her way to Montgomery College (MC) as a dedicated theatre professor.

Professor Alby's journey begins with a nomadic childhood that spanned two continents. Born in Italy, her early years were marked by frequent relocations,

resulting in her attending a staggering nine different schools before high school. As a result, shyness enveloped her, and her public speaking abilities withered away. Desperate to rediscover her voice, she ventured into a theatre class during high school, setting in motion a chain of events that would forever change her life. "I had always known I was going to be an artist, but I didn't know which specific area I would end up in," said Alby.

What started as an attempt to overcome her shyness soon blossomed into a profound passion. Alby fell in love with theatre and decided to pursue it as her life's calling. This revelation was her compass, guiding her through the turbulent seas of

education and the world of theatre.

Post-high school, Alby embarked on a journey that took her to the enchanting city of Paris, where she studied French and worked as an au pair. A chance encounter at a party with a fellow Canadian ignited

year, a serendipitous opportunity came knocking in the form of an audition for a renowned bilingual theatre company, The Other Theatre/L'Autre Théâtre. She successfully landed a role in the company, acting and assisting the Artistic Director



*A Christmas Carol, adapted by Jerry Patch and directed by Irene Alby, From West Virginia Public Theatre's 2017 production. Actors from left to right: Lindsay Wayne, Andrew Lyons, James Kenon Mitchell playing the accordion, and Emana Rachelle.*

her desire to move to Montreal. Her goal was to immerse herself in bilingual political avant-garde theatre, and she began her studies at Concordia University.

While at Concordia, she supplemented her education with courses at the École de Mime and Omnibus, a Francophone corporeal mime studio influenced by the legendary Étienne Decroux. In her final

for three transformative years.

The next chapter in Irene Alby's journey led her to the bustling theatre scene of New York City, where she pursued her studies at Columbia University, learning from luminaries like Andrei Serban, Anne Bogart, and Kristin Linklater. The city was a crucible for her artistic growth, providing a platform for her to perform with masters

like puppeteer Ralph Lee and at esteemed venues such as the Metropolitan Opera and the New Ohio Theatre I.C.E. Factory Festival.

As life took new turns, Irene and her husband decided to leave New York City to start teaching theatre at the university level. Their first teaching position was at the University of Toledo Department of Theatre and Film, where she taught full-time for 12 years and was Founding Artist and Managing Director of the Glaciy Theatre Collective. They then ventured to the WVU School of Theatre and Dance, where she taught full-time for another seven years.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced them to reevaluate their priorities. While her husband contemplated returning to the business, Irene began her search for a teaching position in a vibrant metropolitan area with thriving theatre and film possibilities, eventually leading her to MC.

Teaching at MC felt like a breath of fresh air for Professor Alby. The nurturing and collaborative environment, the smaller department, and the opportunity to shape the acting and directing curriculum were all factors that drew her to the college. She found the students to be enthusiastic, eager to explore various styles and techniques, and brimming with talent.

Throughout her journey, Alby maintained a thriving career in theatre as an actor and director. She performed with Pittsburgh

Shakespeare in the Parks, worked with Bricolage Theatre in Pittsburgh, and delved into international projects, including the Global Women's Performing Arts Festival in Busan, South Korea. She even ventured into writing, with a dramedy animated children's miniseries she penned being chosen as a finalist for the Catalyst Creator Festival.

Her latest chapter commenced this fall as a theatre professor at Montgomery College, where she continues to share her vast knowledge and passion for the arts with a new generation of aspiring theatre artists.

When asked about her take on the modern theatre industry, Professor Alby highlighted the resilience and adaptability of the art form. She stressed the importance of theatre in reflecting our current society and engaging audiences on a deeply transformative level. While acknowledging the challenges posed by the pandemic, she remains optimistic about theatre's future.

Professor Alby's teaching strategies reflect her adaptability and deep connection with her students. She emphasizes the importance of feeling the energy of her students and tailoring her approach to their needs, thereby creating a dynamic and responsive learning environment.

Her advice to budding artists is a valuable blend of wisdom and self-awareness. She encourages them to view auditions as a two-way street, highlighting the

importance of finding the right fit for both the artist and the production team. She also stresses the need to strike a balance between ego and a love for the craft, fostering a holistic and sustainable approach to artistic pursuits. Ever the optimist, Alby shares this bit of wisdom about not getting the part, "...when you go to an audition, you are auditioning them as much as they are auditioning you. If

Alby believes that theatre training not only equips students with performance skills but also fosters emotional intelligence and resilience. In a world increasingly plagued by disconnection, theatre education has the power to reconnect individuals to themselves and others, offering them a rich and fulfilling life path.

The journey of Irene Alby, from Italy to Canada, from New York to



*West Virginia Public Theatre's 2017 production of A Christmas Carol, adapted by Jerry Patch and directed by Irene Alby. Actors from left to right: Rachel Moore as Ghost Past and starring Ronald Siebert as Scrooge*

you don't feel good about how it goes, it may be that you just didn't do your best that day, but it's also possible that you didn't click with the artistic team for some reason. It's okay not to get that gig. There will be something else on the horizon that will be better suited to you."

Montgomery College, is a testament to the transformative power of theatre. Her experiences, insights, and dedication to education are shaping the next generation of theatre artists and enhancing the cultural landscape of Montgomery College.

# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE:

A cluster of ten pink stars of varying sizes arranged in a loose arc above the main text.

*Congratulations to Our  
Outstanding Staff Award Winners,  
Zainab Ali and Michelle Brink!*

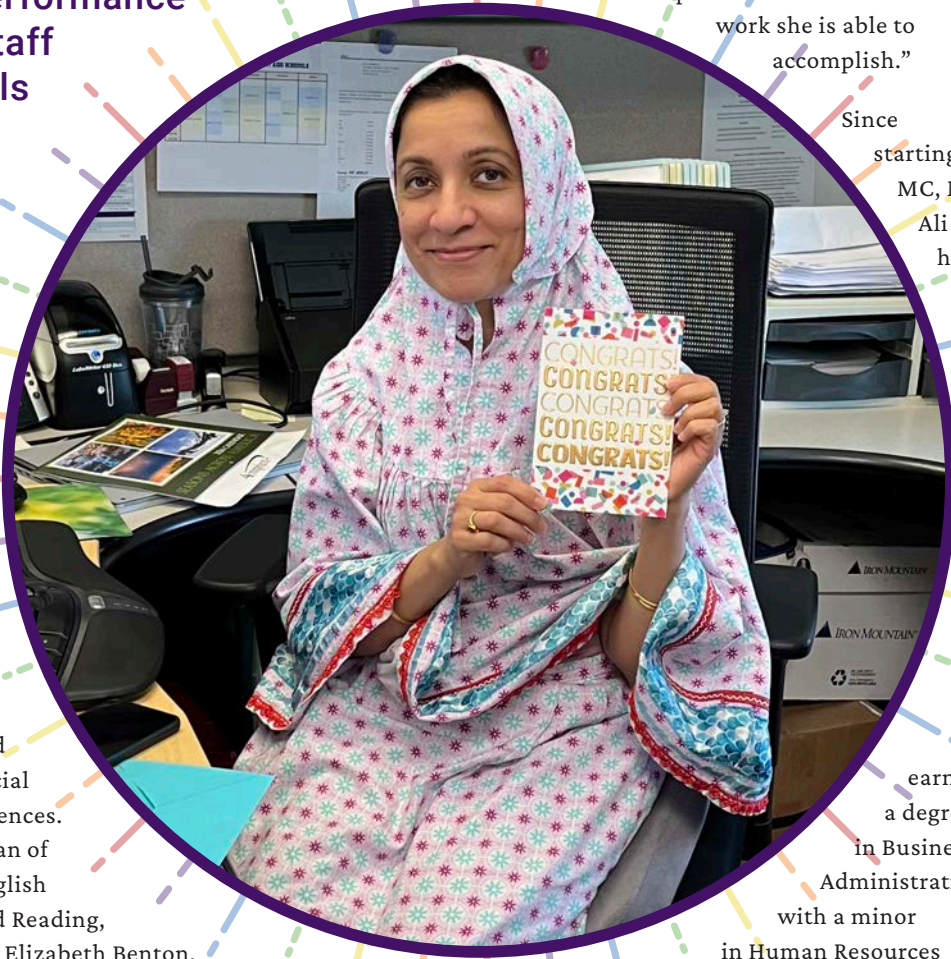
A thick, horizontal pink brushstroke with a textured, painterly appearance, accompanied by five smaller pink stars scattered below it.



**W**e are thrilled to announce and extend our heartfelt congratulations to two exceptional members of the MC family who were honored with Outstanding Staff Awards for Excellence in Performance in 2022. The Outstanding Staff Award recognizes individuals who consistently exemplify exceptional performance, leadership, and service that has a broad impact on the collegewide community. Please join us in celebrating the remarkable achievements of Zainab Ali and Michelle Brink.

**Z**ainab Ali, who began her career at MC as a student worker in Financial Aid, has been a full-time Administrative Aide at the College since 2006. She distinguished herself first as an expert office manager in the English and Reading Department and quickly began to move up the ranks. Now celebrating her 18th year at MC, Ms. Ali is the Senior Administrative Aide to the Collegewide Deans for English and Reading and Education

and Social Sciences. Dean of English and Reading, Dr. Elizabeth Benton, who has worked with Ms. Ali



since 2009 writes, “Her work ethic, understanding of complex learning and operational systems, and her creative thinking make all of us in her orbit in awe of her ability and recipients of the excellent work she is able to accomplish.”

Since starting at MC, Ms. Ali has

to good use. Her grateful colleagues credit her with introducing more efficient operational guidelines, data collection, course scheduling, and budget management technologies and practices to the office. Say Benton:

Ms. Ali utilizes her creative thinking to problem-solve alongside others and me. When we have a new student initiative, she helps us put together a systematic approach... This organizational work keeps the projects both grounded in efficiency and nimble: her organization gives us the ability to see the work historically then reflect and adapt our programs.

Ms. Ali is a mentor to students and faculty alike, kindly and patiently handling complicated academic and non-academic situations, training new employees, and teaching faculty and staff to use new technology and learning systems. A now-retired colleague writes:

I feel blessed to know Zainab and to have had the opportunity to work with her for many years. Her dedication, knowledge, kindness, and willingness to assist others are invaluable assets to Montgomery College. She is an exceptional person and friend, and it was my pleasure to work with her each day.

earned a degree in Business Administration with a minor in Human Resources from University of Maryland Global Campus which she has put

Michelle Brink, who began her career at MC in 2007 as an Administrative Aide in the Media Arts and Technologies Department, is also a graduate of the College. She holds an A.A. in Television and an A.A.S. in Web Design from MC, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in Digital Media and Web Technologies from University of Maryland Global Campus. She has been the Senior Administrative Aide to the Collegewide Dean of Visual, Performing, and Media Arts (VPMA) since 2018.

Endlessly knowledgeable about all things MC, Ms. Brink has been finding ways to improve the VPMA area since the day she arrived. After transitioning the office to a paperless system, she took on the task of managing and marketing the College's annual schedule of 25 art exhibitions, 40 music recitals, 4 theatrical productions, and 2 dance concerts. Whether it is managing complex budgets, designing promotional materials for events, or mastering new technologies, Michelle can do it quickly and well.

"To say that her work is remarkable would be a gross understatement," says the Dean of Visual, Performing, and Media Arts, Dr. Frank Trezza. "She is extraordinary...The sheer

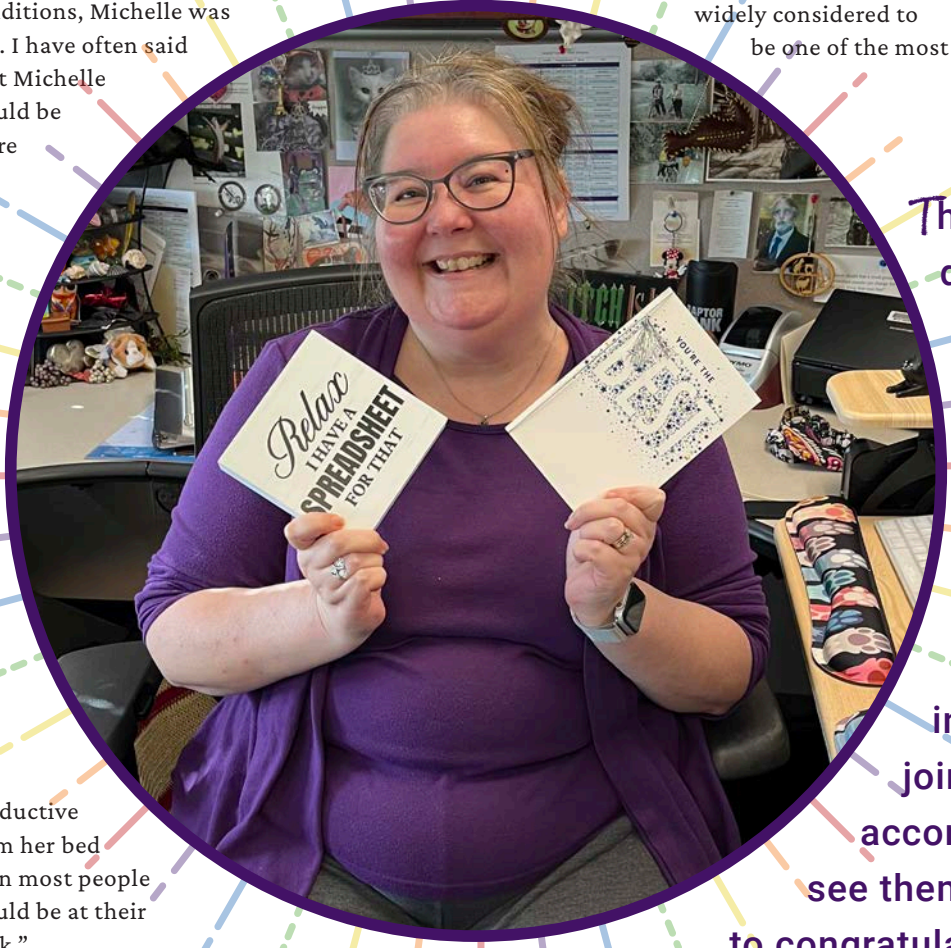
volume of her daily output is exceptional." During the pandemic, he notes, "While many people at MC were hampered by teleworking conditions, Michelle was not. I have often said that Michelle would be more

productive from her bed than most people would be at their desk."

In addition to her remarkable work ethic and talents as a manager,

Michelle is beloved by colleagues and students. She handles even the most complex situations with calm confidence and humor and is widely considered to be one of the most

reliable and friendly members of our community. Says Trezza: "She has an easy manner, cheery disposition, and a delightful sense of humor. She is a pleasure to work with or just be around."



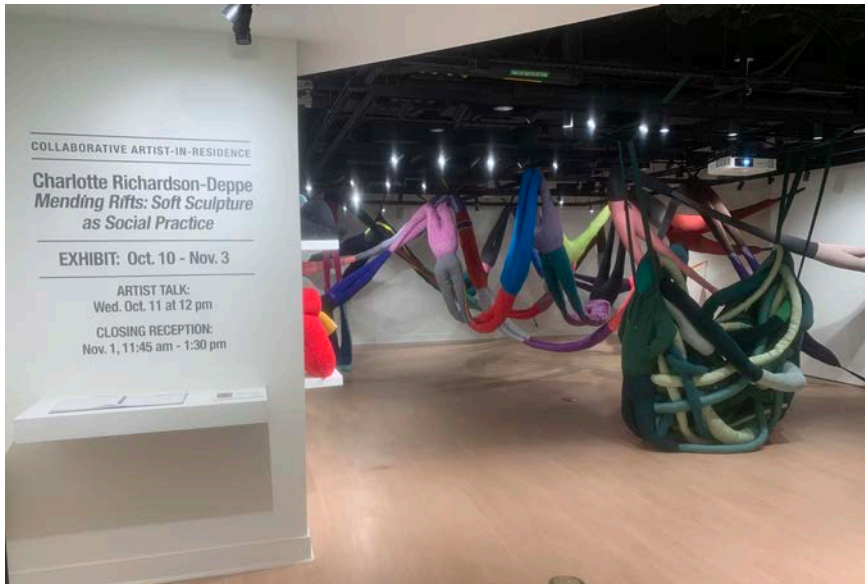
**There are not two more deserving recipients of the Outstanding Staff Award than Zainab Ali and Michelle Brink. Both are exceptionally dedicated and cherished members of the MC community and models of excellence in their work. Please join us in celebrating their accomplishments, and if you see them on campus, remember to congratulate them on this well-deserved honor.**

# ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

*Charlotte Richardson-Deppe*



*Mending Rifts: Soft Sculpture as Social Practice*



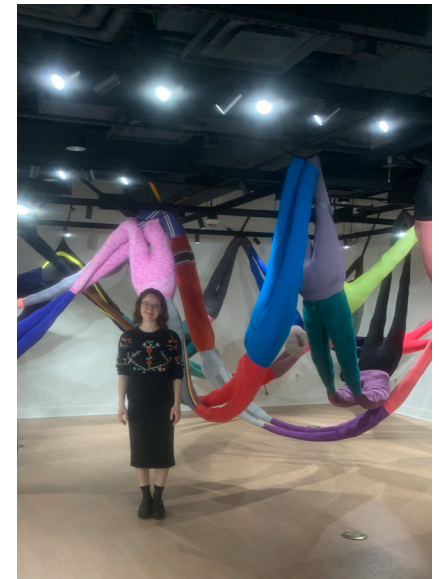
Charlotte Richardson-Deppe with her installation in the Sarah Silberman Gallery

Every semester, the Rockville and Germantown Art Departments welcome a Collaborative Artist-in-Residence (AiR) to work with students over the course of three weeks. This program provides the unique opportunity for students to work directly with professional contemporary artists outside of the classroom. Students have the authentic experience of creating artwork for public installation, as part of a collaboration with peers, faculty, and the artist, working toward a common goal of a gallery installation. In the 10 years since

this program began, 178 classes and over 3100 students from a wide variety of majors have worked directly with an Artist-in-Residence on a hands-on collaboration. For past projects and more on this program, visit the Rockville and Germantown Art Department website here.

Our 2023 Collaborative AiR was Charlotte Richardson-Deppe. A queer feminist artist working between performance and soft sculpture, Richardson-Deppe received her MFA in Studio Art from the University of

Maryland, College Park, where she is currently a lecturer in the Department of Art. Charlotte grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she performed in musical theater and opera and trained in aerial arts at Circus Juventas. Her artistic focus expanded towards studio art while studying at Grinnell College, where she became enamored with sculpture and installation while continuing to train in dance, theater, and vocal music. At the University of Maryland, she turned toward soft sculpture and performance, collaborating with peers across the disciplines of dance, music, photography, and film. Charlotte has performed with the Riverbed Theater Company at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei, Taiwan;



Prof. Lucy Derickson



Students film a performance with Charlotte Richardson-Deppe

taught weaving and fiber arts at Weaving Hand Studio in Brooklyn, NY; served as program Assistant Director at Urban Arts Academy in Minneapolis, MN; and received the Jim Henson Award for Puppetry at the University of Maryland, College Park.

During her residency, Charlotte explored themes of social and environmental justice via sewing and mending practices. She introduced these themes and an installation of her own soft sculpture in Rockville's Sarah Silberman Gallery with an artist talk at the beginning of the residency (a video of the artist talk is available



Students attend the closing reception with the artist in the Silberman Gallery.

to view here). Over the course of the next month, Charlotte guided MC Art students in the creation of an interactive soft sculpture installation and multiple-person garments that resulted in performances that was recorded and projected on the wall of the Silberman Gallery. She also hosted mending workshops in which students brought worn clothing to repair in ways that were both functional and artistic, contributing to a library of creatively mended garments. As they worked with found textiles, including their own discarded clothing,

students examined themes of care, sustainability, and consumerism. The final installation of the collaborative work took place in the gallery and was celebrated with a closing reception attended by the many of the students



The Sarah Silberman Gallery and the MC Rockville Art Department Present  
**COLLABORATIVE ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE**  
**Charlotte Richardson-Deppe**  
*Mending Rifts: Soft Sculpture as Social Practice*

Exhibition Oct. 10 - Nov. 3  
 Artist Talk: Wed. Oct. 11 at 12pm  
 Closing Reception:  
 Wed. Nov. 1, 11-4:30 am - 1:30 pm



Open House for Kids  
 Museum After Hours

who contributed to the exhibition.

Charlotte’s residency was part of an exciting new collaboration between MC and VisArts in Rockville. Initiated by Professor Amanda Miller, who runs both the Collaborative AiR and ArtWalk programs at Rockville and Germantown, this partnership allows artists to hold simultaneous residencies at the College and VisArts, where they have access to studio space. This fall, the MC community

was invited to interact with Charlotte during open studio hours at VisArts, as well as through workshops held during MC’s 11th Annual Humanities Days celebration.

As the AiR program expands and enters into new partnerships, the College community and MC Art Students can look forward to more exciting opportunities to collaborate with professional artists on innovative projects every spring and fall.



Creatively mended garments from the AIR workshops hang on a rack in the gallery

*In Memoriam:*

*Dennis Mulligan,*

1964-2023



Dennis Mulligan, 1964-2023

It is with profound sadness that we share the news of the loss of our colleague, Dennis Mulligan, who passed away unexpectedly last June after 38 years at the College. Dennis began his career as a student assistant in the Rockville Theatre Department in 1985. After graduating from MC, he joined the Performing Arts staff as a full-time Theatre Production Technician and, in 1999, became the Production

Coordinator and Technical Director of the College's celebrated Summer Dinner Theatre program.

Dennis loved his work immensely and was integral to the success of the College's Performing Arts program, devoting countless hours to over 200 productions. In his nearly four decades at MC, he embraced a vast number of responsibilities, including set construction and providing technical support to Theatre and Dance faculty. He was a talented actor and singer, performing in musicals and dramas, and directed many MC productions, including *Nickel and Dimed*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Living Out*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *Reckless*, *The Waiting Room*, *Hair*, and *Working*.

Dennis served on many college-wide and campus committees and was an active member of the MC Staff Union, AFSCME Local 2380, where he was on the executive board for 16 years. He was honored with Recognition Awards from the College for his work on Summer Dinner Theatre and with the Office of Special Events.

Dennis's true joy, however, came from mentoring students. He worked tirelessly to recruit, train, and supervise interns and student technicians. He was a driving force in establishing the internship and apprenticeship programs that set MC's Summer Dinner Theatre (SDT) apart and make it so successful. SDT's Artistic Director, Roberta Gasbarre, remembers being blown away by Dennis's gifts as a mentor:

*Dennis was full of surprises. He was a student, he was a teacher, he was a director, he was an actor, but ultimately, he was a mentor. That is his legacy...his legacy is those young technicians who felt nurtured when they didn't have a lot of confidence in themselves...He really could talk to everybody on their own level, meet them where they were, and be realistic about what was possible. He was able to give people the benefit of the doubt and give everyone a chance or a second chance to do their best.*

Dennis's impact on his community, while immeasurable, was apparent last June when he passed away during the run of *Falsettos*. Despite their disbelief and grief, SDT's cast, crew, and leadership leaned on each other and continued working because they knew that that is what he would want. Says Gasbarre:

*I think it is important for us to acknowledge his presence in our work. For the students, that is the attitude, the hard work, and the patience. Patience for others as well as for oneself. The idea that you can make a mistake. That you're not a failure. You get up off your knees, brush yourself off, and keep going... That was an important quality that Dennis brought to his work. His ability to be straight with students and still encourage them. He allowed for failure and was there to tell them to keep going. He understood family...and for him, the people (in the Performing Arts Department) were part of his family. They, and the students, were his people, his family.*

Dennis will be deeply missed by his students and colleagues as well as his six siblings and extended family. He will have an enduring impact on the MC community for generations to come. Our hearts, thoughts, and deepest condolences are with all those affected by this profound loss.

The Dennis P. Mulligan Theatre Arts Endowed Scholarship has been established in Dennis's memory. Contributions may be sent to the Montgomery College Foundation, 9221 Corporate Boulevard, 3rd Fl., Rockville, MD 20850. Please indicate the above named scholarship fund on your contribution.



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