

Expressions

Volume 1

SJSU | COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND THE ARTS

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Kurtwood Smith's visit



Actor Kurtwood Smith visited San José State University on February 13, 2014. An alum of the Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre Department, Mr. Smith spent the afternoon speaking to students about his acting career and answering questions about working in the television and film industry. Mr. Smith's new show, *Resurrection*, recently made its debut on ABC. Everyone was grateful for the time he spent with students, faculty, and staff and for the inside scoop he shared with future actors, screenwriters, producers, and directors. [Read more about his visit here.](#)

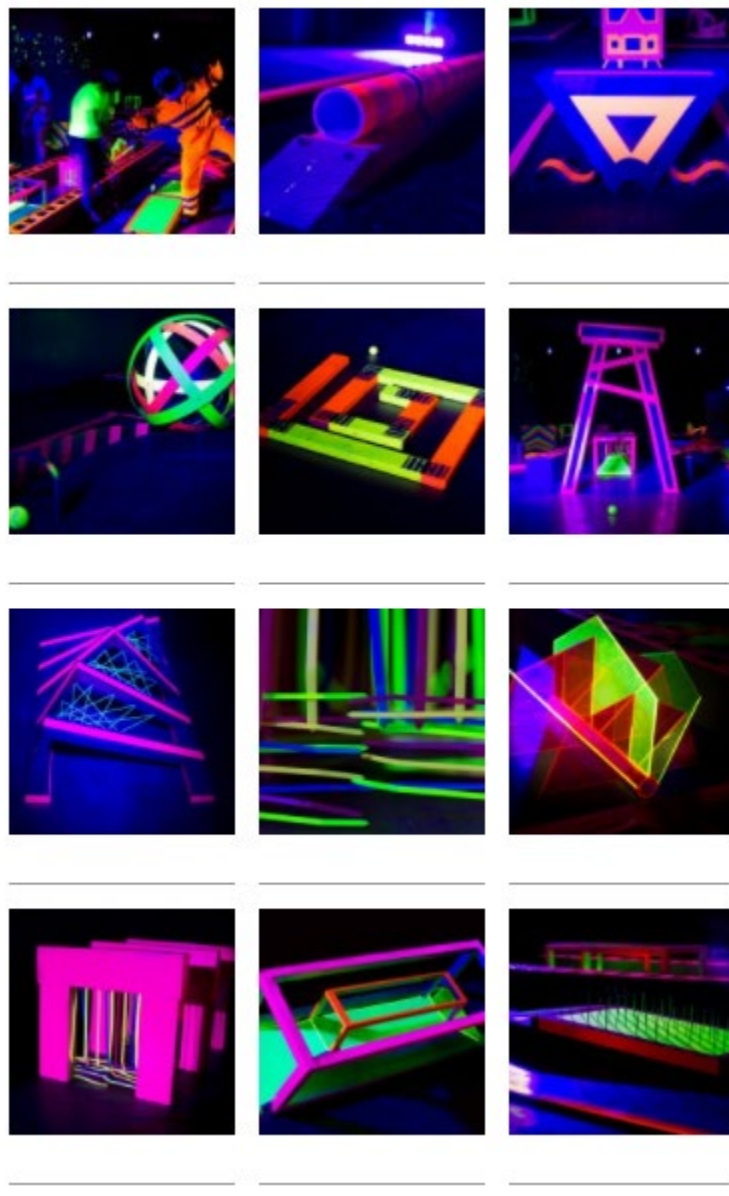
Brian Taylor's Photography

Brian Taylor's photography was recently featured in a solo exhibition at Gallery 291 in Mill Valley, and will be included in a group show at the CEPA Gallery in Buffalo, New York in September. His work will be featured in a solo exhibition at The New York Center for the Book in 2015.



Brian's artwork was selected as the cover of the September issue of the Korean Photography Magazine, with a 15 page interview inside. A chapter dedicated to Brian's work appears in the recent book, **Photography Beyond Technique: Essays on the Informed Use of Alternative and Historical Photographic Processes**, Focal Press, January, 2014. His work is also included in the new text, **Transformational Imagemaking: Handmade Photography Since 1960**, by Robert Hirsch, Focal Press, 2014.

Gallery: 3-D Design Concepts Class



Selected pictures from Scotty Gorham's ART 13 3-D Design Concepts class, the "Black Light Miniature Golf Course" project.

SJSU MFA Student Takes the Pentagon by Art



Mark Pinto, a former Marine and current third-year graduate student in photography in SJSU's **Art and Art History Department**, was recently selected in a nation-wide juried show from amongst military veteran artists. His work is featured in the first **Veteran's Art Show at the Pentagon** in Washington D.C. The exhibit opened on November 11, 2013, Veterans Day, and will run for a year—visible to the thousands of Pentagon employees as well as the public on the Pentagon tour. Pinto's digital photograph titled "Homeless Joe" is part of a ten-

picture series depicting the difficulties of veterans as they are reintegrated into society. Each photo uses the G.I. Joe action figures as a way of disarming the viewer and bringing them closer to the work. Visit Pinto's **website** to learn more.

A Grammy Winner's In the House!



Congratulations to **School of Music and Dance** professor **Aaron Lington** and the **Pacific Mambo Orchestra** for winning the **Best Tropical Latin Album** category at the **56th Annual Grammy Awards**. Dr. Lington played baritone saxophone on and composed half of the compositions comprising the winning album. He has certainly fulfilled an earlier title bestowed upon him by the **Downbeat Magazine** Critic's Poll as a "**Rising Star**" in the Bari-

tone Saxophone category. Dr. Lington is a professor at San José State University, where he serves as Coordinator of Jazz Studies. Read the **full story** by SJSU's Pat Lopes Harris.

Alumna Named National Book Critics Circle Award Nominee



English and Comparative Literature Department alumna **Carmen Giménez-Smith** has been named a finalist for this year's **National Book Critics Circle Award** in Poetry for her new book, **Milk and Filth** (University of Arizona Press). She is also the author of a memoir, three poetry collections, and co-editor of the fiction anthology, **My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me** (Penguin, 2010). She is the recipient of a **2011 American Book Award** and now teaches in the creative writing programs at New Mexico State

University and Ashland University, while serving as the editor-in-chief of the literary journal **Puerto del Sol**. Awards will be announced March 13, 2014. Listen to Ms. Giménez-Smith read from the book **here**.

Ken Burns Accepts Steinbeck Award



How many people have a cinematographic "effect" named after them? The great American filmmaker **Ken Burns** does. And not surprisingly, it's called the **Ken Burns Effect**. You can watch the videos of his December 2013 acceptance of the **Steinbeck Award, "In the Souls of the People,"** and his interaction with our students here:

KEN BURNS VISIT TO SJSU DECEMBER 2013

KEN BURNS ACCEPTING THE STEINBECK AWARD

Profile: H&A Supporter Bill McGee



Where Music, Literature and Computers Collide

When you retire, perhaps you're considering taking up golf or planting roses. But when William McGee retired from IBM, he decided to pursue a life-long dream of studying music and, at 65, enrolled in SJSU's baccalaureate program in music composition. He explored keyboards synthesizers, music theory and the use of technology in digital production. Previously, his last forays down the halls of academia had been in 1949 and 1951, when he earned degrees in physics respectively at UC Berkeley and Columbia, which led to his career as a computer scientist at IBM.

Happily, all these talents merged, and today from his home in Los Altos he uses them in his latest passion: understanding what about music attracts people. His knowledge of mathematics and computer programming has enabled McGee to use probability theory to quantify what musical components are present in popular songs.

McGee's experience at San José State also prompted him to take other actions. After struggling with the outdated equipment in the studio, he created the McGee Music Recording Studio Fund in the School of Music and Dance. These gifts have long-range impact for future students, according to Pablo Furman, professor and coordinator of composition and music technology. "Now, countless students will enjoy taking classes in a new studio and learning critical skills necessary for successful work in digital sound production."

McGee made other generous donations, including one to keep *Reed Magazine*, the campus literary journal founded in 1898, in print. "I'd like to see *Reed Magazine* continue; it's had a very long history," he said, noting that our campus lays proud claim to producing the oldest literary journal west of the Mississippi.

In addition, this alumnus created the Ruth MacLean McGee Scholarship Fund for the Department of English and Comparative Literature in the name of his late wife, Ruth, a writer. Mr. McGee's rationale for this gift was based on his observations of patterns in higher education: "English departments are typically underfunded, and it seemed like a good way to support them."

Today, our students in the College of Humanities and the Arts benefit from the old and the new, thanks to the generosity of one of our alumni—the latest cutting-edge technology used in music composition and the preservation of *Reed Magazine*.

By Cathleen Miller

Profile: Professor Janie Scott



From Broadway to the Central Bay

SJSU Humanities and Arts faculty member, **Janie Scott**, has a résumé that could reach the floor if written out. Between her roles on Broadway, her time touring with major productions, and her experience as a choreographer in both the Bay Area and New York, she offers an expansive and crucial perspective on the dance and theater arts communities. For 20 years, SJSU Dance and Theatre Arts majors have had the privilege of dipping into Scott's well of knowledge to help them in their own budding careers. Her punchy, straightforward personality not only adds to her skills as an academic adviser and teacher, but also hints at her success as a performer.

Born an army brat in Camp Cook, CA, her birthplace technically does not exist anymore—now called Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, CA. “I don't have a home-place to go back to,” states Scott, who moved every year of her life until the end of her middle school years. Her familiarity with change proved to be a useful skill later in her career, when living in the midst of the theater world. Entering San José State University as a 17-year-old music major, she quickly switched her major after watching a dance class from the doorway. She describes the moment as being “hit by a lightning bolt,” and, as if by divine intervention, she knew that her path had forked. The decision to become a dancer was not based in any level of logic or objectivity, having never taken a dance class in her life, and came with some resistance from her parents. Nevertheless, she plopped herself front and center of every class, a five-foot-tall, redheaded freshman taking every opportunity imaginable to soak in knowledge like a sponge.

Her gung-ho personality and her determination to improve fueled her. She purposefully worked with artists more experienced than herself, who always pushed her to, as she says, “run faster, harder, and jump higher.” Although she felt that her lack of experience would show, she began giving herself the pep talk she would use for years and years to come: “What's the worst thing that could happen?” Her love of musicals began, ironically, with a fear of singing publicly—maybe not the best fear for a future Broadway performer. Scott sweated at the idea of auditioning for a musical, but after a bit of a push from a casting director, she auditioned for and was cast in a small production. “They really needed a little one on the end,” Scott explains with a smirk. After three weeks in this production, she no longer felt satisfied with only dance, and needed to engage fully with a character, both physically and vocally.

At age 25, she auditioned for *A Chorus Line* in San Francisco—"What's the worst thing that could happen?" After a grueling five-hour audition, the competition weaned down to Scott and two other women for a spot on their tour. Luckily, she made the cut and headed out for the tour as an understudy swing. "My life changed forever," she explains, pointing to a banner with photos of all of the casts from *A Chorus Line*. "I have no business being on that poster, nothing like that should have happened when I started dancing at barely 17 and not singing until I was 21, no major résumé, no nothing." Scott is the definition of a role model in this aspect. From aspiring dancers to already determined performers, she represents the success of a strong will and the eagerness to learn. Professor Scott has worked hard to get where she is, and has many war stories to share with her students: to inspire them, prepare them, and dazzle them.

By Danielle de Ojeda, English & Comparative Literature Major, SJSU

It's a Dean's Life Vol. 1



The new year has started with a bang in Humanities and the Arts. **Professor Aaron Lington's Grammy award** has everyone buzzing with excitement about the talented faculty in our midst. The Pacific Mambo Orchestra, of which Professor Lington is a founding member, won in the Best Tropical Album category for their self-titled album. **Learn more.**

Looking back on last year, I cannot help but feel tremendously proud about the accomplishments of the College. The fall 2013 celebrations around the Art Centennial went off without a hitch. **Exhibits** continue through the spring, and the gorgeous catalog is available for purchase through the

Art and Art History Department for those who miss the shows.

In December, we were privileged to host the great American filmmaker Ken Burns, when he received the **2013 Steinbeck Award**. Mr. Burns spent the afternoon with enthralled students, faculty, and staff in dialogue about telling America's stories through film.

Watch the video. The sold-out evening event featured **Mr. Burns in conversation with KQED's Michael Krasny**. Past winners include influential artists and public figures, such as Bruce Springsteen, John Mellencamp, Rachel Maddow, and Michael Moore.

The numerous events sponsored by the **Center for Literary Arts**, the **Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies**, and the new **Steinbeck in the Schools** site created for teachers and students by the **Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies** are just a few examples of the ongoing programming that nourishes our university and our community.

This spring holds the promise of many amazing events in the College, including a College-wide celebration of the 75th anniversary of the publication of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. The School of Music and Dance will be collaborating with the Department of TV, Radio, Film, and Theatre to produce both the opera and the theatre production of this great American novel. For tickets, please visit the **School of Music and Dance** or **TV, Radio, Film, and Theatre**. In addition to numerous exhibits in the **Natalie and James Thompson Gallery** and the March 6 inaugural **Kazuki Fukuda-Abe Lecture Series** in Contemporary Japanese Art event, we also will be opening our College Student Success Center this semester in Clark Hall, which will provide an opportunity for students to receive enhanced advising, career services, and internship opportunities. Finally, we look forward to hosting a *Donor Recognition Event* on April 22 from 3-5pm to honor the supporters who so generously contribute to scholarships and program support in H&A.

The **College of Humanities & the Arts** has created this newsletter, *Expressions*, as a vehicle for publicizing our accomplishments, probing the impacts of humanities and arts education, and celebrating all aspects of the creativity that we nurture in our students

and the surrounding community. Just as **SJSU is Powering Silicon Valley**, the College of Humanities and the Arts is *Powering Creativity*. But we need your help to tell others about the wonderful work we have done for more than 100 years to promote excellence in liberal arts education.

Please help us spread the word about the high-quality, high-impact educational experiences we provide in H&A! Like us on **Facebook** and post stories there about the impact SJSU and H&A have had on you and on the community. Or follow us on **Twitter**, where you can read frequent updates about Humanities & the Arts as well as trends in public higher education nationwide. Please also join our **mailing list** or **share your stories** with us. We would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Vollendorf, Dean