

CORE FACULTY BIOS

DERRICK AUSTIN



BIO: Derrick Austin is the author of *Tenderness* (BOA Editions, 2021), winner of the 2020 Isabella Gardner Poetry Award, and *Trouble the Water* (BOA Editions, 2016). His third collection, *This Elegance*, is forthcoming from BOA Editions in Spring 2026. His debut collection was honored as a finalist for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award, Thom Gunn Award for Gay Poetry, Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry, and the Norma Faber First Book Award. *Tenderness* was a finalist for a Golden Poppy Award, Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry, and a Northern California Book Award. A Cave Canem fellow, he is the recipient of a Ron Wallace Poetry Fellowship at the Wisconsin Institute of Creative Writing, a Stegner Fellowship, and an Amy Lowell Poetry Traveling Scholarship. He has had poems and essays commissioned by The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, The New Museum, Craft Contemporary, The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, The Brick (formerly LAXART), and The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

[Author Site](#)

Book: [Tenderness](#)

Book: [Black Sand](#)

Poetry, [Published Poetry](#)

Sarah LaBrie



Bio:

Sarah LaBrie is a TV writer and the author of [No One Gets to Fall Apart](#), a memoir published by HarperCollins in 2024. The book was named a New York Times Editors' Pick and

Notable Book of the Year and was highlighted by Elle, NPR, and Esquire as a best memoir of the year. Lorrie Moore calls *No One Gets to Fall Apart* “a brilliant memoir... a triumph of every kind of literary perseverance,” and the Los Angeles Times hails it as “extraordinary.” LaBrie has also written for The Guardian, Guernica, Joyland, the Los Angeles Review of Books, Electric Literature, and other publications. Her libretti have been performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Apollo Theater, and she has written on television series including *Minx*, *Blindspotting*, *Made for Love*, and *Love, Victor*. She has received fellowships from the Ucross Foundation, Yaddo, Sewanee, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and was nominated for Best Television Comedy Script at the 2024 Women’s Image Network Awards for her work on *Blindspotting*. LaBrie earned her BA from Brown University in Comparative Literature and Literary Arts and an MFA from New York University as a Writers in the Schools Fellow. She grew up in Houston’s Third Ward and now lives in Los Angeles with her husband, filmmaker Justin Lerner, and their dogs. She teaches in the low-residency MFA of the Americas program at Stetson University.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [No One Gets to Fall Apart](#)
- Story, [Tender](#)
- Co-Writer, [Made For Love, HBO](#)
- Co-Writer, [Minx, Starz](#)
- Co-Writer, [Love, Victor, Hulu](#)

Cyriaco Lopes

**BIO:**

Brazilian-American artist Cyriaco Lopes has exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP), El Museo del Barrio in NYC, the Centre Wallonie Bruxelles in Paris, Casa Degli Artisti in Milan, among other international venues. In 2022 he had a solo exhibition at Satchel Projects in Chelsea, NYC. His work has been selected and curated in exhibitions by critics such as Yasufumi Nakamori, Paulo Herkenhoff and Adriano Pedrosa, as well as by artists such as Lygia Pape, Janine Antoni, Luciano Fabro, and Ryan Trecartin. He is the winner of the NYC World Studio Foundation Award, the Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis Project Award, and the São Paulo Phillips Prize of trip to Europe.

His performances with poet Terri Witek have been seen at the Centro Nacional de Cultura in Lisbon, Portugal, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, the Salford Museum, in Manchester, England, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, FL, the Centre del Carme Cultura Contemporanea, in Valencia, Spain, and Oi Futuro Center for Art & Technology, in Rio, Brazil. Their collaboration was featured at the 2023 ARCO Madrid, where their gallery, *The Liminal*, won one of the two special mentions by the jury.

The artist holds two M.F.A.s: one in Imaging and Digital Arts, UMBC, Baltimore, and the other in Visual Languages, UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro. He attended artist's residencies such as Skowhegan, the London Project, MassMoca, and the MacDowell Colony (where Lopes was a 2019 Marian O. Naumburg Photography fellow).

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Exhibit, [Saints & Martyrs](#)
- Collaboration, [Guest Room: "WHERE is the photographic image?"](#)
- Show, ["Off to Elsewhere," Munich, Germany](#)

Urayoán Noel



BIO:

Urayoán Noel is the author of eight books of poetry--most recently *Transversal* (Arizona 2021), named a book of the year by the New York Public Library and longlisted for the PEN Open Book Award--and of the critical study of Nuyorican poetry *In Visible Movement* (Iowa, 2014), winner of the LASA Latino Studies Book Prize. A finalist for the National Translation Award and the Best Translated Book Award, his most recent translation is Nicole Cecilia Delgado's *adjacent islands/islas adyacentes* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2022). Noel has been a fellow and faculty of CantoMundo and the Macondo Writers Workshop and has also received fellowships from the Mellon, Ford, and Howard Foundations. Forthcoming from La Impresora in Puerto Rico is his hybrid prose text *Cuaderno de Isabela / Isabela*

Notebook. Noel's visual work has been published in the *New York Times* and exhibited in museums and art spaces in New York and Puerto Rico as well as at Poesiefestival Berlin and is included in collections of Latin American and Latinx electronic literature. He lives in the Bronx and is Director of Graduate Studies for NYU's MFA in Creative Writing in Spanish.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [Transversal](#)
- Book, [Buzzing Hemisphere / Rumor Hemisférico](#)
- Book, [Los Días Porosos](#)
- Book, [Kool Logic](#)
- Artist Book, [Tryptico](#)
- Poem Series, [Wokitokiteki](#)

Terri Witek



BIO:

Terri Witek's newest books include *Down Water Street* (aboveground press) and *W / \ SH*, a dystopian collaborative work with poet Amaranth Borsuk (Anhinga Press/ Visual Poetry Series), both forthcoming. Her work has been included in many journals and anthologies, including 2 from 2021: *JUDITH: Women Making Visual Poetry (Timglas et)* and *WAAVe (Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets)* Witek's art/text mixes are often featured in collaboration: she teaches Poetry in the Expanded Field in Stetson University's low-residency MFA of the Americas with Brazilian visual artist Cyriaco Lopes; they also lead The Fernando Pessoa Game at the Disquiet International Literary

Program each summer in Lisbon. Their collaborative work has been represented at ARCO in Madrid and in Seoul, Chania (Crete), Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Lisbon, and Valencia, Spain.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

- [Author Site](#)
- Book, [The Rattle Egg](#)
- Book, [Body Switch](#)
- Book, [The Rape Kit \(Slope Editions Prize\)](#)
- Book, [Exit Island \(Florida Book Award medalist\)](#)
- Book, [The Shipwreck Dress](#)
- Book, [Carnal World](#)
- Book, [Fools and Crows](#)
- Chapbook, [copies: I loved you in the hard old way](#)
- Chapbook, [Newsers \(Yavanika Press Publications Prize\)](#)
- Chapbook, [On Gavdos Ferry](#)
- Chapbook, [First Shot at Fort Sumter/Possum](#)
- Chapbook, [Courting Couples \(Center for Book Arts Prize\)](#)
- Anthology, [JUDITH: Women Making Visual Poetry \(Timglas\)](#)
- Anthology, [WAAVe \(Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets\)](#)
- Publication, [BEYOND THE ILLEGIBLE ON BOUNDARY AVE](#)
- Exhibitions with Cyriaco Lopes, [The Severe Ones and Gods of Remainder \(The Liminal Gallery, ARCO 2023 - Madrid\) Special jury mention: E l a i r e c o m i e n z a a t o m a r l a s f o r m a s l e n t a s d e l m á r m o l](#)

Staff

Brendan Bowles



BIO: Deri

Savannah Kater



Savannah Kater, MFA Program Coordinator, is a New England Native who currently resides in Port Orange, Florida. Her work has been published in *Collateral Journal* and the *WAAVe (Women Asemic Artist and Visual Poets) anthology*. She has also curated site-specific visual poetry addressing the multi-generational effects of war. She is the CEO and founder of the nonprofit Scrap the Waste Corporation and is passionate about

community outreach. Kater received three degrees from Stetson University, including MFAotA.

Ryan Rivas



BIO:

Ryan Rivas is the author of *Nextdoor in Colonialtown* (Autofocus, 2022) and *Lizard People* (ThirtyWest, 2023). He is the Publisher of Burrow Press, and the Coordinator of MFA Publishing at Stetson University's MFA of the Americas creative writing program. A Macon Writers Workshop fellow, his work has appeared in *The Believer*, *The Rumpus*, *Literary Hub*, *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2012*, and elsewhere.

Shelby Smotherman



BIO:

Shelby Smotherman is a writer, artist, and theatrical technician working in the Tampa Bay Area. Most often, she works with paint and lighting and uses language from her technical background to fill her poetry, as well as taking heavy influence from pop culture.

EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP FACULTY

Kenzie Allen



Kenzie Allen is the author of *Cloud Missives* (Tin House, 2024). She is a Haudenosaunee poet and multimodal artist, and the recipient of a 92NY Discovery Prize, an inaugural

James Welch Prize for Indigenous Poets, the 49th Parallel Award in poetry, broadside prizes from Sundress Publications and Littoral Press, and fellowships from Vermont Studio Center, Aspen Writers' Foundation, and In-Na-Po (Indigenous Nations Poets). A finalist for the National Poetry Series, her poems have appeared in *Poetry* magazine, *Boston Review*, *Narrative* magazine, *Poetry Daily*, *Best New Poets*, and other venues. Kenzie is an Assistant Professor of English at York University, where her research centers on documentary and visual poetics, literary cartography, and the enactment of Indigenous sovereignties through creative works. She is a first-generation descendant of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

[Artist Site](#)

Poetry Collection, [Cloud Missives](#)

STEVEN DUNN



Steven Dunn, a.k.a Pot Hole (cuz he's deep in these streets) is the recipient of a 2021 Whiting Award, and the author of three novels: *Potted Meat* (2016), *water & power* (2018), and *Tannery Bay* (2024), which is co-written with Katie Jean Shinkle. *Potted Meat* was a finalist for the Colorado Book Award and shortlisted for *Granta Magazine's* Best of Young American Novelists and adapted to a short film by Foothills Productions. The Usual Route has played at L.A. International Film Festival, Houston International Film Festival, and others. He was born and raised in West Virginia.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

[Author Site](#)

Book, [Tannery Bay \(written with Katie Jean Shinkle\)](#)

Book, [water & power](#)

Book, [Potted Meat](#)

Short Film, [The Usual Route Dir. by Cory Warner](#)

Justin Lerner



Justin Lerner is an award-winning filmmaker from Boston whose career began when his short film THE REPLACEMENT CHILD was chosen as one of ten to world premiere at Telluride Film Festival. His first feature, GIRLFRIEND, premiered at Toronto Int'l Film Festival and won a Gotham Independent Film Award (Audience Award). His second feature, THE AUTOMATIC HATE, made its world premiere at SXSW Film Festival and was later nominated for the Flash Forward Award (Best First or Second feature) at Busan Int'l Film Festival. Lerner's third feature, CADEJO BLANCO, premiered at Toronto Int'l Film Festival and Guadalajara Film Festival, later being nominated for the John Cassavetes Award at the 2024 Independent Spirit Awards. It also won the Grand Prize at Festival Icaro, the Young Blood Prize at Reims Polar Film Festival, and it was nominated for Best Iberoamerican Feature at the 2022 Ariel Awards, Mexico's version of the Oscars. It has been released theatrically in more than a dozen countries including Spain, France, Mexico, the U.S. and the UK later this year. In 2016, Lerner was a co-founder of the Cinema School at Francisco Marroquín University in Guatemala City, where he currently spends part of each year as a visiting professor. He is also a partner of La Danta Films, a production company based in Mexico City and Guatemala City.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

['Cadejo Blanco' Interview](#)

[Director Bio](#)

LEAH SANDLER



Leah Sandler is an interdisciplinary artist, writer and educator based in Central Florida. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Rollins College in 2014 and a Master of Fine Arts from University of the Arts Philadelphia in 2017, and currently teaches at Stetson University. Recent exhibitions include CPCH TV (a solo exhibition at the South Bend Museum of Art), Quarter Life Crisis! (a 2-person exhibition at the Casselberry Sculpture House), Body Acclimation Strategies (a solo exhibition at Touche Boutique Miami), and CPCH Staging Area (a solo exhibition at Laundromat Art Space Miami). Sandler's writing and projects have been featured in publications including Burrow Press Review, Locust Projects: A Closer Look, Textur Magazin, Salat Magazin, SPECS Journal, and Mapping Meaning Journal. She is the author of The Center For Post-Capitalist History's Field Guide to Embodied Archiving, published by Burrow Press, released in 2021, and Notes From the Archivist, published by Bodiless Editions, 2024.

ENCOUNTERS LIST:

[Artist Site](#)

Book, [THE CENTER FOR POST-CAPITALIST HISTORY'S FIELD GUIDE TO EMBODIED ARCHIVING](#)

Book, [Notes From the Archivist](#)