

A close-up portrait of Sarah Slean, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a teal button-down top and large hoop earrings. She is looking slightly upwards and to the right with a gentle smile.

The York University Magazine

Fall 2022

Switching Gears



Recording artist
Sarah Slean
on composing
the future



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The York University Magazine

Contents

4 The President 5 Editor's Notes 6 View 30 Giving 32 Alumni 38 Flashback

14 SWITCHING GEARS

Sarah Slean riffs on the power of music education

20 ANALOG REVOLUTION

Combatting digital fatigue with manual arts and crafts

26 GOOD GRIEF

Who has the right to grieve?



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

THE PRESIDENT



RHONDA L. LENTON
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

THROUGH TWO UNPRECEDENTED YEARS of responding and adapting to a global health crisis, many of us have felt disconnected from each other, the York community, and the local and global communities we serve. But if we look closer, it becomes clear that the impact of what we do – our pedagogical breakthroughs, knowledge-translation, ingenuity and innovation – transcends cultures and borders.

As a 21st-century university with a mandate to right the future, York University continues to expand its role as a nexus where academia and industry, people and place, challenges and solutions converge to catalyze the necessary social, cultural, environmental and economic development that will chart the way forward through the recovery period and beyond.

The Canadian health-care ecosystem, for instance, is currently in dire need of nurses, doctors and other health-care experts. York’s interdisciplinary expertise and existing partnerships with the City of Vaughan, Mackenzie Health and VentureLAB on a new Vaughan Healthcare Centre Precinct (VHCP) are furthering our vision for a more integrated, preventive and community-focused model for health care that contributes to the supply of future health professionals and the vibrancy of the regional economy and creates greater health equity for underserved communities. In line with York’s reputation as a progressive university, we continue to engage our local and global communities to ensure that our projects are informed by the evolving needs of the diverse groups they are designed to serve.

Over the past few years, we have introduced and hosted an unprecedented number of community and stakeholder consultation meetings and interactive Presidential Town-halls for all our major initiatives, from the VHCP plan and our conceptual proposal for a School of Medicine to York’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and the development of the Markham Campus.

One of the defining challenges facing us all – climate change – is another area where universities have a crucial role to play. Through our Living Well Together: Keele Campus Vision and Strategy, we are re-envisioning our campuses to create more environmentally sustainable and integrative spaces for us to live, work and study while strengthening our connections with the city, the land and one another. The spillover effects of our physical campuses reach every corner of the globe. At York’s Las Nubes EcoCampus in Costa Rica, our capacity as an agent of positive change manifests in conservation research and programs in areas that range from biodiversity protection to cutting-edge environmental management technologies. A new Las Nubes Strategic Plan will amplify our current capacity with additional environmental education programs and offerings.

These are just a few examples of how our York community has been an unstoppable incubator of ideas and innovation working with partners to forge meaningful connections across sectors. The *2022 President’s Annual Report* highlights the many ways York University – as one of the world’s top 35 in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings for meeting its sustainable development goals – continues to strengthen our impact on the complex global issues of today and the future. To learn more about York’s accomplishments of the past year, visit go.yorku.ca/presidentsreport2022.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD

EDITOR’S NOTES



Get Back

This time last year, we were still standing six feet apart and trying to navigate the novelty of a vaccine passport. We’ve come a long way since then. After much preparation, classrooms have reopened, as have gyms, bars, theatres and dance clubs. People are congregating again with only a few precautions remaining in place. It’s been a period of transition, and it has tested our resilience and ability to adapt to rapid and tumultuous change. Yet here we are, maskless, on the other side.

Without a doubt, COVID-19 has reshaped the world as we once knew it. Nothing is really as it was before. Welcome to “the new normal” – a world where adjustments must be made to move forward without losing the gains we have acquired over the past two and a half years. This describes many of the stories you are about to read here, in *The York University Magazine*. From processing grief and learning how to live with a disability to a musician’s return to touring and people permanently altering their relationships with tech, the Fall 2022 issue brims with examples of how people confronted

with sudden change have found ways to adapt to the upheaval, often rediscovering happiness or a sense of purpose along the way.

The pandemic is behind a lot of it. But rather than focusing on the immediate effects of the health crisis, these stories of transition are more about living with its long-term or even permanent effects. It takes optimism and no small amount of courage to see beyond the obstacles put in our path. The alumni you will encounter here have both in spades. It’s what makes their push toward normal feel so inspiring: if they can do it, so can we. ●

— Deirdre Kelly

The York University Magazine

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF YORK UNIVERSITY



Volume 8, Number 1

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Publications Mail Agreement No. 40069546

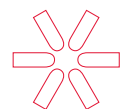
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
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THE YORK UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE is printed and mailed to alumni and friends of the University once a year, in the fall. The summer and winter issues are available online only, at yorku.ca/magazine. Ideas and opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect the ideas or opinions of the University or the editors. To get in touch, email yomag@yorku.ca

ON THE COVER



Sarah Slean
 Photography by
 Sofie Kirk



Doing the Twist

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET



*York's newest addition is
a leaning tower of ongoing learning*

AFTER YEARS of occupying a series of empty classrooms in various buildings across campus, York University's School of Continuing Studies finally has its own stand-alone home, and it's already turning heads. The rapidly growing faculty's new 9,012-square-metre building, scheduled to open this fall at the northeast corner of Ian MacDonald Boulevard and Pond Road, twists as it rises six storeys above the ground, forming a dynamic contrast to the predominantly rectilinear architecture found south of the Student Services parking garage on the Keele Campus.

VIRAL DETECTION

York researchers develop a device for identifying the bio-invaders in our midst

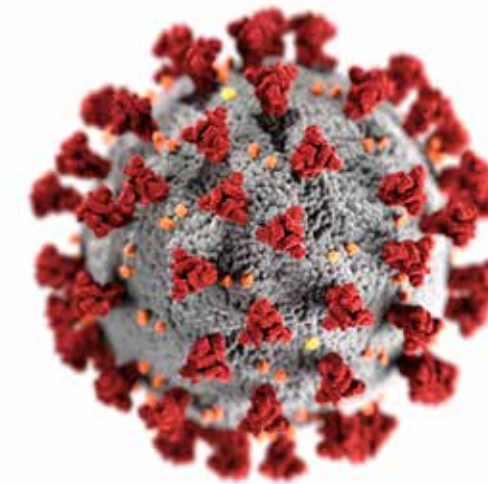


ILLUSTRATION OF CORONAVIRUS STRUCTURE: ALISSA ECKERT, MSMI; DAN HIGGINS, MAMS

LOCATING VIRUSES before they become widespread diseases has become imperative in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting researchers like York University mechanical engineering professor Pouya Rezai to take urgent action in finding a solution to a universal problem. At his lab in the Lassonde School of Engineering, multiple graduate and undergraduate students have collaborated and developed a novel environmental biosensor capable of screening water and tactile surfaces for the presence of pathogens using a single microfluidic device. “It’s not a virus spread-prevention tool,” Rezai says, “but it is a step in the right direction.”

With the aim of improving decontamination measures and minimizing the economic losses of viral outbreaks, Rezai created the prototype in collaboration with York civil engineering professor Satinder Kaur Brar and Sixth Wave Inc., a nanotechnology company focused on the detection of targeted substances at the molecular level.

Sixth Wave’s trademarked Accelerated Molecular Imprinted Polymers (AMIPs) technology, together with advancements introduced into MIPs by Rezai’s group, form a key component of the device, on which a thin coating of the highly specialized polymer is layered on microparticles and microwires to bind to pathogens and trigger fluorometric or electrical responses.

A two-year grant from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, plus additional support from Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, will be used to bring the device to market in the near future. It’s an important next step, Rezai says. “New knowledge about molecularly imprinted polymers, their affinity to viruses and their integration into microfluidic devices will help us develop rapid environmental monitoring technologies for safeguarding the public and containing future outbreaks.” ●

— Deirdre Kelly



The sense of movement is accentuated by exterior walls and tessellated triangular windows that appear to lean away from the street as they extend upward to a tilting roof parapet atop the geometric structure. Glass walls allow an abundance of natural light to flood the more than 50 classrooms, meeting spaces and instructional offices spread across its six levels (five above grade and one below). Built with sustainability in mind, the new \$73 million building also houses mechanical rooms where such ecological features as a self-generating heat recovery system and solar-powered water heater have enabled it to achieve LEED Gold environmental certification.

Toronto architecture firm Perkins&Will executed the building over the course of two years after winning a

York-sponsored international design competition in 2020. The vision of an unconventional twisting structure was selected for its alignment with the School of Continuing Studies’ commitment to offering an innovative learning experience for students of all ages.

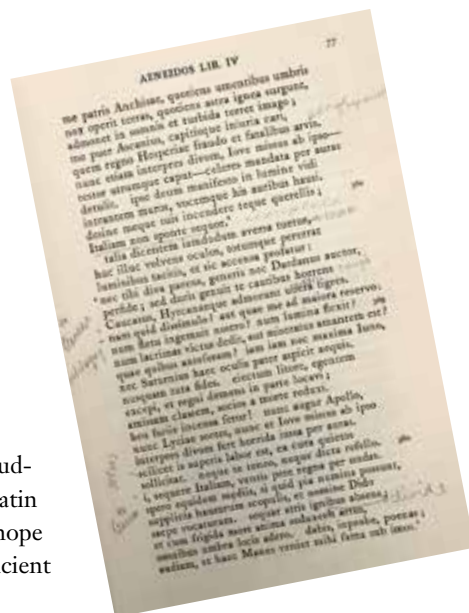
Since its founding in 2015, the faculty has been reimagining what continuing professional education could look like in the 21st century – and with considerable success. The new building consolidates that forward momentum. “The design is bold, futuristic and unique,” says School of Continuing Studies founder and assistant vice-president Tracey Taylor-O’Reilly, “which resonates with us because our programs are also unique and future-oriented.” ●

— Deirdre Kelly

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

Latin Lover

A classic comes back from the dead



IN SARAH BLAKE'S classical studies classes at York University, Latin comes alive as a language of hope and survival in such works of ancient literature as Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Written during the reign of Augustus Caesar, Rome's first emperor, the epic poem narrates the journey of Aeneas, mythic founder of Rome, following the fall of Troy. Metaphor and allegory abound, making it a work of enduring literary value. But it was its theme of massive disruption that compelled Blake, an associate professor in the Department of Humanities, to want to teach it to a small group of students during the pandemic lockdowns.

"It's a story about a group of survivors of a devastating war who struggle to find a new safe place to live, losing parents, friends and lovers along the way, battling fear and despair, trying to interpret the mysterious signs of the universe – dreams, omens, prophecies – while also trying to decide when to take a risk and what to leave behind," she explains.

Professor and students pored over Virgil as a group, in the original Latin. Sorting through the ancient verb tenses, among other linguistic arcana, brought the class closer

together, even at a time of remote learning.

"Reading the poem in the original Latin gives it a powerful vividness, an intimacy," shares Blake, presently at work on a book about what ancient Romans thought about the material world.

As students of Latin, we're often reading it really slowly to catch all the grammar, so you sit with each word, each line, for some time. It makes for a moving reading experience."

As a foundational language, Latin also reminds us that the past is in the present, there to remind us of ancient struggles, wisdoms and insights that never go stale, as revealed by a rereading of the *Aeneid*.

"It is the story of a peaceful nation in Italy being invaded by settlers – the Trojan refugees – who bring violence and war as they look for a new home," Blake says. "The poem insists on multiple perspectives and voices. These are contemporary human stories that will resonate with any reader. They get me every time." ●

— Deirdre Kelly



Sarah Blake

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

*Mathematician Jude Kong
inspires Black students to aspire*

ENUMERATING POSITIVE CHANGE

WHEN JUDE KONG was growing up in Cameroon, his friends played a major role in encouraging his passion for mathematics.

“From middle school onward, we had a math assignment every day. When I got home, I would relax a bit, then immediately jump to my homework, struggle and ensure that I understood it (at times with the help of my sisters or people in my community) in a way that I could explain to someone. Then I rushed to my friend’s house to work together as a team,” says Kong, an assistant professor in the Faculty of Science’s Department of Mathematics & Statistics.

Whenever he explained the concepts to his friends, there would be a light-bulb moment for them – something finally clicked that they couldn’t understand in class. “Gradually, I gained the nickname ‘Prof’ from my friends in middle school.”

These moments eventually led him to develop what he calls a family-oriented approach to teaching mathematics – especially for students who are Black or from economically disadvantaged communities and were made to believe that someone like them could not do mathematics, he says.

“Despite the indispensability of mathematics, a substantial number of students have ‘mathematics anxiety.’ This makes it difficult for them to participate in math classes, as they have the impression that they know nothing and thus will make a mockery of themselves if they try to ask or answer a question.”

To address this, when he became a secondary school teacher, he thought about ways to minimize this anxiety. Remembering that in his childhood his mother always left whatever she was doing to attend to him when he was scared, and how safe it made him feel, Kong decided to create a family-oriented environment in his classroom.

“If I was called up to say something at home, I was usually very articulate and had all my thoughts together, compared to when called up elsewhere to say something. This is because, at home, I felt like no one would judge me irrespective of how ‘stupid’ I may have sounded; I knew that if I made any

mistake, my siblings would help me. I was surrounded by people who loved me unconditionally.”

His formula to engage students in his class includes sending a welcome email to each student, giving them a reason to want to come back to his class, calling students by their names, creating communities through WhatsApp and other social media platforms where they meet and exchange ideas, and creating incentives for them to meet and solve exercises together.

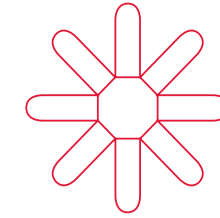
While teaching, he switches between discussing mathematical concepts and having students become a part of his stories to ensure that he keeps them focused. “Everybody loves stories,” he says.

Calling students by their names builds an environment in which their voices are heard and creates incentives for them to work together. An important aspect of the success of this family-oriented approach is for him to be available, so Kong has his Zoom link open for students to get in at any time, and he ensures that he is present. He notes that there are students who started his class fearing math and now achieve A grades.

His creation of the ‘YorkU Black Mathematics Family’ in the math department has become an essential support, a chance for students to have a voice and help each other.

“‘Family’ is truly the best word to describe this group. The first set of questions we ask at every meeting always has to do with how we are doing mentally and emotionally,” says Sade Rose, a student who has started her career in education. “What Professor Kong has actually created is a space in which Black mathematics students can come together and feel comfortable and safe to express their true feelings while receiving academic and emotional support from each other. This helped me tremendously in my studies. I could always find someone who is ready and willing to lend a hand when I was struggling with difficult concepts taught in my lectures. Professor Kong and the YorkU Black Mathematics Family helped me to discover my passion and begin walking in my purpose.” ●

— Neil Armstrong



Canadian recording star Sarah Slean is back as a student at York, polishing her composition skills while preparing to tour the country with a series of Joni Mitchell tribute concerts this fall

SWITCHING GEARS

READING SARAH SLEAN'S CV is like scanning the script of a rock 'n' roll biopic. There's her dues-paid residencies at Berlin dive bars and small Toronto coffee shops, frenetic and hermetic nights of heartbreak and songwriting in Paris followed by big-break collaborations with world-class conductors, then a surfeit of stages and studios shared with a list of legends that includes Bryan Ferry, Rufus Wainwright, Alanis Morissette and Feist, and – most recently – a return to York, where it all began.

Speaking via Zoom, moments after one of four music classes she's taking to complete her master's degree in composition at York University, Slean is hard-pressed to explain the cinematic arcs of her spectacular career thus far. "The whole thing feels as surreal as some of my most experimental songs," she says in a hushed tone, careful not to wake Abigail, her napping one-year-old daughter. Those songs she speaks of? They often blend opera, pop, classical and musical theatre

**BY ELIO IANNACCI (BA '99)
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK**



Sarah Slean performing with the Niagara Symphony Orchestra

into their verses with abandon. “I’ve never been someone who’s not had a lot going on – in music and in life.”

Slean’s life of curveballs and mirror balls began when she signed a multinational record deal with Warner Music in Canada and Atlantic Records in the U.S. in 1998, two years after she first came to York as a scholarship student in professor Christina Petrowska’s master piano class. When the Pickering, Ont., native’s career began to take off, she left the University to continue her studies closer to the downtown clubs she was then playing. It was at that tender age that Slean went on to co-produce and record her first major-label album, leaning on a long-time friend, Canadian rock singer-songwriter Hawksley Workman, to co-produce the project (the two briefly reunited last year for a joint EP called *These Two*).

Slean’s knack for directing string orchestras and her classically trained piano prowess help her amp up the emotions that pervade all her self-written songs. Inspired by O.G. influencers of the stage and literature – luminaries that range from Judy Garland to Leo Tolstoy – Slean’s approach to songwriting sets her apart from much of the Lilith Fair canon coming out of Can-pop. Although her instrument of choice is a baby grand Steinway (not a Gibson guitar) and her groupies consist of poetry- and symphony-lovers (not headbangers), the singer-songwriter’s career is packed with the kind of larger-than-life moments Hollywood and rock folk live for.

“I’ve seen so much of the cult of personality in the music industry through the years that it was starting to horrify and disgust me,” she says. “It can be repellent if you don’t pause

Universities like York are places where you can get a broader understanding of humanity and the way the world actually works – you can take a step back from the entertainment industry’s unreality

from it. Universities [like York] are places where you can get a broader understanding of humanity and the way the world actually works – you can take a step back from the entertainment industry’s unreality.”

That said, her brushes with fame have not stopped since Slean began her more-than-25-year career in the arts: she’s won a pile of awards, including a Canadian Screen Award for her soundtrack work, and appeared on the silver screen in films ranging from indie gems like 2005’s *Black Widow* to blockbusters like *Crimson Peak*.

Looking at her track record is quite the task, even for Slean, as it spans an 85-plus song output over the course of 11 albums. Her time back in the classroom, however, has urged Slean to look at these many years of performing, making and recording music through a host of different lenses.

“Artists need books, experience, training and knowledge to keep shedding their skins,” she says. “It is so they can take off the masks they wear and get closer to what is real ... to what Buddhists call the original face, that non-dual centre where the ego doesn’t rule us.”

Refracted through celluloid-worthy

moments that mirror all the best rock flicks out there – *Almost Famous* moments (burning out after a five-album streak, getting a divorce and breaking down after over-touring) and hilarious *Spinal Tap* encounters (a listen to her song “Everybody’s on TV” offers many clues) – Slean’s personal and professional complexities can be found by the careful seeker. This goes for lyrics that range from such major radio-friendly tunes as “Sweet Ones” (off her 2002 debut, *Night Bugs*) and “Lucky Me” (off 2004’s *Day One*) to obscure fan-favoured anthems like “Looking for Someone” (off 2008’s *The Baroness*) and “Holy Ground” (off 2017’s *Metaphysics*), all of which deal with her own spiritual conflicts and epiphanies.

Slean says she’s in a newfound place of realization – a phase that mirrors moments in the movie *Rocketman*, wherein fellow piano-playing pop icon Elton John begins to relearn his craft after releasing a plethora of hits and experiencing the Faustian deal that fame may bring.

“I’m trying to figure out a way to contribute and to give what has been of value to people in the past,” Slean says. “I’m trying to think of a way to create without pairing it with a

persona or personality that I’m supposed to sell.”

A section of Slean’s “One True Love,” a song found on 2011’s *Land and Sea* double album, encapsulates the singer-songwriter’s current epiphanous state. Slean says this particular track can be viewed as a premonition, and that it explains why Slean returned to school after arranging for the likes the National Art Centre Orchestra and Symphony Nova Scotia, getting nominated for four Juno awards and performing at the world’s most treasured and historic music venues and opera houses. “The lines ‘Magic wand of empathy said I am you and you are me / But somewhere on our way we have forgotten who we are and we drifted so far’ mean so much to me right now,” she says.

“Basically, [‘One True Love’] is about my never-ending truth-seeking quest,” she says. “I believe education is cultivating your mind enough to try and place yourself in a different reality, in a different perspective,” she explains, pointing to the challenges of reaching those ambitions while working within the music industry. “Finding that truth is very difficult to do when you’re immersed in a culture that responds to packaging



Interacting with scholars at York has helped me switch gears and rethink some of the ways in which music can be made. York has me re-evaluating my process and has challenged some of my assumptions

human beings. Also: we are all born in a certain class, in a certain place, so we often can't see beyond that until there's contrast," she says. Due to her love of metaphysics and literature, Slean likens education to a Narnian portal that allows a student to move from one room to an entirely new dimension by way of a book, a theorist, a philosopher or, in Slean's case, a fellow colleague or composer in class.

"Interacting with scholars at York has helped me switch gears and rethink some of the ways in which music can be made. All the assumptions about how to start a song or end it have been challenged when I'm listening to other students doing a self-study on work that I've made. York has me re-evaluating my process and has challenged some of my assumptions."

Slean says the results of her evolution at York will be the contemporary music she is required to create as part of her degree requirements, a piece that she says will make its way onto her next album, slated for post-graduation.

Although her studies and family life have been all-consuming, Slean is not dropping the mike anytime soon. She has been hard at work bringing to life a theatrical love letter to Joni Mitchell's music. The project – which sees Slean singing and discussing Mitchell's work – has been touring Canada, giving her the opportunity to collaborate with the Regina Symphony Orchestra and the Calgary Philharmonic.

It is Slean's megawatt vocals, powerful vibrato and piano expertise that have allowed her to interpret Mitchell's work in ways that go well beyond the plethora of YouTube and TikTok covers of "River" and "A Case of You."

"When I first heard Joni's *Blue* album, I was 16," Slean says. "It was like she was sitting in the room with me. She had the same thoughts and the same relationship questions I had ... the same longing and confusion and disappointment and wandering."

Although it took more than 25 years, Slean's admiration turned into obligation. "I felt like I *have* to highlight the hills and valleys of her life, through song, because she was a woman in the dawn of the 1960s and 1970s," she says. "The choices she made were so radical; she had a child, and she chose to give it up in favour of her art. Imagine all of the intensity that came with that – the grief, the guilt, the judgment. She refused to be an accessory and made the music she wanted to make, even when nobody was getting it. That deserves to be recognized."

Slean's next stop with the tour will be October 28 and 29 with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, before she brings the tribute to Kamloops in March. The plan is to tour the show with every major orchestra in Canada so Slean can communicate her appreciation and, in turn, continue to learn about her own artistry through Mitchell's music.

"Singing her is like going back to school in some way," Slean says, noting that the performance is more of an exercise in deconstruction than fangirling. "Joni was not programmed by pop radio or the music she'd heard – she was open enough to have her ear go 'Yeah, I like that!' when things were unusual. I truly think her life and the way she leads it is an important lesson we can all keep learning from." ●

Combatting digital fatigue with manual arts and crafts

Analog REVOLUTION

WHEN EVERYONE GREW BORED of staring at their screens during the lockdowns, an arts and crafts revival movement took hold – a rebellious reaction to the dominance of the digital in most of our lives. Significantly, young people raised on computer technology were among the first to unplug as they pursued, en masse, more tangible forms of self-expression like crocheting, knitting, quilting, rug hooking and sewing their own clothes. They also resuscitated classic board games like Scrabble and Monopoly, as well as such slow, mindful artisanal pursuits as pottery-making and calligraphy.

“Tactile approaches to anything in life are far more interesting, and more real, than a virtual activity,” says Deborah Lau-Yu (MDes ’08), co-founder of Ferris Wheel Press, a luxury stationery company in Markham, Ont., whose sales of fountain pens, paper notebooks and coloured inks spiked during the pandemic as people took up handwriting again. “They restore us to a more thoughtful, soulful, sensually engaged way of

BY DEIRDRE KELLY ● PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON





OLD SCHOOL: Illustrator and musician Michael McGlennon's heavily embellished cassette tape was born of lockdown boredom

being in the world. The digital age really distances us from that. It disconnects us from the physical.”

A York-trained graphic designer and art director whose own arsenal of artisanal techniques includes vintage letterpress printing and hand-drawn illustration, Lau-Yu is part of a new generation of design innovators returning handcrafted practices of the past to the forefront of cultural activity. Motivating them is digital fatigue, a widely recognized syndrome of feeling overwhelmed by digital devices, apps and subscriptions in the context of the pandemic, where being digitally connected – for both work and pleasure – intensified. A need to take a break from tech now affects more than a third of all households, according to a 2021 Deloitte mobile trends and connectivity survey, and is prompting people to seek out more organic and environmentally sustainable forms of creative expression and engage more of their human faculties than mouse clicks and keystrokes.

A return to handmade production represents a return to a simpler life – what trend forecaster WGSN identified in a 2021 survey of youth culture as the catalyst behind a radical shift of habits, hobbies and behaviours in millennials and their younger Gen Z counterparts born between the years 1997 and 2012. In their shared quest for a less techno-laden existence, like the one enjoyed in the decades before social media, this highly influential demographic is making the old look new again. Collectively, they are reviving manual practices and industries thought to have died with the rotary phone.

Sales of sewing machines have skyrocketed in Canada over the past two years – by as much as 200 per cent, according to a CTV newscast – driven in part by “sew bros,” young men who have taken to making their own DIY fashions in the COVID era. Sales of vintage cameras that require real film

and labour-intensive darkroom techniques to produce an often deliberately grainy image have also soared, increasing between 42 and 79 per cent during the same period, said Dawn Block, eBay's vice president of hard goods and collectibles, in a previously published report.

Robyn Cumming (MFA '07), an assistant professor in the department of Visual Art & Art History, teaches a course on analog photography at York, where the pre-digital photographic technology is used as a tool of creative discovery. “Students are certainly seduced by the tactility and materiality of the analog process,” she says. “With analog photography comes a real sense of mystery – and failure. You need to wait to view what you create, often for days. In a culture of immediacy, forced patience and anticipation can be refreshing. And of course, once you see your results, you're surprised, excited or disappointed. It's an emotional process.”

From a psychological perspective, looking to the past as a source of inspiration is a form of resilience, a creative way to cope with our precarious times, says Brent Lyons, an associate professor of organization studies at the Schulich School of Business who studies the impact of uncertainty on individual identity formation. In a situation rife with unpredictability, such as a global health crisis, people are likely to rethink their values and what they want out of life. The collective soul-searching that has taken place since the start of the pandemic in 2020 has resulted in a great many people reassessing their career paths, Lyons says, and ultimately taking up “creative pursuits to help them find connections with people and communities they care about.”

It's a fresh start, paving the way for new avenues of expression for York grads like Diana VanderMeulen (BFA '12), a Toronto digital artist who, during the pandemic, moved

WITH ANALOG PHOTOGRAPHY COMES A REAL SENSE OF MYSTERY – AND FAILURE



away from tech-based visual representation to work with her hands as a furniture-maker. Previously, she had been creating apps, videos and computerized still images to document and lend permanence to her environmental installation art. But when the digital became all-pervasive during the early homebound stage of the pandemic, VanderMeulen, a 34-year-old self-described millennial, found herself wanting to shut it down. “I definitely developed digital fatigue,” she says. “As NFTs came into vogue, it turned me away from digital, which to me had become so trend-focused, more about currency and less about art.”

Trained in drawing and printmaking techniques at York, she turned to handcrafting one-of-a-kind translucent furniture pieces made from upcycled Lucite and other found materials, describing the process as “tactile, hands-on, experimental – a different way of expressing myself.” Some of her furniture pieces, including a large berry-coloured Lucite chair, were highlighted at the recent edition of the Interior Design Show’s juried Prototype section for new designers, where she was touted as one to watch. The work is ongoing.

For inspiration, VanderMeulen studies vintage print magazines and, when possible, attends in-person art exhibitions, delighting in getting ideas from a tangible experience as opposed to an algorithm-generated notification of what the internet deems noteworthy. “Tech is amazing and exciting,” she says, “but I want to know what other people are interested in. I want real recommendations based on someone’s authentic experience of a thing, not some bot suggesting to me what it is I should be looking at.”

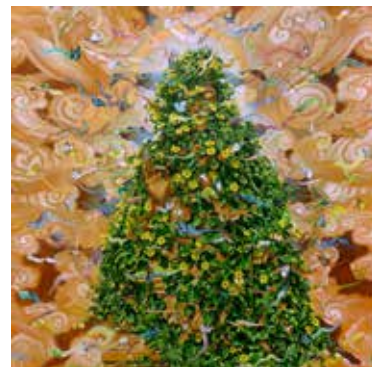
That anti-tech sentiment is shared by fellow York grad Michael McGlennon (BFA ’14), a Toronto illustrator

and musician better known by his artistic name, Moon Toboggan. During the lockdowns, he wrote poetry by hand and made and released a new album – *tIME mACHINES* – on streaming services, as well as on old-school cassette tape. A future project involves a hand-drawn comic book about growing up in Northern Ontario. Much of his artistic practice is deliberately tech-free to better root it in nostalgia. “So much of my work, whether visual, audible or readable, revolves around childhood memories and dreams,” he says. “Even when I’m just sketching or aimlessly playing guitar, a random idea will begin to grow out and bloom once it takes root in the past.”

To Ana Paula González Urdaneta (BFA ’13), a York-trained painter in Mexico City, nostalgia is not just a state of mind but an artistic practice based in centuries of painterly tradition. When she creates one of her colourful canvases, depicting spiralling butterflies or fantastic island landscapes floating on blue waters, she layers image after image by hand using a paintbrush manipulated by rhythmically moving fingers. The repetitiveness lulls her into a state of deep concentration, allowing her to tap into her subconscious and draw upon ideas lurking there, in the depths of her being. This is why, to her, tactility is the key to creativity and feeling at one with the world. Unplugging, she says, reconnects her to the power of human touch. “Handmade art not only carries a human quality that makes it irreplaceable, it also taps into the continuum of human expression through our relationship to and manipulation of materials. For me, the process of building an image layer after layer would not be as satisfying if it were a virtual one. It’s a means to ground myself, order my thoughts and articulate them through a negotiation with something I can hold in my hands.” ●

HANDS-ON:

Diana VanderMeulen’s upcycled furniture (left) and Ana Paula González Urdaneta’s canvases (centre and right) exemplify the ways people are being drawn to more tactile pursuits



**TACTILE APPROACHES
TO ANYTHING IN LIFE
ARE FAR MORE
INTERESTING,
AND MORE REAL,
THAN A VIRTUAL ACTIVITY**



BY KIRA VERMOND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOPHIE KIRK



Christine Jonas-Simpson

Good Grief



Who has the right to grieve?

BARBARA HEAGY (MA '03) remembers the exact moment she fell in love with her husband, Tom. They'd been friends since high school, more than 30 years, when in 2001, on the heels of her separation, he'd asked her to a party to give her a break from a crammed schedule of parenting, teaching elementary school and working toward a master's degree in dance at York University.

But when she went to give him a perfunctory kiss at the end of the night, Tom proposed trying something else: a real kiss. Just to see how it would be.

"And I thought, 'Alright, let's do it,'" she says now, laughing, from her home in Guelph, Ont. But their embrace didn't go as expected. "The whole Earth moved! We were shocked. When we parted, we both went, 'Whoa! What kind of chemistry was *that*?'"

In 2006, they were happily married, and everything clicked as they merged their lives.

Until it didn't.

In 2010, Tom developed small cell lung cancer, a particularly aggressive form. He held on for seven months, travelling the waves of punishing treatment before he eventually

succumbed to the disease. Heagy was devastated. And although she can now speak about her husband without falling apart, she'll still feel flooded by emotion if she sees a man who looks like him walking down the street.

"At least for me, it's not like you go in one end of a truly deep grief and come out the other," she says. "You're in it – but the intensity of it dies."

Losing a family member is only one reason people experience grief. Combine a worldwide pandemic – with upward of six million fatalities at the time of writing – with the seemingly interminable war in Ukraine, soul-scarring gun violence in the U.S. and a looming recession, and it's little wonder googling the term "collective grief" results in nearly 20 million hits. From missed high school graduations to missed loved ones around the dinner table, we're feeling the recent tragic events, says Christine Jonas-Simpson, associate professor in the Faculty of Health's School of Nursing.

"This is very much a global, collective experience of grieving," she says. "It can be overwhelming."

Jonas-Simpson has long been interested in how people experience grief, particularly nurses caring for mothers whose babies have died, and youth who have lost a parent or infant sibling. In many cases, grief is disenfranchised – there's a

It becomes a way to open dialogue about loss and grief, which is so often considered taboo to acknowledge or discuss. Grief needs acknowledgement

sense they don't have the right to grieve deeply since they didn't know the child for long. But being encouraged to explore deep feelings of sadness and loss can be greatly therapeutic. One way is through the arts. Jonas-Simpson engages in arts-based research, using media such as film, theatre and painting to help people better understand the experience.

"Some human experiences are, at times, more challenging to speak to," she says. "With the arts, we can express them in ways that we can't with words. The research becomes far more accessible. It becomes a way to open dialogue about loss and grief, which is so often considered taboo to acknowledge or discuss. Grief needs acknowledgement."

This work has been used to help those in the health-care field explore their complex experiences with loss and grief. In Jonas-Simpson's research film *Nurses Grieve Too*, one nurse stated that she had been involved in thousands of births, and that she can "recall vividly every family I have been with who experienced a loss. I could tell you what room they were in and who was involved, what the parents were doing. You never, ever forget them." Fortunately, grief in the health-care setting is finally being recognized.

Understanding the concept of grief in an abstract way is one thing, but the emotional, cognitive and physical symptoms of grief are so varied and numerous that many people may not

recognize those symptoms even when they're experiencing them. Leeat Granek (BA '01, MA '04, PhD '09), associate professor with York's School of Health Policy and Management, once co-created an online survey for *Slate* asking people to list their experiences in relation to loss – think stomach pain, headache, sadness and forgetfulness. In the end, they identified about 50 distinct symptoms of grief.

"People have a lot of somatic symptoms, particularly women, that you don't often see in psychological literature about grief. It's much broader and more variable than is recognized," Granek explains.

Granek has also researched the relationships between medical professionals and their patients, as well as the effects of neurosurgeons' decisions.

"Now, with the pandemic, there's a lot more awareness of the emotional lives of health-care providers and how much support they themselves need as well," she says.

Granek decided to research tough topics after she lost her mother when she was in her twenties and received implicit and explicit messages about how long her grief should last and what typical grieving looked like. She says much of her work is meant to help the public feel more comfortable about their own grieving.

"They have the right to understand what they're feeling is normal, and

the fact that they're being made to feel like they're abnormal is a construction of psychology," she says.

Speaking the day after the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, Granek says we still have a long way to go when it comes to understanding what actually helps people when they've experienced a loss. In short, it's not about treating grief as a problem to solve.

"It's something you live with," she says, pointing out that sending bereavement counsellors out to school shooting survivors in the first days after an attack isn't likely helpful yet. "The people are just in total and utter shock. They need the practicalities; they need to eat, sleep and have people with them."

Having a support system helped Heagy through the dark days after Tom died, but so did writing. Four years after his death, she pulled out the journals they wrote during his illness. She eventually went on to publish a memoir, *10: A Story of Love, Life and Loss*, and has since worked on four other titles, including co-authoring a book about grief.

Writing about loss has helped her come to terms with it, although she is the first to admit she's no longer an eternal optimist. Instead, she embraces life as a realist.

"There's a yin and a yang. The sun isn't going to shine every day, but you can still learn to live with the rain," she says. "You do go on." ●

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Giving

FRIENDS & PHILANTHROPY



York Board of Governors Chair Paul Tsaparis, Frank Stronach and President & Vice-Chancellor Rhonda L. Lenton

Magna founder Frank Stronach drives change at York with a climate-friendly mini-car and a generous donation in support of research innovation

AS GAS PRICES SURGE and climate change concerns continue to mount, consumers increasingly seek cost-effective, environmentally responsible transportation options. Thanks to a first-of-its-kind pilot project between York University's Lassonde School of Engineering and Canadian automotive trailblazer Frank Stronach, York community members will soon have an additional solution: the SARIT, Stronach's innovative, three-wheeled electric vehicle. The word itself is an acronym for Safe, Affordable, Reliable, Innovative Transit.

"The SARIT is a micromobility vehicle designed to both reduce environmental impacts and improve traffic congestion concerns," says Stronach. "Four SARITs can fit into a regular parking space while providing unmatched safety compared to alternative transportation options."

With room for two people plus storage, the SARIT runs on renewable energy, and its micro size also promises to relieve gridlock and take up less urban space.

The SARIT's top speed of 32 kilometres per hour makes it ideal for commuting – safer and more comfortable than

alternatives like e-bikes. It also costs just 10 to 20 per cent as much as standard EVs, with operating, insurance and electricity costs of less than \$300 per year.

In fact, the SARIT is a new class of vehicle, and as such, Stronach sought partners to test his prototype, determine use cases and performance in an urban environment and collect data for the Ministry of Transportation. York University's Bergeron Chair in Technology Entrepreneurship Andrew Maxwell says he reached out to Stronach to collaborate on the project because his team had been looking for low-carbon options to use on campus.

"I CHOSE YORK UNIVERSITY," Stronach says, "because its Living Lab and entrepreneurial mandates are perfectly aligned with SARIT's objective to revolutionize the personal transportation space."

Stronach delivered the first prototype to the Lassonde School in April, and the work began immediately. Ever since, faculty, students and campus facilities staff in the "mini-city" of Keele Campus have been putting their heads together to realize the potential of Stronach's vision for the SARITs. And now, Stronach has demonstrated his commitment to the initiative by way of a \$100,000 gift, which was announced on June 23 during an event at Lassonde's Bergeron Centre for Excellence in Engineering following Stronach's arrival on campus with another batch of SARIT prototypes.

The funds are part of a wider partnership between Stronach and the University, which will support research-funding opportunities in sustainable urban agricultural and, of course, the continued testing, development and improvement of the SARIT electric vehicle prototypes in York's Living Lab.

"When we look back at history, change has always been brought about by students, and we need a culture change," said Stronach at the June 23 announcement. "When I look three years down the road, gasoline prices will triple. When I look 10 years down the road, gasoline will be rationed."

Although large electric cars have been rising in popularity – especially as gas prices skyrocket – Stronach says large electric vehicles don't address gridlock, and it will take trillions of dollars to build up the grid system to accommodate widespread use.

Given York's considerable expertise in advanced technology and innovative manufacturing, the project has quickly grown to encompass the design, development and commercialization of the SARITs as well. "We realized that there were

many aspects of the vehicle that were in the conceptual stage, so it evolved into a research project where we use the vehicle on campus not just for testing but also to come up with designs for commercial versions," Maxwell says.

Now the flagship project of the newly formed Manufacturing, Technology and Entrepreneurship research centre at York, the SARIT initiative has become a multidisciplinary effort bringing together faculty and students from engineering, design, economics, mathematics, business, art and other disciplines.

As such, the project supports teaching activities through the Living Lab, which offers experiential and work-integrated learning opportunities. "Students will get the chance to try out new features, new ways to optimize the routing, and new applications for the vehicles as part of their courses," Maxwell explains.

The project also provides employment opportunities: already, eight engineering students have been hired this summer, and there are plans to bring on more in the coming months. With manufacturing based in Aurora, the vehicles' development and commercialization will also create jobs in the region. "There's a big push to make everything in Canada," says Maxwell.

The SARIT's on-campus use will be rolled out in phases. For phase one, which began on the Keele Campus in April, 10 prototypes have been provided to facilities, security and parking personnel, who will use the vehicles in their daily jobs and record performance or technical issues for further development. After revisions, likely by the end of this year, 10 additional vehicles will be available for faculty, staff and students to rent through a campus ride-share service.

When the technology is ready for large-scale deployment, the plan calls for the SARIT to be sold through a dealership established at York, which will also function as a service centre. Longer-term opportunities for the partnership include developing advanced features, exploring new use cases and working on additional market applications.

York being the only university in the world developing micromobility EVs on campus means the level of enthusiasm and engagement on this project is truly unique. "The opportunities have spurred dozens of requests from across campus to be engaged in this collaborative – and innovative – sustainability project," Maxwell says, "which is very exciting." ●

— Ariel Visconti

With additional reporting from Matthew LaForge

Alumni

Way to Gogh

A York grad's immersive exhibitions are changing how we experience contemporary art

BY DEIRDRE KELLY

WHEN COREY ROSS (BA '95, MBA '00) was an undergrad, he bought a reproduction of Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night* at York University's annual poster sale. Attracted by the image of a

blue night sky dotted with swirling yellow stars as much as by the tragic life story of the 19th century Dutch artist who had painted the original, Ross reckoned that if he owned a van Gogh, however ersatz, it might boost his cool factor. "I thought," he says years later, "that if I hung the poster over my bed in my dorm, I'd get lucky." Little did he know.

Fast-forward to today and van Gogh is advancing Ross's fortunes beyond his wildest dreams. His immersive van Gogh exhibition – an animated art show involving dozens of projectors and millions of pixels at a time – has succeeded in turning the 50-year-old arts entrepreneur into a major player in the fast-growing immersive entertainment industry, which a recent estimate valued at \$61.8 billion. "It's a completely new genre," Ross says. And it has taken the world by storm.

"Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience" became an international sensation soon after it opened in the spring of 2020 during the pandemic lockdowns. A seasoned producer whose previous achievements include "The Art of Banksy" and *Cats*, Ross hadn't planned to open during a global health crisis. But when he found himself suddenly embroiled in one, he met the challenge.

After COVID-19 restrictions disrupted his initial plans for live attendance, Ross came up with the ingenious idea of turning One Yonge Street – the former site of the *Toronto Star's* printing press – into the first-ever drive-in theatre for art. Via ramps that once allowed trucks to pick up newspapers, audiences were able to enter the venue in their cars and experience a new way of seeing art, an especially important opportunity when all other galleries and museums remained

closed. "We had stories in the *Washington Post*, the BBC – we even made the front page of a newspaper in Vietnam," he says. "When everything else was closed, we were open, and it made our reputation."

Since that auspicious debut, "Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience" has gone on to play 19 different cities in Canada and the U.S., selling more than five million tickets. Its enormous popularity has given rise to a series of similar experiential exhibits based on the work of artists such as Gustav Klimt, Frida Kahlo and Ukraine's Taras Shevchenko. More recent shows include "The Bob Marley One Love Experience" and "Immersive King Tut."

"We're now the biggest operator of experiential art venues in the world," says Ross, whose Lighthouse Immersive – the company he runs with business partner Svetlana Dvoretzky and Toronto-based developer Slava Zheleznyakov – grossed \$200 million last year, plus another \$30 million in gift sales.

While some fine art critics have dismissed the moving images as kitsch, for a generation that's grown up with digital technology, the immersive art experience has a different value. It is less an appreciation of an art object than it is a discovery of the artistic process, the artist, and the artist's influences. It is art history rendered, as one reviewer aptly put it, "as an elaborate non-linear documentary film" that shows not just the art itself but the creative genius behind it. "It's experiential entertainment," says Ross, proud of his achievement – and why shouldn't he be?

The projection-based spectacles resonate with audiences, enveloping them in a multimedia environment where five-storey-high images move in synchronization with a mixed-content soundtrack. The musical selections run the gamut from Beethoven to David Bowie to Edith Piaf. There are also original compositions by Luca Longobardi, a member of an Italian artistic team led by Massimiliano Siccardi



IMMERSIVE KING TUT: Corey Ross's newest immersive show

that has successfully reconfigured the immersive art format – a creation of the 1960s – into a new 21st-century pop art experience. The possibilities now seem endless.

Last November, Lighthouse Immersive commissioned its first live performance work: “Touch,” an interactive dance by the National Ballet of Canada’s Guillaume Côté. This past spring, it formed an association with Quebec theatre dynamo Robert Lepage and Argentinian–Canadian writer and literary critic Alberto Manguel to present “The Library at Night,” an immersive virtual reality journey into some of history’s most awe-inspiring libraries.

What’s up next? Ross won’t say for sure, but there is chatter that a future collaboration might involve George Lucas (of *Star Wars* fame), who had seen the immersive van Gogh show in Los Angeles and found it impressive. “It would be a stretch to say there’s a future project there, but Lucas has spoken with the creative team,” he says, partly confirming the rumours. And to think it all started with a York student’s belief in the power of art to change your life. “Once upon a time, I had hoped that van Gogh would improve my romantic life, it’s true. But the rest of it? Well, it’s that first rule of show biz: sometimes you really do just get lucky.” ●

BEJEWELLED

A self-taught jeweller has a sparkling second career

ERIN MARCUS (BA '98) took a degree in cultural studies, a multidisciplinary program combining different courses in fine arts, and it pervades a handcrafted jewellery collection rooted in painting and poetic narrative.

“I work like an artist, and honestly, that’s because I studied fine arts at York,” says the proprietor of Toronto-based virtual boutique erinmarcusdesigns.com. “It was an education that made me open to opportunity.”

That opportunity presented itself in Hawaii, a frequent family vacation destination. Seduced by the ocean waves, lush flowers and verdant foliage of the tropical Maui landscape, Marcus was inspired to leave her job in the food industry after 15 years to make jewellery – previously a hobby – full-time.

The emeralds, garnets, opals and tourmalines that figure in her creations reflect the colours of nature and the prismatic quality of her University education.

“I didn’t know at the time in what area of my life my shining star – as one of my professors put it – would rise. But when it did rise, I was ready. What I learned at York really had a big impact on me.” ● — *Deirdre Kelly*



Alumni Noteworthy

Rowing Machine Reboot

Andy Hoang turns your workout into a game

ON A MISSION to end boring home workouts, Andy Hoang (MBA '13) has created an immersive, experience-driven rowing machine equipped with a gaming platform to drive motivation and mental engagement. Combining strength training with entertainment, calorie-burning with interactive multiplayer video games, Aviron offers “short bursts of engaging workouts” with a competitive edge.

Users can match strokes with a virtual Olympian or work up a sweat while being chased by hungry wolves or zombies. They can also compete in online workout rooms, participate in strategy games, be ranked on a global leaderboard and, for a change of pace, glide through scenic rows while listening to music on a 22-inch Wi-Fi-connected touchscreen.

A machine costs \$2,199 plus a monthly \$25 membership fee for access to new content and software updates. *Forbes*, *Toronto Life* and the *Los Angeles Times* have already inked endorsements, each calling Aviron a killer home workout with the potential to change the fitness industry.

“We are the only connected workout platform that taps into the competitive camaraderie of gaming psychology via

high-quality video game programs,” says Hoang, 34, who worked in his Vietnamese family’s CCTV manufacturing business before becoming CEO of his own company. “Users keep users coming back for competitive and interactive rowing workouts because they find them fun as well as addictive.”

When it launched in 2018, Aviron made machines for corporate gyms. It switched to the consumer market after the pandemic forced the closure of most communal workout facilities in 2020. Today, the company is seen as a major player in the red-hot \$100 billion connected fitness market.

After raising US\$23.5 million from investors like Samsung Next and American technology startup accelerator Y Combinator, Aviron is reporting a 700 per cent increase in year-over-year revenue. Membership has also increased, despite the reopening of gyms.

“Our tremendous growth drives home that Aviron is tapping into an unmet market,” says Hoang. “People don’t want to die of boredom when they work out. They want to feel connected and alive.” ●

— *Deirdre Kelly*

Classes



SHARI MARSHALL (BA English '02)

1968

LARRY, SHELDON
(BA LIBERAL ARTS & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES)

Immediately upon graduating from York, where he was a Rio Tinto Scholar, Sheldon worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in London for 10 years. After winning a Canada Council award, he relocated to New York City, where he directed theatre on and off Broadway at the Public Theater and Playwrights Horizons. In Los Angeles, he directed 25 feature and cable television films and more than 500 hours of television (including Bradley Cooper's first comedy, *I Want to Marry Ryan Banks*) and the drama *Color of Love*, starring Gena Rowlands. Since 2016, he has taught masterclasses in filmmaking in Shanghai and produced over 40 short films. An associate professor at the University of Southern California for 12 years, he is currently Head of Film at the Lee Strasberg Theater and Film Institute in New York.

1971

MUNNS, EVANGELINE
(PhD PSYCHOLOGY)

Evangeline has worked as a certified clinical psychologist for the past 50 years. A recognized expert in play therapy, a model of treatment used to help children with emotional and behavioural problems, she has taught workshops nationally and internationally to therapists working with children and their parents. As a certified supervisor with the Canadian Association for Play Therapy, the American Association for Play Therapy and the Theraplay Institute in Chicago, she also supervised therapists seeking certification. The recipient of several honours, including a Play Therapy International award and a lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Association of Play Therapy, she retired in 2021 and is today pursuing a second career as a painter of watercolours.

1976

WILSON, ROD
(MA HEALTH, PhD HEALTH '83)

Originally trained as a clinical psychologist, Rod has used his education in English literature, psychology, counselling and theology to work as a non-profit leader, consultant, professor and therapist. Rod is the author of several faith-focused books, including the recently published *Thank You. I'm Sorry. Tell Me More: How to Change the World with 3 Sacred Sayings*. From 2000 to 2015, he was president of Regent College, a graduate school of theology in Vancouver, B.C., where he continues

to live with his wife Bev, a former non-graduated York student.

1982

DI GIACOMO, JAMES
(MA SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY)

After leaving York, James continued his education at Concordia University, where he took an MBA in finance and policy. Soon after, he launched a 37-year career in banking and worked for several institutions, including Chase Manhattan Bank of Canada, UBS Canada and BMO, where he served as the managing director of the latter's Canadian Commercial Banking Division for the past 20 years. Now retired, James looks forward to spending quality time with his wife, Hilary, and their two daughters.

1989

MOORE, PATRICK
(BFA MUSIC)

Patrick has worked in television broadcasting for close to 30 years, mainly doing camerawork behind the scenes at CTV News operations in Toronto. He assists shows like *CTV National News* and *CTV News Toronto*. He also works on many TSN studio productions that originate in Toronto. Music, which he studied at York, remains his first love, and Patrick recently completed the background music for *Here We Stay*, a documentary about Chinese immigrants in Canada.

1992

LITTLE, CATHERINE
(BA EDUCATION, BSc CHEMISTRY)

Catherine is an educator of Chinese heritage who recently authored *Twelve in a Race* with illustrator and artist Sae Kimura. The book is a read-aloud rhyming book that retells the origin story of the Chinese zodiac in an engaging and creative manner.

1995

RAO, PRIYA
(BA EAST ASIAN STUDIES)

Priya worked in the Canadian film and television industry for 20 years as an actor, programmer and producer of such projects as the comedic short *Raju's Blind Date*, which was later adapted as a series of radio plays for CBC Radio. In 2019, with master sommelier Jennifer Huether, she founded The Social Herbivore, a Toronto consultancy offering wine pairing suggestions for vegan foods. In 2021, again in collaboration with Huether, she published her first cookbook, *The Social Herbivore: Perfect Pairings for Plant-Based Cuisine*. The dynamic duo now hosts wine pairing events at pop-ups and food festivals across Southern Ontario.

1999

BOYE, SEIKA
(BFA DANCE AND ENGLISH, MA DANCE AND ENGLISH '06)

A dance scholar, artist and writer, Seika is the recipient of the inaugural Dance in the Public Sphere Award by

the international Dance Studies Association, headquartered in Evanston, Ill. She won for *It's About Time: Dancing Black in Canada 1900–1970 and Now*, her archival exhibition looking at the mostly undocumented dance history of Black peoples in Canada during the first seven decades of the 20th century. Formerly a professional dancer, Seika is now a movement dramaturg and consultant for various dance companies, independent artists and organizations. She also serves as an assistant professor and director of the research-based Institute for Dance Studies within the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. The next iteration of the exhibition – including new commissions from performing, visual and literary artists – will take place at the Audain Gallery at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver this October.

2002

DIMITRAKOPOULOS, NICK
(BA POLITICAL SCIENCE)

After graduating from York as a mature student, Nick worked with various federal bureaus, including as a customs inspector with the Canada Border Services Agency and a senior primary inspector with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. After leaving the civil service in 2014, he started his own company as an immigration consultant. In 2017, Nick obtained a diploma in food quality assurance and later opened his own company focused on food safety, iCD Consulting Services.

MARSHALL, SHARI
(BA ENGLISH)

Shari came to York seeking to fulfill her twin passions: law and literature. Since graduating, she's succeeded in turning them into concurrent real-life practices. In 2008, she became an investigator for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta while also pursuing a side career as a writer and editor. In 2022, while continuing to work for the RCMP, she released her first self-published novel, *The Ember Stone*, about an unconventional woman and a magical war.

2009

REEVES, PAUL
(BA PSYCHOLOGY)

Paul is the founder and CEO of Refresh Fans, a company that specializes in high-volume, low-speed (HVLS) fan technology. Prior to this, he was a managing director at Big Ass Fans. Then as now, Paul worked to help companies reduce energy consumption and its associated costs while improving employee morale and efficiency. His mission is to build a company that solves real-world problems with simple and effective solutions.

2012

TURNER, CAMILLE
(MES ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES)

Camille is the recipient of the 2022 Toronto Biennial of Art's prestigious Artist Prize, which she won for *Nave*, an immersive installation piece that uses symbolic imagery to link colonial Canada with the African slave trade.

A native of Jamaica who combines Afrofuturism and historical research in her multimedia art practice, Camille – presently a York PhD student – was one of 38 artists to participate in the second instalment of Canada's biggest visual arts event focused exclusively on contemporary art from around the world.

2015

ADEGBESAN, GBEMI
(BA POLITICAL SCIENCE)

Gbemi recently became the director of admissions and recruitment at King's University in Edmonton, Alb. – the first Black person to occupy the position. Previously, he worked as manager of international admissions and recruitment at Toronto International College, a university preparation high school in North York, Ont.

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2018

RAHMAN, KASHFIA
(BA INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL SCIENCE)

After graduation, Kashfia worked for the Ministry of the Attorney General in the victim witness assistance program. In 2019, she attended Harvard University before enrolling at Western Michigan University's Thomas M. Cooley Law School, from which she graduated in May of this year. Since 2021, Kashfia has worked as a research assistant at Harvard's GenderSci Lab. In 2022, she began her role as a legal assistant at PwC Canada with the goal of pursuing either corporate law or personal injury law. Her other interests include health-care disparities related to race, sex, gender and immigration status, as well as the intersection of medicine and human rights.



PAUL REEVES
(BA Psychology '09)



Flashback

Have a great photo from your days at York?

Email us at magnotes@yorku.ca

WHEN YORK'S FIRST CAMPUS BOOKSTORE opened with the launch of classes in the fall of 1961, it filled up fast. At some point, all 200 students enrolled in that inaugural year pushed their way into the overcrowded premises to buy their textbooks and swap information about their eagerly anticipated courses. This tight squeeze of a store served as the northern branch of the SCM Book Room, whose original downtown location (on St. Thomas Street, just south of Bloor) catered mostly to University of Toronto students. Over the ensuing decades, the York site would grow to become its own distinct entity, selling not just books but also stationery, gift items and branded spirit wear to students, faculty and the general public. Just as it was more than 60 years ago, the York University Bookstore remains a hub of activity. Last year, more than 70,000 copies of 3,500 titles in both printed and e-book formats sold online and in-store. ●

PHOTOGRAPHY: University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC04405

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