

## Bennington Banner

### Bennington College announces 2019 Public Action MFA candidates

BENNINGTON — The Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) at Bennington College is pleased to announce the 2019-20 candidates for its two-year Master of Fine Arts in Public Action degree.

Kenneth Bailey, co-founder for Boston-based Design Studio for Social Intervention, and media artist Marina Zurkow, who is focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections, will begin their work at CAPA starting in Fall 2019.

This MFA in Public Action is specifically geared to professionals working in the arts, including visual and performing artists and leaders, who are making significant contributions to the field of socially and civically engaged creative practice.

Candidates' creative work can engage myriad topics, including community regeneration, civic participation, economic development, creative placemaking, public policy, environmental advocacy, conflict resolution, or other cross-sector engagements where there is an urgent need for highly creative approaches to systemic challenges.

CAPA's MFA in Public Action recently concluded its first year with two exceptional candidates, sculptor Caroline Woolard and theatre activist Aaron Landsman, both of whose creative work focuses on building community coalitions and addressing gentrification and affordable housing.

The MFA in Public Action is directed by faculty member Robert Ransick in collaboration with the Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) Director Susan Sgorbati and is modeled on long-standing successes of Bennington's current MFA in Dance.

"The MFA in Public Action is a unique program that supports highly accomplished artists in the further development of their creative work tackling systemic challenges facing our world," said Ransick. "We expand this year with these extraordinary artists, Kenneth Bailey and Marina Zurkow, who will join our second-year students Aaron Landsman and Caroline Woolard at Bennington's groundbreaking Center for the Advancement of Public Action."

"We are thrilled with what our inaugural candidates have accomplished in their first year: developing their work and deepening their skills while also teaching, mentoring, and modeling for undergraduate students how to create socially engaged artistic work," said Provost and Dean of the College Isabel Roche, who will become interim president in July. "We look forward to welcoming Kenneth Bailey and Marina Zurkow and seeing the ways that faculty and students work with and learn from each other."

As part of their studies, candidates will each teach undergraduate courses every term alongside faculty mentors in their respective disciplines. Each term, the graduate students will be asked to share the results of their research and work in socially engaged practice with the Bennington community. They will bring added expertise, innovation, and knowledge to Bennington College undergraduate students interested in socially and civically engaged creative public action.

The curriculum for the MFA in Public Action is largely self-directed: candidates work closely with faculty to design an education plan that best suits their individual strengths, interests, goals, and creative process. The schedule for each term includes both research and work in creative public action and

other coursework. As a core requirement, candidates meet in a once-a-week tutorial with faculty to discuss and show the development of new material. This course, the Graduate Research Seminar in Public Action, is the basis of each individual's studies. =

The program incorporates Bennington's progressive pedagogy, extending more than eight decades of innovative artistic research, teaching, and learning, while integrating the orientation and methods of the Center for the Advancement of Public Action.

### **About the 2019-20 MFA in Public Action Candidates**

Kenneth Bailey is the co-founder of the Design Studio for Social Intervention (ds4si). His interests focus on the research and development of design tools for marginalized communities to address complex social issues. With over three decades of experience in community practice, Kenneth brings a unique perspective on the ethics of design in relation to community engagement, the arts and cultural action. Projects he has produced at ds4si include Action Lab (2012-2014), Public Kitchen (2011-2018), Social Emergency Response Center (SERC) (2018) People's Redevelopment Authority (2018), New Strategies for New Atmospheres (2019), and InPublic (2019).

Marina Zurkow is a media artist focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections, re-searching "wicked problems" like invasive species, superfund sites, and petroleum interdependence. She has used life science, bio materials, animation, dinners, and software technologies to foster intimate connections between people and non-human agents. Her work spans gallery installations and unconventional public participatory projects. Her collaborative initiatives include Climoji, Dear Climate, More&More Unlimited, and Floating Studio for Dark Ecologies. Currently, she is working on visualizing future oceans, and connecting eaters to food opportunities in changing climates.

Exhibitions include Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, bitforms gallery, NY, Montclair Museum of Art, Diverseworks, Houston, Sundance New Frontiers, FACT, Liverpool, SF MoMA, Walker Art Center, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Wave Hill, NY, and the National Museum for Women in the Arts. She has collaborated with Social Science and Humanities scholars at Rice University, New York University, and the University of Minnesota. Zurkow is a 2011 Guggenheim Fellow and received grants from NYFA, NYSCA, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Creative Capital. She is a fellow at ITP/Tisch School of the Arts and a member of Multispecies Humanities Lab at New York University, and is represented by bitforms gallery.