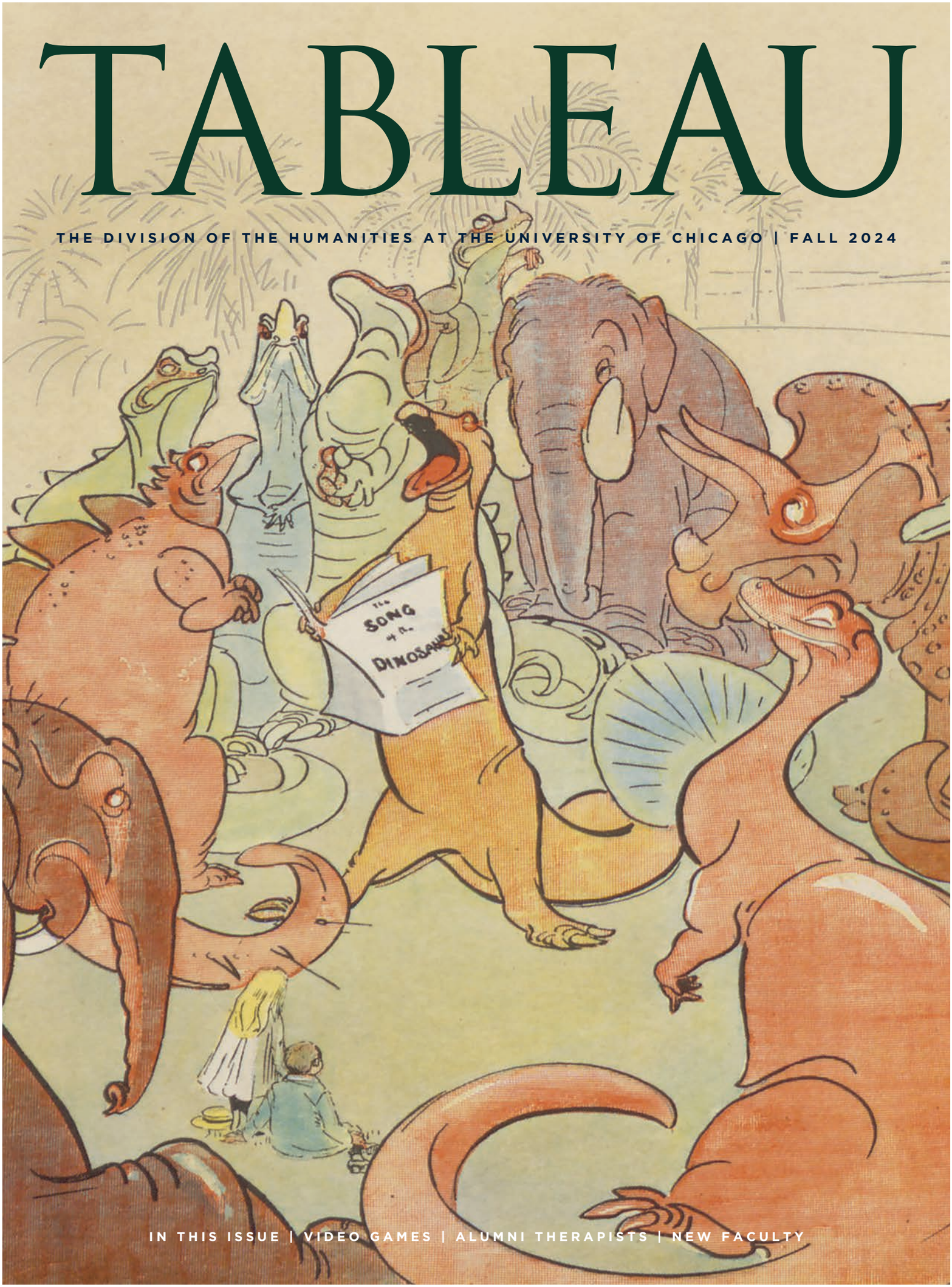
TABLEAU

THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | FALL 2024



IN THIS ISSUE | VIDEO GAMES | ALUMNI THERAPISTS | NEW FACULTY

IN THIS ISSUE

ON THE COVER

The Song of the Dinosaurs *by J. A. Shepherd, part of the original artwork for E. D. Cuming's fantastical story* Wonders in Monsterland *(George Allen, 1901), was on display at the UChicago Library's exhibit* Bibliosaurus! *from January to April 2024. On loan from the collection of Charles Valauskas.*

Pioneers in the Sky, *an exhibition of aerial photography that closed in August at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, included this image of wheel-like structures surrounded by flooded desert in eastern Jordan.*

OPPOSITE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUSTIN "CHAD" HILL; THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ZICH

Deborah L. Nelson

Dear Alumni and Friends,

At UChicago, creative writers are readers, film historians make documentaries, music composers are steeped in history, and music historians are accomplished musicians. The walls between scholarship and practice are much more permeable now than in the past.

The division has long been the home of internationally celebrated artists like Augusta Read Thomas and Theaster Gates. In the twenty-first century, we have built distinguished undergraduate programs like Creative Writing, Media Arts and Design, and Theater and Performance Studies (TAPS), which complement our distinguished graduate programs in music composition and visual arts. It is time that the Division of the Humanities recognize the distinction of our artists and our arts curriculum by changing its name to the Division of the Arts and Humanities, a change that will become official in the coming months.

For instance, Emmy-winning set designer **Rich Murray**, AB'94, got his start as an undergraduate in a UChicago set design course taught by **Linda Buchanan**, AB'74, a veteran of the Chicago theater scene. Murray once told the *University of Chicago Magazine* that sets are "a real way of bringing something to life onstage, almost like the set design is another character." He received Emmys in 2022 and 2023 for his innovative set design on the hit TV show *Only Murders in the Building*. And he now provides career advice to our students in TAPS.

Award-winning independent filmmaker **Kimberly Peirce**, AB'90, attributes her success to studying English at UChicago and learning from her mentor, literary scholar and cultural theorist Lauren Berlant, who died in 2021. "[Berlant] gave me permission to dream," Peirce said, "and to follow my great passion to tell stories."

Peirce made the surprise hit movie and cultural touchstone *Boys Don't Cry* in 1999. She directed and cowrote this real-life story of Brandon Teena to honor the courage and imagination of a trans person who lost his life in pursuit of his true self. Through this Oscar-winning film, Peirce helped shape a national conversation about gender and sexual identity.

In addition to mentoring students who make vital contributions to the world, many of our faculty members will display what's distinctive about the arts and humanities in unique spaces on the UChicago campus for Humanities Day on October 26, 2024. Ethnomusicologist **Philip V. Bohlman**, the keynote speaker, will launch the event during a session that features live music in the Logan Center Performance Hall. Poet **Srikanth "Chicu" Reddy** will lead an arts panel of experts discussing experimentation and critical analysis centered on arts research. Game experts **Patrick Jagoda**; **Heidi Coleman**, AM'08; and **Marc Downie** will present a live interactive media game performance at the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry.

We hope you will attend Humanities Day sessions in person or virtually. As always, I appreciate your dedication to the arts and humanities.

Deborah L. Nelson
Dean, Division of the Humanities
Helen B. and Frank L. Sulzberger Professor,
Department of English Language and Literature

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Hungarian artist Vera Molnar began her series Lettres de ma mère etude *(My Mother's Letters Study, 1981–91) with a few hand-drawn zigzagging lines of blue ink, meant to simulate her late mother's handwriting. She converted the pattern to computer code in 1984 to create plotter drawings, including this 1987 piece.*

Creative misuse

BY CHANDLER A. CALDERON

Art historian Zsofi Valyi-Nagy looks at new media and artistic collaborations with machines.

Zsofi Valyi-Nagy, AB'13, AM'18, PhD'23, has long had an affinity for what she calls the "creative misuse" of technology, that is, "artists experimenting with technology that they maybe don't fully understand and using it for something that it wasn't intended for initially." A specialist in new media art and a visual artist herself, Valyi-Nagy has spent the last several years researching Vera Molnar, who is best known for her plotter drawings made on computers beginning in the 1960s. Using programming languages that weren't necessarily intended to create images, Molnar programmed these early computers to draw for her, using a mechanical arm, or pen plotter, to ink lines along *x* and *y* axes.

Though Molnar, who died in December 2023, is regularly called a pioneer of computer art for this experimental work, she preferred to be known as a painter. At first this choice puzzled Valyi-Nagy, but as she learned more about how the artist worked, she came to appreciate how Molnar integrated computers into her drawing and painting practice. For her it was never simply a matter of entering code into a machine.

> What is the art? Is it the code, or is it the picture?
>
> —Zsofi Valyi-Nagy, AB'13, AM'18, PhD'23

Art historians may sometimes emphasize the final art object over the work that went into it, but Valyi-Nagy saw that with digital art—and with Molnar's work in particular—it was essential to shift the focus to the artistic process. "When early computer graphics are exhibited in museums," she says, "what you're not seeing is the really complex iterative process that led to that image. There was this misconception, maybe, when you just see the framed hard copy, that there was an algorithm that was written, you press *Go*, and then it was output to paper, and that was it. And so the question is, What is the art? Is it the code, or is it the picture? And I find that binary not very productive when it comes to Molnar's work, because there's so much in between the code and the output that you don't necessarily see."

In addition to studying Molnar's archives, Valyi-Nagy tracked down early computers and recreated Molnar's work—an approach called media archaeology—and conducted extensive interviews with the artist. Valyi-Nagy found the prospect of these interviews daunting at first, and learned that other graduate students in her department researching living artists faced a similar challenge. Together they started the workshop series Speaking of Art: Artist Interviews in Scholarship and Practice to learn how to incorporate oral history into their research.

Through conversations with Molnar and archival research, it became clear that the artist's process "was very much not linear," says Valyi-Nagy, and that her work with computers was completely integrated into her studio practice. Though Molnar is best known for her earliest plotter drawings ("Art history is all about, Who did this first?" says Valyi-Nagy), the artist's work from the 1980s interests Valyi-Nagy even more. In the 1960s, Molnar worked in a computer lab away from her studio, on a computer without a screen. After she programmed it, she had to wait hours—sometimes days—to see the resulting plotter drawing, make changes to the code, and generate a new drawing. By the 1970s she could interact with her drawings on a screen; by the 1980s, she had a computer in her studio. Suddenly "she was moving back and forth between analog images and digital images. She was sketching in her notebook, turning that into code, which would transform into this digital image that she would then transform again and then output to the plotter." (Valyi-Nagy even found photographs Molnar had taken of her computer screen throughout the 1970s, the existence of which raises more questions about Molnar's relationship to the computer: "Why did she take a picture of the screen when she could output it to paper?" Valyi-Nagy wonders.) Molnar's geometric drawings are deceptively simple, she realized. Molnar was engaged in a conversation with the computer; rather than accepting its output as the last word, she found different ways to reassert her artistic hand.

In combining analog and digital media, Molnar also participated in the debate—already top of mind when she began working on computers—over whether humans would be replaced by the new technology. "She had this way of programming the computer to almost simulate human error, like using randomness to create a tremor in the plotter-drawn line. Or she would draw a concentric square series with a computer, but then add in her own hand-drawn lines and ask you to question, Which one of these is better than the other?" Valyi-Nagy emphasizes the humor in Molnar's approach: "There is a sort of playfulness to this where she, I think, maybe thought that this entire debate was ridiculous and silly. And she's like, of course, the computer is not going to replace the artist. And also, behind every program there is a person."

For years early computer artists like Molnar have not been taken seriously, explains **Christine Mehring**, the Mary L. Block Professor of Art History, who was Valyi-Nagy's dissertation adviser. Not only was their work seen as "geeky," she says, but there was also a misconception that in computer art, "the artist has a decreased importance as an individual creator." With the emergence of sophisticated generative technologies over the last few years, these artists' early explorations of the relationship between artist and computer have become more relevant than ever.

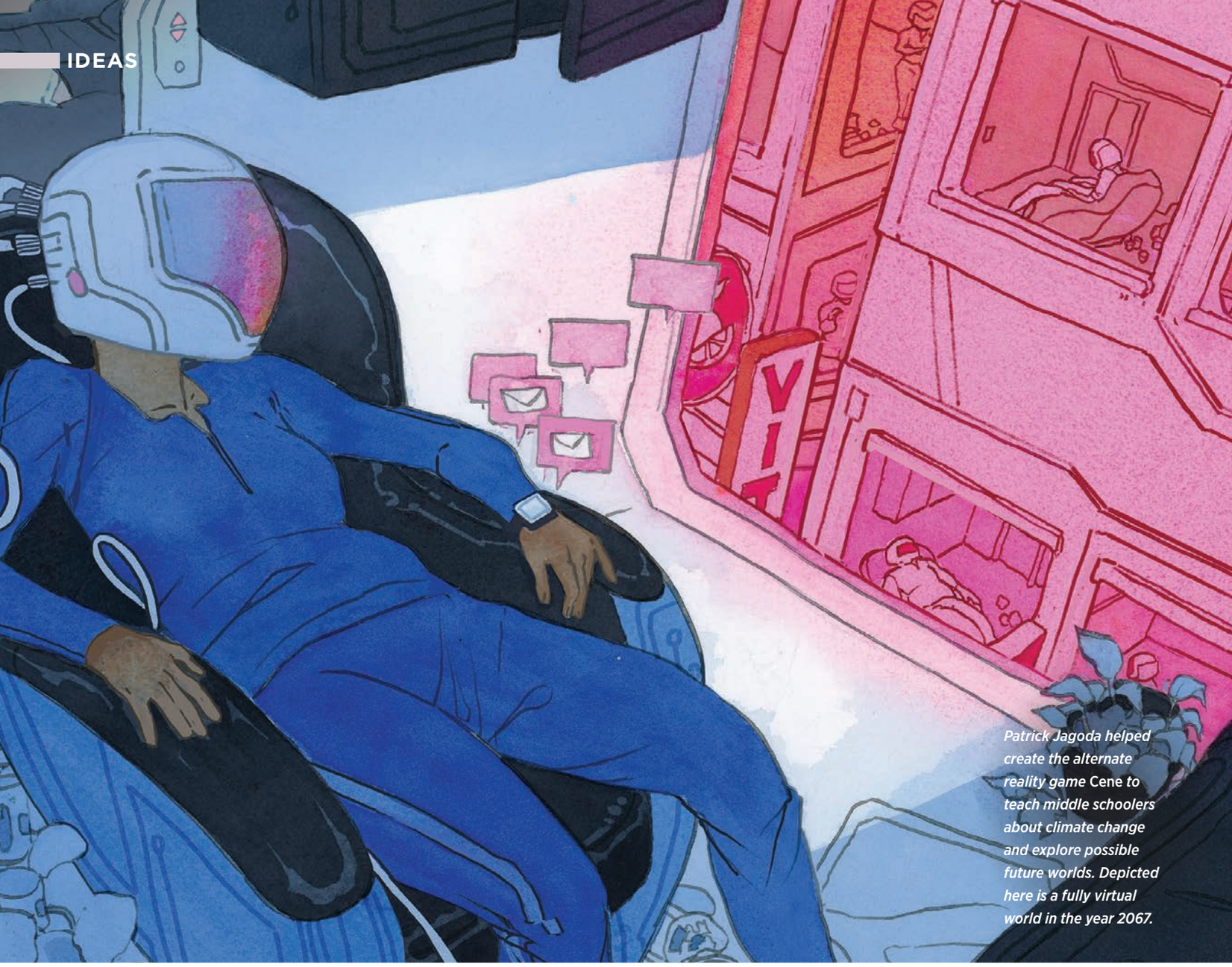
Mehring's hope is that as more people learn about artists like Molnar, "we'll have the resources and the time and the expertise to think about how to preserve this kind of art within museum collections," as well as the machines on which the art was made. "I think we're just at the beginning of how important this prehistory of computational art will be," says Mehring.

In her own artistic practice, Valyi-Nagy probes the possibilities of technology in art. Like many people who grew up at the dawn of the internet age, Valyi-Nagy explored the creative potential of computers and the internet when she was younger, making bitmaps (pixel drawings) and sharing them via GeoCities, which hosted user-created websites. She continues to incorporate a mix of technologies into her artistic work today, "investigating where these technologies fail—or fail to do things that I want them to do." Searching for what tools like 3D scanners, holograms, or X-rays are unable to capture, she highlights those glitches and holes throughout her work, drawing attention to the limitations of these technologies.

While in graduate school, Valyi-Nagy began experiencing severe chronic pain. As her doctors struggled to find a diagnosis, she says, "I became really interested in the role of imagery in diagnosis, and how I was getting all these X-rays and MRIs, and nothing was showing up, but I felt so much pain and it seemed like the doctors wouldn't believe me." The experience got her thinking about a question that has long been part of the conversation around media like photography and holography: "that something has to be visible in order to be true." To explore this tension, she created what she calls "AI-assisted collages," feeding assemblages of diagnostic images and paint through an AI program, adding a randomness that she feels is in keeping with Molnar's work. She has experimented, too, with text-to-image generators, honing the language she uses to prompt the AI through an iterative process like Molnar's. The AI often comes up with something completely unlike what she imagined. "It's always some sort of collaboration between you and the technology." ■

READ VALYI-NAGY'S *ARTFORUM* PIECE ON MOLNAR'S LEGACY at tableau.uchicago.edu/molnar.

ABOVE: ANNE AND MICHAEL SPALTER DIGITAL ART COLLECTION © THE ARTIST'S ESTATE; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHY BY CASSIA DAVIS



Patrick Jagoda helped create the alternate reality game Cene *to teach middle schoolers about climate change and explore possible future worlds. Depicted here is a fully virtual world in the year 2067.*

Two perspectives on video games

AS TOLD TO SUSIE ALLEN, AB'09

A media theorist and a scholar of Arabic literature explore the promises and pitfalls of a juggernaut industry.

Patrick Jagoda *is William Rainey Harper Professor in Cinema and Media Studies and English Language and Literature as well as the author of several books on game studies. He is cofounder of the Game Changer Chicago Design Lab, the Fourcast Lab, and the Transmedia Story Lab, and he serves as faculty director of the Weston Game Lab and the Media Arts and Design program.*

Ghenwa Hayek *is an associate professor in Middle Eastern Studies and coleader, with associate professor of Islamic studies Alireza Doostdar, of Gaming Islam, a research initiative that explores representations of Islam, Muslims, and the Middle East in video games. The project began with an eight-part video series on the game* Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*.*

Since the start of the twenty-first century, video games have moved from subcultural hobbies marketed to a narrow demographic of White adolescent boys to one of the world's largest cultural phenomena. By some estimates, there are currently over 3.2 billion global gamers. The game industry in 2022 was estimated to be worth 347 billion US dollars, substantially exceeding the film and music industries.

Given the popularity of video games, there is ongoing curiosity about whether games are culturally destructive or socially redemptive. Parents ask me if their children should even be playing video games at all. Teachers ask me if there are uses of games in the classroom that exceed the "chocolate-covered broccoli" approach of some unengaging educational games. Instead of taking an extreme view, either cheerleading or condemning, we can better grasp the medium of games by examining it critically—and by remaking it through imaginative design.

Games are a complex form and metaphor in our twenty-first-century world. People play games for many reasons. Games can be fun. They can offer a safe space in which to encounter a surmountable challenge. Many games provide social experiences, either in person or remotely. Still other games are essentially interactive narratives that spur interpretation, much like novels or films. One reason that games resist any easy characterization is that so many different kinds of things, in 2024, can be called games. This includes a gamified learning system like Duolingo, sandbox spaces like *Minecraft*, and even escape rooms.

Since I joined the faculty, much has changed in games research at the University of Chicago. We now have a Media Arts and Design major with a game design emphasis. I have also cofounded three labs that demonstrate just how versatile a form games have become. First, the Game Changer Chicago Design Lab, which I started with [then] medical professor Melissa Gilliam, creates games as educational tools to improve public health; encourage underrepresented youth to pursue STEM pathways; and explore race, gender, and sexuality. Second, the Fourcast Lab, which I created with theater and performance studies professor **Heidi Coleman** [AM'08], designs artistic "alternate reality games" with science faculty about topics such as climate change and epidemiology. Finally, the Weston Game Lab, a student-facing initiative I run with game designer **Ashlyn Sparrow**, provides resources to—for instance—a student who wants to understand the history of Japanese role-playing games; a collaborative team that seeks to create an entertainment game; or a research group in public health, quantum computing, or financial education.

As the infamous (though unofficial) motto of the University of Chicago once boasted, this is the place "where fun goes to die." Yet in 2024, this could not be further from the truth. Numerous members of the University community have transformed the life of the mind into a life of play. As any serious teacher will tell you, play (including gameplay) can be the highest form of learning. ■

I declared to anyone who would listen that, after I got tenure, I would be playing video games for a good amount of my time. And one of the things you realize when you start expressing an interest in video games is that lots of other people play them too—they just don't usually talk about it. That's how I found out that **Alireza Doostdar** [associate professor of Islamic studies and the anthropology of religion in the Divinity School] also plays games.

We're both really interested in taking our scholarship to a public that we usually don't reach. One model for public scholarship we thought of was Jack Shaheen's book *Reel Bad Arabs* [Olive Branch Press, 2001] and subsequent documentary, which deconstruct the way that Arabs are represented in film and on TV. Gaming Islam develops Shaheen's book and similar projects for a different kind of audiovisual medium. It's disheartening (but not surprising) that so many of the stereotypes that were identified in earlier decades are still present in contemporary games' representations of certain kinds of Middle Eastern people.

We started with *Call of Duty* because it's a behemoth franchise. You can't ignore it. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*. The gameplay is amazing. I had the impression going in that it's just a game about killing a bunch of people, which it is, but it's also very well crafted and has compelling characters. And that's one of the reasons we need to pay attention to games like this—because it's so fun to play and so easy to get sucked into the story. Fundamentally, though, it's not very different from a lot of mainstream American media produced about the region.

Of course, in the same way that indie films are different from Hollywood blockbusters, there are massive games produced by big studios, and there are also lovingly crafted indie games made by one person or a very small team. Our next series for Gaming Islam is going to focus on one of those small games, called *Heaven's Vault*. The protagonist is a Muslim archaeologist named Aliya who wears the hijab. In many ways, she is the antithesis of the swashbuckling archaeologist represented by Indiana Jones on film and Lara Croft in an earlier generation of video games. Yet even that game, we will argue, carries some familiar ways of thinking around knowledge production about the East—specifically about artifacts and who gets to decipher the language and who gets to explain a culture. That's a little bit of a spoiler!

My personal ambition for Gaming Islam is that it will reach people who have started to pick up games and are beginning to question some of the representations they're seeing of Muslims and the Middle East. A young person could watch our videos and realize there is a deliberate choice in making the people in *Call of Duty* look or speak a particular way. And why is the hero always an American soldier saving locals from themselves? ■

WATCH HAYEK AND DOOSTDAR DISCUSS *CALL OF DUTY*
at tableau.uchicago.edu/games.

OPPOSITE: ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH GAVAGAN; THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON SMITH; PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ZICH

Crossing sonic borderlands

BY KELLEY TATRO

Graduate students trace patterns of music and migration.

Ronnie Malley, AM'23, plays the oud in a performance of his one-person play* Ziryab: The Songbird of Andalusia *for Chicago's Silk Road Rising (now Silk Road Cultural Center) in 2016.

In 2022 **Philip V. Bohlman**, the Ludwig Rosenberger Distinguished Service Professor in Jewish History in the Department of Music, won an annual Balzan Prize for his contributions to ethnomusicology scholarship. The prize was both an honor and an opportunity—not only for him but also for the graduate students he mentors. The International Balzan Prize Foundation stipulates that half of the prize's award be spent on fostering the next generation of excellent research in the award winner's field.

So with Bohlman's guidance, a cohort of PhD students embarked on a multiyear project, funded by the prize, to illuminate an important issue in the discipline today: the entanglements of music and migration. Named "Borderlands of Sonic Encounter," the project will ultimately result in the creation of a website and digital archive of materials from various global border regions, a series of monographs, and local and international events. To kick it all off, the cohort held an inaugural symposium at UChicago in February of 2024.

Through panels titled "Bengali Borderlands," "Media, Mode, and Mobility," and "The Middle East," the symposium participants addressed an incongruity: that, increasingly around the world, the vibrant flow of people and ideas crashes into rigid geopolitical boundaries. By highlighting migrants' musical experience in borderlands—including literal borders that demarcate nations on maps and figurative borders that people imagine around their identities—ethnomusicologists reveal how people navigate the diverse challenges of migrants' lives.

"I think it's important to shed some light on how displaced peoples and stateless people and refugees … have shared experiences but also can have very different experiences," says **Tomal Hossain**, AM'22. He presented research based on his ongoing fieldwork with Rohingya refugees, and he also helped organize the symposium as the borderland project's assistant. "This larger conversation does happen, to some extent, but in political science, in refugee studies, in humanitarian studies. Oftentimes those studies don't really engage on a deep enough level with musical experience, sensory experience, the cultural meaning-making that takes place daily."

Hossain describes the nuances of what it means to be a Rohingya Muslim living in the refugee camp that he visits—one of 33 Rohingya refugee camps (as of summer 2024) situated in a site called Cox's Bazar District in Bangladesh, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Rohingya are "stateless through and through," he says, unlike some refugees who are recognized as citizens of one country

THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY AERIN WRIGHT; OPPOSITE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KURYSZ; PHOTO COURTESY TOMAL HOSSAIN

Varshini Narayanan, AM'20

Tomal Hossain, AM'22

All borders are fictitious, and yet we also know the immense power of a national or an institutional border.

—Varshini Narayanan, AM'20

despite being forced across borders into others. Rohingya Muslims are denied citizenship by the officially Buddhist Myanmar state, which has also conducted periodic campaigns of ethnic cleansing against them, forcing waves of migration into Bangladesh.

To understand how that intergenerational experience of statelessness informs the self-image of the Rohingya, Hossain focuses on *tarana*, a song form that often builds on borrowed materials. When repurposing well-known melodies, *tarana* musicians may riff on the associations of an original song by giving it new lyrics. Hossain describes a "very popular Rohingya love song, which was converted into a *tarana* song, and so the beloved goes from being a human being to [representing] the land, the country."

Other songs refer to Islamic ideas about struggle and martyrdom. "You can always look to the afterlife as a sort of reassuring fact of existence in the face of bleak prospects for life in this world," Hossain explains, something that he believes fuels the popularity of the genre among people who are denied the right to health care, housing, education, and employment.

Like Hossain, other students who participated in the conference have taken part in the everyday lived realities of their research subjects while doing ethnography. But as **Varshini Narayanan**, AM'20, noted, many of these participants are from immigrant families themselves. The conference featured primarily "not just scholars of color, but especially diasporic scholars," they say, people who have personal experience of "negotiating a multiplicity—and a contentious multiplicity at that."

As part of the panel on media, Narayanan presented new exploratory research on the rapper Brodha V, whom they describe as a "Hindu Brahmin hip-hop artist steeped in Black American aesthetics in his body language and dress." Indicating the figurative borders of identity and politics that diasporic communities negotiate through cultural practices, they note that Brodha V comes from a privileged stratum of India's caste-based society while drawing on an art form long associated with marginalized communities in the United States. They ask, "What does it mean to espouse Black American and Brown elite Hindu aesthetics in the same artistic expression? What does that do for us in terms of the kinds of borders that can get transgressed and the kinds of communities that can be reached?

"I can send my mom a hip-hop video that has Hindu values built into the text," they explain, "and all of a sudden, we're not talking about sex and drugs and all of these things that, for her, are tied to the anxieties of westernization and modernization. That's a message she can relate to," and so "the aesthetic values of Indian hip-hop become accessible.

"We live in a multicultural global society," Narayanan continues. "All borders are fictitious, and yet we also know the immense power of a national or an institutional border in terms of restricting movements, circumscribing people, defining people. There's this very pressing, urgent need to understand what happens as different borders become legible or less legible over time."

Ronnie Malley, AM'23, does historically based research inspired by his experience being raised in a musical Palestinian American family. Set in the Andalusian region of medieval Spain, his research highlights the complex multicultural society of the time, which included Arab and Berber Muslims, Arab and European Christians, and Sephardic Jews—a dynamic, cosmopolitan world that he didn't know about growing up, and that he wishes more people knew about today as they consider the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

"I wanted to see, what can I glean from this era? Not only were Jewish and Muslim relations at a peak, they thrived and really gave us the new world together: linguistically, culturally, artistically, mathematically, philosophically, scientifically—in so many ways. And that came about from a concentrated, shared experience in creating cultures together from religious diversity," he says.

To reveal those intertwined cultures in the context of his conference panel, Malley also talked about his experiences as a performing artist presenting his one-person play *Ziryab: The Songbird of Andalusia*. The story is inspired by the historical figure credited with bringing the oud, a pear-shaped stringed instrument, from medieval Baghdad to Cordoba, Spain, in the ninth century, where it would be transformed first into the lute and later into the modern guitar. Malley is himself an oud and guitar player, and he punctuates the storytelling of the play with snippets of musical performance on both instruments.

In addition to Malley's discussion of his performances of *Ziryab*, he also took part in the *mehfil*—a kind of jam session—that closed the symposium. Embodying the fluidity of cultural exchange, several of the conference participants played music together, mixing their expertise with sounds from different regions and genres. ■

READ ABOUT MALLEY PERFORMING IN A TIME OF WAR
at tableau.uchicago.edu/malley.

More common in the mid-twentieth century than today, Rorschach tests like this one invite subjects to respond to ambiguous shapes to reveal something about their inner life.

The talking cure

BY LUCAS MCGRANAHAN

Three alumni therapists bring a humanistic perspective to their clients.

Rashida Black, AM'06, AM'15, was a classical harpist who studied ethnomusicology before becoming a holistic psychotherapist based in California. Suzi Naiburg, PhD'89, whose family includes four generations of UChicago students and alumni, is a Massachusetts-based psychoanalyst who also teaches writing to therapists. Leigh Ann Smith-Gary, PhD'12, AM'14, who practices in Connecticut, transitioned from Germanic studies to become a therapist working in the tradition of one-time UChicago professor Carl Rogers. The three alumnae spoke with *Tableau* about their journey from scholarship to private practice therapy, including how their intellectual work continues alongside and within their work with clients.

What is your approach to therapy?

Black: I consider myself an empath, so I tap into what a feeling means, how it resonates, and how it is triggered. I've done a combination of cognitive therapies and hypnosis. In hypnotherapy, I get clients to this very calm space, where their body is relaxed, and they can turn off all the chatter. Let's say a client is having a pain somewhere or discomfort, but they don't know where it's coming from. Together we make a journey to understand what this pain point is trying to communicate. I'm guiding them through this experience so they can meet various parts of themselves and integrate.

Naiburg: I would identify myself as a relational psychoanalyst and trauma therapist who can draw on contemporary analytic approaches as well as the resources of hypnosis, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, EMDR [Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing] therapy, and attachment work. EMDR was first used to treat PTSD and now offers tools for addressing

My interest in psychological studies of Henry James ... eventually led to my becoming a psychoanalyst.

—Suzi Naiburg, PhD'89

Suzi Naiburg, PhD'89

Rashida Black, AM'06, AM'15

Leigh Ann Smith-Gary, PhD'12, AM'14

a wide range of conditions. Like hypnosis, it involves the same kind of intense focus and softening of attention to the periphery in the processing phases so that the mind becomes relaxed, allowing more memories and associations to emerge and break through repetitive patterns, recontextualizing trauma experience.

Smith-Gary: My approach is the client-centered approach, which was started by Carl Rogers. He was a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago [1945–57], where he founded a counseling center that was the first to do evidence-based research into what's effective in therapy. He found that three conditions are both necessary and sufficient to facilitate therapeutic change: empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard for the client, and congruence on the part of the therapist—a rigorous self-awareness, so that you're aware of and accepting of your own internal states. As a client-centered therapist, you do not try to play detective. You stay right next to, or even slightly behind, the person as they are unfolding themselves with you. You're not creating theories about them or telling them what their reality is.

What do you like most about your job?

Naiburg: People can change and have richer lives. Obviously, people come to therapy because something doesn't satisfy them. They're not feeling as fulfilled or as lively as they'd like to be. So, you help them with what they come for, but hopefully you also help them expand their capacity for meaning-making and living the life they'd like to have.

Black: I don't want to call it *channeling*—I'm super woo-woo, so I say words like that—but it's that shared humanity, like we're reflecting one another. Therapy is how I can be supportive of your journey, but it's not the healed helping the unhealed. I'm a healer, but so are you. I get to be uncomfortable and grow every day.

Smith-Gary: I'm very interested in the internal landscapes of people. I also love the intimacy that comes in hour-long segments. I can immerse myself fully, and then I can be with myself again. It's a way of life that really suits me.

How has your humanities background informed your career?

Smith-Gary: I'll always remember one of my therapeutic mentors saying, "You know, the best way to become a therapist—and a good one—is to read literature, not psychology." I had worked on nineteenth-century realist literature for my dissertation on the trope of the sublime in the German tradition. It reflected my interest in observing human beings at their limits, right at these moments of intensity, of overwhelm, of terror, of deep pain, and of understanding how that can be metabolized. In writing my dissertation I was nearing 30 and asked, "What would I do if I could do anything in the world?" I gave myself permission to consider therapy. It felt very brave and audacious at the time. I went across the street to what is now called the Crown Family School, and I sat in on some psychodynamic classes and really enjoyed them. I applied to the school, defended my dissertation, and transitioned the next fall.

Naiburg: Sometimes a patient might have trouble thinking about the meaning of something, and I might say to them, "Imagine you're a character in a short story and this happens. What do you think the author might be offering the readers?" Sometimes that frees them up to make connections they might not have otherwise made. The other thing is that literature teaches sensitivity to form, pattern, image, and language and presents a variety of characters and motivations. All these things help me listen to a patient. There's a lot of interest in narrative and associative process in talk therapy. The more you look and listen, the more you see and hear. I think it's a sensibility that I bring from the study of literature. I started studying at MIP [the Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis] because I wanted to bring a wider range of psychodynamic frameworks to my studies of literature. My interest in psychological studies of Henry James and the James family tilted me toward more psychological frames of mind and eventually led to my becoming a psychoanalyst.

Black: I was a classical harpist, and my master's thesis was on the Black presence in classical music. I focused on ethnomusicology. As an ethnographer, you learn interview techniques and different ways to speak with people who are not like you. That really helped me to understand not only various cultures but also the historical context that can shape our experiences. After graduating I started a nonprofit called the Myrtle Hart Society, after the first Black harpist I could find historical representation of. She performed at the 1893 World's Fair. I wanted to form and find community. All these experiences help me to approach therapy with an appreciation for the multifaceted human experience. ■

READ AN EXPANDED VERSION OF THIS STORY
at tableau.uchicago.edu/therapists.

OPPOSITE: HERMANN RORSCHACH, 1921 (PD-US-EXPIRED); THIS PAGE: PHOTOS COURTESY SUZI NAIBURG, RASHIDA BLACK, AND LEIGH ANN SMITH-GARY

From left: Recently arrived faculty members Maya Krishnan, Pamela Klasova, Carlos Halaburda, and Margaret Geoga.

New faculty fall 2024

BY COURTNEY C. W. GUERRA, AB'05

The Division of the Humanities welcomes 16 new faculty members to campus, as the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations is renamed the Department of Middle Eastern Studies.

Ray Briggs joins Philosophy as professor following faculty appointments at Stanford and the University of Queensland. A major figure in analytic metaphysics and epistemology, they also work on philosophy of language and gender, using philosophical and mathematical tools to address questions about rationality and the nature of the world. In addition to more than two dozen articles, they are the coauthor of *What Even Is Gender?* (Routledge, 2023). Their PhD is from MIT, where their dissertation was entitled "Partial Belief and Expert Testimony," and their BA (also in philosophy) is from Syracuse University.

Gregory Maxwell Bruce, assistant professor in South Asian Languages and Civilizations, studies Islam in South Asia. His first book, *Turkey, Egypt, and Syria: A Travelogue* (Syracuse University Press, 2020), is an annotated English translation of a significant Urdu-Persian-Arabic-Turkish work by philosopher, Islamic theologian, literary critic, and historian Shibli Numani (1857–1914). The book traces and documents scholarly networks connecting India to the Ottoman Empire in the 1890s. Before coming to UChicago, Bruce lectured in Urdu at the University of California, Berkeley, and at Stanford. His PhD, in Asian cultures and languages, is from the University of Texas at Austin, and his BA, in philosophy with a minor in ethnomusicology, is from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is the editor in chief of the *Journal of Urdu Studies* (Brill), which he cofounded.

Jonathan Flatley, professor in English Language and Literature, joins UChicago from Wayne State University; he was previously on the faculty at the University of Virginia. He is a comparativist who works on American, African American, and Russian literature and culture. Most broadly, his research concerns collective emotion as it takes shape in aesthetic and political forms. His most recent book, *Like Andy Warhol* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), argues that a key through line connecting all of Warhol's work is his commitment to liking and being-alike. He is also the author of *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Harvard University Press, 2008), and his next monograph is tentatively titled "Black Leninism: How Revolutionary Counter-Moods Are Made." He completed his BA at Amherst College and was a research fellow at the Moscow Institute of Philosophy before receiving his PhD in literature from Duke University.

Ray Briggs

Jennifer Fleissner

Cassandra Guan

Derek Kennet

Jana Matuszak

Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek

Jennifer Fleissner is professor in English Language and Literature and an expert in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American novels, with interests in theory and method as well as in contemporary fiction. Her book *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (University of Chicago Press, 2004) has become a touchstone in the field; her follow-up, *Maladies of the Will: The American Novel and the Modernity Problem* (University of Chicago Press, 2022), weaves together early Christian thought, natural philosophy, and German idealism as backdrops to the nineteenth-century American novel's engagement with dramas of the will. She joins UChicago from the faculty of Indiana University—where she had the rare honor of receiving the Trustees' Teaching Award twice, in 2019 and 2022—and, before that, UCLA. Her PhD is from Brown and her BA is from Yale.

Margaret Geoga, assistant professor of Egyptology in Middle Eastern Studies and the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, is a scholar of ancient Egyptian literature—its production, transmission, and reception throughout history. She holds a PhD in Egyptology and Assyriology and a concurrent MA in comparative literature from Brown; her BA, from Harvard, is in Romance languages and literatures. Her latest book, currently under contract, is *Receptions of a Middle Egyptian Poem: A Textual and Material Study of "The Teaching of Amenemhat," ca. 1550–500 BCE* (Brill, forthcoming). She was previously an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities at the University of Pennsylvania Wolf Humanities Center.

Cassandra X. Guan joins Cinema and Media Studies as assistant professor following a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at MIT's Art, Culture, and Technology Program and a faculty position at the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program. She holds a PhD and MA in modern culture and media from Brown and a BFA in art from the Cooper Union. Her dissertation and book project, "Maladaptive Media: The Exigency of Life in the Era of Its Technical Reproducibility," reinterprets the aesthetics of animation in the early twentieth century through the philosophy of technology. She is also working on a book entitled "Imagine There's No Human" about mass mobilization and automation in Chinese state media from the 1950s through the present.

Carlos Gustavo Halaburda is assistant professor in Romance Languages and Literatures. He holds a PhD in Luso-Hispanic studies and critical theory from Northwestern; he earned both his MA and BA from the University of British Columbia. He specializes in cultural productions about queerness and disability, with a focus on Argentina, as well as Uruguay and Brazil. Prior to arriving at UChicago, he was a Marie Skłodowska Curie Research Fellow at the University of Cologne and a postdoctoral fellow of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada at the University of Toronto. His book project, "Argentina's Sentimental Underworlds: Slum Theatre and the Staging of Queerness and Disability—1880–1930," studies how fin de siècle sexology and genetic theory informed the dramatic repertoire of the Río de la Plata.

Derek Kennet is the Howard E. Hallengren Professor in Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology in Middle Eastern Studies and the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures. His research areas include the rise of Islam, economic responses to arid environments, and the interactions between the Arabian Peninsula and nearby societies. He was formerly the resident archaeologist at the National Museum of Ras al-Khaimah in the UAE and spent 25 years at Durham University before coming to Chicago. He completed his undergraduate studies at the Institute of Archaeology in London, and his PhD is from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He has coauthored several books, the most recent of which—*Southeast Arabia at the Dawn of the Second Millennium: The Bronze Age Collective Graves of Qarn al-Harf, Ras al-Khaimah (UAE)*—is forthcoming from Oxbow Books in 2024.

Pamela Klasova, a scholar of classical Arabic literature, joins Middle Eastern Studies as assistant professor following a faculty appointment at Macalester College. Her PhD (in Arabic and Islamic studies) is from Georgetown University, and she completed bachelor's and master's equivalent degrees in Arabic and Dutch philology from Charles University in the Czech Republic, as well as an MA in Arabic from Leiden University in the Netherlands. In her first

OPPOSITE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ZICH; THIS PAGE AND NEXT: ALL HEADSHOTS COURTESY THE FACULTY MEMBERS

Nikhita Obeegadoo

Austin O'Malley, AB'07, MA'09, PhD'17

Senem Pirler

Darya Tsymbalyuk

book, *The Eloquent Tyrant: Speech and Empire in Umayyad Iraq under al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, 694–714*, under contract with University of California Press, she explores how al-Ḥajjāj, the powerful governor of Iraq under the Umayyad dynasty, used oratory in his efforts to strengthen the early Islamic empire.

Maya Krishnan, assistant professor in Philosophy, is a scholar of Kant and German idealism, with a particular focus on theology. Her dissertation, "The Totality of the Thinkable," uses Kant's theological texts to offer a new perspective on his accounts of knowledge, reference, and self-deception. She also does contemporary work on autonomy and intelligibility. Her doctorate is from the University of Oxford, where she was a Prize Fellow at All Souls College and a Rhodes Scholar. She completed the BPhil in philosophy at Oxford, for which she was awarded the Gilbert Ryle Prize, and a BA in philosophy at Stanford.

Jana Matuszak, assistant professor of Sumerology in Middle Eastern Studies and the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, specializes in Sumerian language and literature. In her research on humor, rhetoric, law, and gender, she combines philological research with theoretical approaches derived from literary, cultural, and historical studies. She received her PhD from the University of Tübingen, and her prizewinning dissertation was published with De Gruyter in 2021. She is currently working on one book about Sumerian mock hymns and another entitled "Defining Femininity: The Construction of Ideal Women in Sumerian Didactic Literature at the Dawn of the 2nd Millennium BCE."

Anna-Latifa Mourad-Cizek is assistant professor of Egyptian Archaeology in Middle Eastern Studies and the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures. Her scholarship explores ancient cultural encounters and their impact on sociocultural transformations. She is the author of *Rise of the Hyksos: Egypt and the Levant from the Middle Kingdom to the Early Second Intermediate Period* (Archaeopress, 2015) and *The Enigma of the Hyksos, Volume II: Transforming Egypt into the New Kingdom. The Impact of the Hyksos and Egyptian-Near Eastern Relations* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021). Her PhD and BA—in ancient history—are from Macquarie University in Australia.

Nikhita Obeegadoo joins Romance Languages and Literatures as a Neubauer Family Assistant Professor following a faculty appointment at the University of British Columbia. She holds a PhD from Harvard, as well as a BS in computer science and a BA in comparative literature from Stanford. Her research revolves around contemporary literatures of oceans, archipelagoes, and migrations, with a special focus on the Indian Ocean. Obeegadoo's work has previously been funded by a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, as well as by a major Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant. She is at work on a book project titled "Submarine Complicities: Mapping Archipelagic Studies Through Multispecies Perspectives."

Austin O'Malley, AB'07, MA'09, PhD'17, returns to Middle Eastern Studies as an assistant professor after serving on the faculty at the University of Arizona. A scholar of Sufism and narrative poetry, O'Malley researches reading practices and the reception of Persian poetic texts, both by their historical readers and as imagined or anticipated by their authors. His first book, *The Poetics of Spiritual Instruction: Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭar and Persian Sufi Didacticism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), explores a major figure in classical Persian literature, and his next will focus on forgeries and misattributions—the practice of falsely attributing works to revered authors.

Senem Pirler is an assistant professor of Composition in Music who was previously on the faculty of Bennington College. Born in Turkey, she completed her undergraduate studies in classical piano at Hacettepe State Conservatory and studied sound engineering and design at Istanbul Technical University. She went on to receive a master's in music technology from NYU Steinhardt and a PhD in electronic arts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with the dissertation "Disruption, Dis/orientation, and Intra-action: Recipes for Creating a Queer Utopia in Audiovisual Space." Her work—often collaborative, with audiovisual components—has been performed at venues including Carnegie Hall and Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

Darya Tsymbalyuk, assistant professor in Slavic Languages and Literatures, is an interdisciplinary researcher who is also engaged in creative practice. Her work explores the cultures of Ukraine and Eastern Europe through the lens of the environmental humanities. Her PhD is from the University of St Andrews, and she holds a dual BA from Kenyon College in modern languages and literatures and studio art. Before joining UChicago, she was a fellow at St Antony's College, University of Oxford; IWM (Institute for Human Sciences), Vienna; School of Advanced Study, University of London; and New Europe College in Bucharest, Romania. Her work has appeared in *Narrative Culture*; *Journal of International Relations and Development*; *Nature Human Behaviour*; and *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia*, among others. Her first monograph, *Ecocide in Ukraine: The Environmental Cost of Russia's War*, is forthcoming from Polity in 2025. ■

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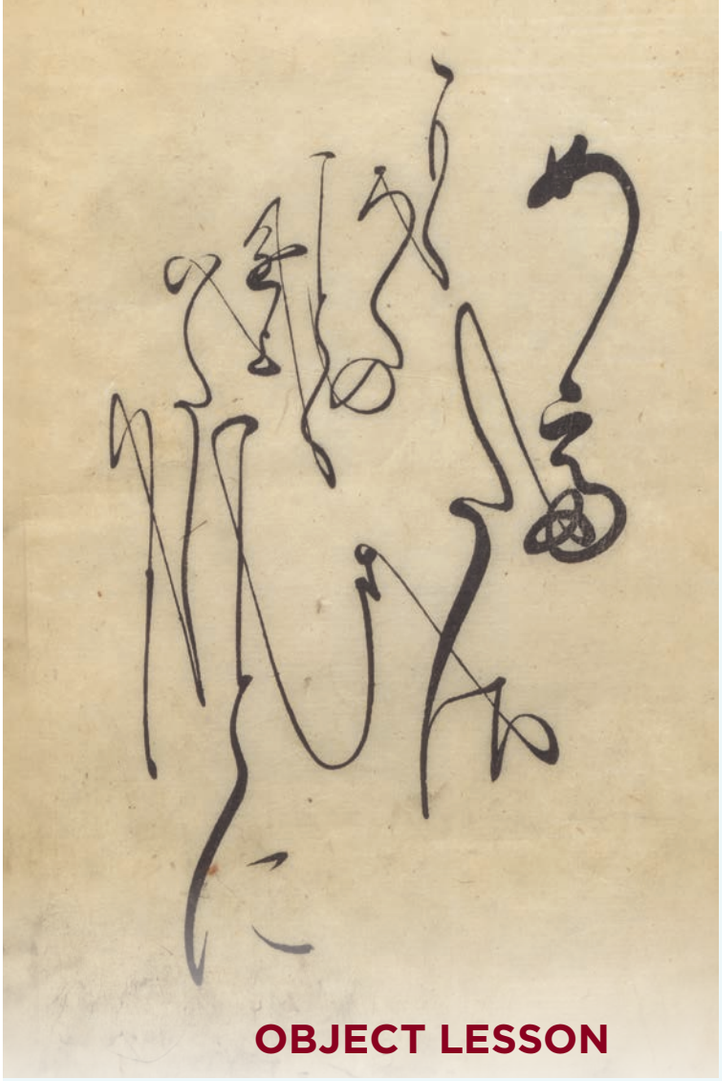
at tableau.uchicago.edu/newfaculty2024.

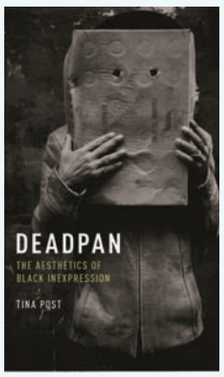


OBJECT LESSON

Eminent English Japanologist Peter Kornicki, the 2024 Paleography and the Book Visiting Scholar, says he has been delighted to discover several Japanese rarities in the Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, including an eighth-century Buddhist text translated phonetically from Sanskrit to Chinese and this 1714 woodblock-printed calligraphy manual intended for women.

SEE ALSO

Deadpan: The Aesthetics of Black Inexpression (New York University Press, 2022), by **Tina Post**, an assistant professor in English Language and Literature, has gained recognition for its exploration of emotional withholding in Black cultural production. The book has won a National Book Critics Circle Award and a Best Book Prize from the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present.



"I have found it remarkable how often, in the course of presenting this work, I have been asked whether deadpan is a strategy of resistance. My answer is generally 'Maybe.' Deadpan might enact deference or denial, quietude or aggression, resistance or acquiescence. Like any performance, it depends on the settings, the costumes, the dramaturgy, and the audience."

BY THE NUMBERS

The University's **Online Language Archive**—now fully digitized and available at ola.lib.uchicago.edu—is a critical resource for language preservation and research. Here are some facts and figures on the OLA.

232
Total languages, from every continent except Antarctica

5,472
Total hours of recordings

< 5
Native speakers of Dieri, an Indigenous language of South Australia represented in the OLA, as of the year 2021

2013
The year of death of the last native speaker of Yurok, an Indigenous language of Northern California represented in the OLA

1955
The year of a recording of the Lord's Prayer and some poetry in Manx, the native language of the Isle of Man. Manx was declared extinct in 2009, though it is making a comeback.

412
Number of tapes, on five-inch reels, in one collection featuring native speakers of Tzeltal and Tzotzil, two Mayan languages still spoken in southern Mexico, totaling 230 hours. UChicago Anthropology faculty and students made the recordings from 1956 to 1962, interviewing hundreds of native speakers in Mexican villages.

59
Years Joe Toth worked for the Language Laboratory, which evolved into the Digital Media Archive (DMA) and then the OLA

3
Formats for digital files, evolving with technology: DAT cassettes, CDs, and their current format of WAV/mp3 files. Prior to digitization, the recordings were on vinyl LPs, reel-to-reel tapes, and even aluminum cylinders and wax cylinders.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ONLINE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE
at tableau.uchicago.edu/ola.

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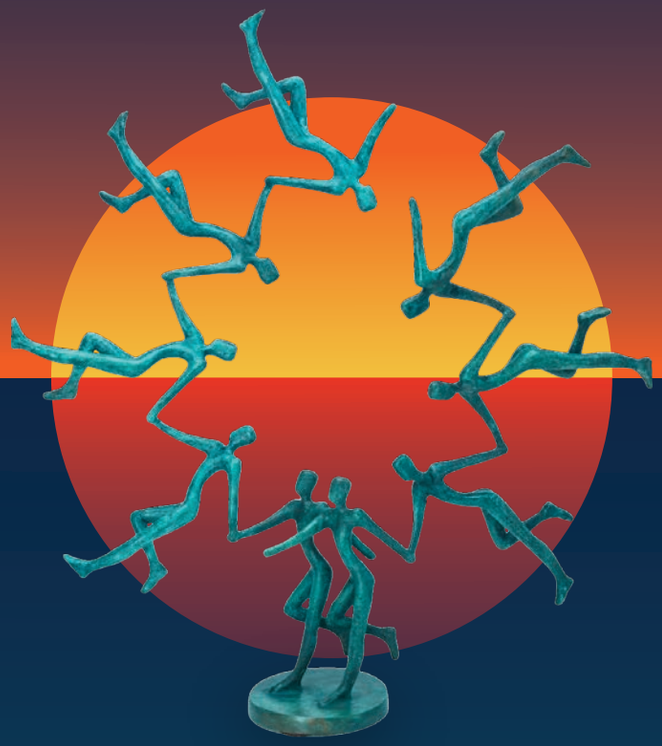
Berlin Family Lectures

The Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin Family Lectures bring to campus individuals who are making fundamental contributions to the arts, humanities, and humanistic social sciences for an extended series of annual lectures and development of a book for publication with the University of Chicago Press. In 2025, acclaimed opera and theater director Yuval Sharon will deliver three lectures on May 6, 13, and 20, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., which are free and open to the public, at the Logan Center for the Arts in Chicago. Through the theme ***Anarchy at the Opera***, Sharon will explore questions such as: Is opera a standard bearer or a pallbearer for the status quo? What can an anarchic opera do to challenge the status quo? What aspects of elitism can an anarchic opera undermine?

Sharon's lectures will be titled "The Joyful Anarchy of John Cage," "Improvisation and Excellence," and "Institutionalization." For more information, contact humanities@uchicago.edu or visit berlinfamilylectures.uchicago.edu.

CELEBRATING HUMANITIES DAY AND COMMEMORATING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LOGAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26

Join us as we celebrate what makes the arts and humanities distinctive at the University of Chicago. See and touch rare books from the Regenstein Library's Special Collections, and explore art and artifacts from the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures Museum, the Smart Museum, the Neubauer Collegium, and the Logan Center for the Arts. Listen to live music performed during the keynote session in Logan. Spend the entire day at Logan or explore other unique locations throughout campus. Explore topics such as Bob Dylan's bridges, Plato and Descartes on Halloween, serious games, interactive media performances, and the archaeology of Sinbad the Sailor from 11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

All events—interactive discussions, demonstrations, tours, and exhibits—are free and open to the public. Select sessions are available virtually.

Register today at humanitiesday.uchicago.edu.

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