

Summer 2016

# Expressions, Summer 2016 Mailer

San Jose State University, College of the Humanities and the Arts

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SJSU | COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND THE ARTS

# EXPRESSIONS

2016-2017



SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

## EXPRESSIONS

2016–2017 Newsletter

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# it's a DEAN'S LIFE



The College of Humanities and the Arts embarked on an exciting journey in 2016: we are now the proud operators of the city-owned **Hammer Theatre Center** in Downtown San José. The theatre, formerly known as “The Rep,” is a high-quality, 54,000-square-foot performing arts facility. In partnership with the city, we have made significant improvements to the Hammer. Our opening featured the internationally acclaimed film festival, **Cinequest**, and since then we have been busy hiring staff and building a calendar for the 2016–2017 season.

The Hammer represents a city-university partnership that promises to bring more economic and cultural activity to Downtown San José. Simultaneously, the project will expose San José State University’s 33,000 students to extraordinary artistic programming. Our commitment to the partnership will enhance students’ education in humanities and the arts, as well as in business, marketing, hospitality, and many

other disciplines at SJSU, the oldest public university in the West. A grant from the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** for activation of the Hammer Theatre represents the first external investment in the artistic and cultural activation of the Hammer and the surrounding plaza. We continue to look for more partners to support this amazing endeavor.

I am proud to report that we have more than 4,200 students majoring in humanities and the arts. In the last year alone, our students won accolades at **Cannes Film Festival**, national screenwriting competitions, and statewide research competitions. As you can see in the article about animation and illustration graduate Noah Klocek, our alumni continue to make significant social, artistic, and economic impacts on our communities and the world.

The success of our students and alumni is made possible by their hard work and by the dedication of 500

faculty and staff in the College of Humanities and the Arts. The accomplishments of these extraordinary people are too numerous to list, but include such impressive accolades as spatial artist Shannon Wright’s 2016 SVCcreates Artist Laureate Award; interior designer Virginia San Fratello’s Early Career Investigator Award; philosopher Michael Jordan’s Ethics and Bioethics Bowl team leadership; digital media artist Craig Hobbs’ Knight-funded Public Prototyping Festival; and pianist Gwendolyn Mok’s President’s Scholar Award.

I am grateful for the generous support of donors who believe in our mission and are inspired by our impact. Donations to the College of Humanities and the Arts in the past year have funded impactful opportunities. Your support has provided hundreds of scholarships for deserving students; enhanced our Humanities Honors program; created learning spaces as unique as the Calvin Seid lab for Industrial Design; helped send our choirs to Ireland for their third annual international tour; and supported the oldest college literary journal in the West, *Reed Magazine*.

As you will read in this edition of *Expressions*, an estate gift from former faculty member **Martha Heasley Cox** brought more than \$4.8 million to the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies. Major estate gifts like these ensure programming

for generations to come and help us increase our impact on our students and our community. Most importantly, they help us serve our students better year after year by enhancing the amount available to support infrastructure and programming.

We are so focused on student success in our college that even our publicity materials are student-produced. I hope you enjoy reading this student-created publication, and that you are inspired by what you see to get more involved with the college. If so, I invite you to sign up to receive our quarterly e-newsletters to stay apprised of our happenings by sending an email to **HUMANITIES-ARTS@SJSU.EDU**.

I am proud to work in public higher education and am grateful to everyone—faculty, staff, alumni, community members, and donors—who make it possible for us to educate 33,000 students at San José State University. Thank you for the role you play in supporting the College of Humanities and the Arts and for helping us touch the lives of thousands of students and community members every day!

In gratitude,

Lisa Vollendorf, Dean



*the hammer theatre 2.0:*  
**ALREADY MAKING AN  
IMPACT IN SAN JOSÉ**

It's hard to believe it, but the Hammer Theatre has been open since March 2016—and what a ride it has been! Operating in the heart of Downtown San José as a partnership between San José State University and the City of San José, the Hammer has already made a huge impact on the revitalization of the city center through an expansion of the arts, bringing dozens of performances and events to the people of San José, students and the public alike. The Hammer sits on the Paseo de

San Antonio, a vibrant pedestrian pathway that connects SJSU with the Tech Museum and bridges urban spaces from Saint James Park to the SOFA cultural district. The College of Humanities and the Arts has always been dedicated to high-impact involvement with our community; the Hammer Theatre continues our college's proud tradition.

The Hammer Theatre, named after former Mayor Susan Hammer and her husband Phil, was originally

created through a partnership between San José's Redevelopment Agency and the San José Repertory Theatre Company in 1997. Taking over operations in 2015, a dedicated team from SJSU worked tirelessly to upgrade, refurbish, and rebuild the performance space, reestablishing it as a top-notch venue in the downtown area. And what a venue! Sobrato Auditorium, the main performance stage of the Center, seats 532 people:

370 in the orchestra and parterre (the theatre floor behind the orchestra), and another 162 in the balcony. With an elevator pit, retractable panels, and newly updated technology including rigging, lighting, and sound systems, Hammer 2.0 is a premier performance space suited to a wide variety of public performances and creative encounters.

CREATE.  
IMAGINE.  
EMPOWER.

**CINEQUEST**  
FILM FESTIVAL

Highlights of events already hosted at the Hammer include:

**CINEQUEST:** Voted “Best Film Festival” in America by *USA Today* readers, the Cinequest Film Festival annually brings thousands of moviegoers from around the world to downtown San José for two weeks of films, panels, and premieres. The Hammer Theatre proudly showed a number of films during the 2016 Festival, including *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a short film produced by students from SJSU’s Department of Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre. Based on the 1892 short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* served as the Hammer’s opening event, bringing the work of our talented students to an international audience and beginning a Hammer tradition that links arts, education, our university, and the community we serve.

▶ Cinequest Film Festival at the Hammer Theatre



▶ Professor Aaron Lington directing the Jazz Orchestra

**SJSU’S JAZZ ORCHESTRA + LATIN JAZZ:**

San José State’s School of Music and Dance has some of the best Jazz ensembles in the region. On International Jazz Day, two of our student groups—the Jazz Orchestra directed by Aaron Lington and the Latin Jazz Ensemble led by Jeff Lewis—performed with San José Jazz on the Hammer main stage. This memorable collaboration treated community members to a world-class performance on a world-class stage. The Hammer looks forward to hosting more collaborative events featuring the School of Music and Dance.



▶ Professor Jeff Lewis directing the Latin Jazz Ensemble



SJSU students performing on International Jazz Day ▶

# CREATIVITY

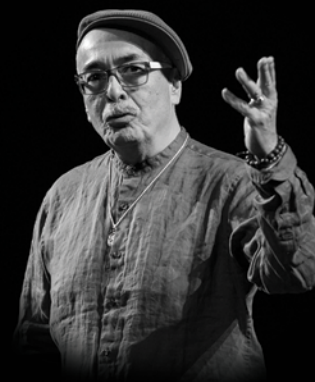
**CATALYST QUARTET:** The string core of the Sphinx Virtuosi (one of the nation's most dynamic and prestigious professional chamber orchestras), the Catalyst Quartet performed at the Hammer after holding a day of workshops with SJSU student musicians. Says Dr. Fred Cohen, Director of SJSU's School of Music and Dance, "The musicians in Catalyst Quartet are profound thinkers. They know how to put on a concert that matters and has meaning." Certainly those in attendance were in agreement with Dr. Cohen.

**LEGACY OF POETRY DAY:** Legacy of Poetry Day is an annual event during which schools, publishers, libraries, booksellers, and poets throughout the United States celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture. SJSU celebrated big this year with poetry readings in the Hammer from United States Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera, as well as California Poet Laureate Emeritus Al Young, San Francisco Poet Laureate Alejandro Murgia, Santa Clara Poet Laureate Arlene Biala, and others. The theme of this year's Legacy of Poetry Day celebration was "Ways and Ways to San José: A History of Santa Clara/Silicon Valley," a theme that comes from a poem by Al Young.

# COLLABORATION



▶ Catalyst Quartet performing at the Hammer Theatre



▶ United States Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera



▶ California Poet Laureate Emeritus Al Young

▶ Santa Clara Poet Laureate Arlene Biala



**PACHANGA ON THE PASEO:** Hammer Theatre events aren't limited to the theater itself; public performances also take place on the Paseo de San Antonio in front of the theater. "Pachanga on the Paseo," directed by Kinan Valdez and written by Luis and Kinan Valdez, was presented by the Department of Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre to coincide with Legacy of Poetry Day celebrations. A "pachanga" is both a party and a kind of dance. Featuring dance processions, parades, and musical theater, "Pachanga on the Paseo" drew upon the tradition of *Teatro Campesino*, an artistic movement of the United Farm Workers that used theater to inform, educate, and inspire outdoor audiences in public places.

**UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2016–2017:** The upcoming season will include SJSU productions of: *Corridos*, directed by Kinan Valdez; *Elijah*, directed by Layna Chianakas; and *Kaleidoscope*, a multidisciplinary showcase of our top talent in the School of Music and Dance. We also are pleased to welcome the Sphinx Virtuosi back this fall along with *Fiesta de Muertos*, co-produced with the Ballet Folklórico Mexicano.

In just a few months, the Hammer Theatre has already begun contributing to the arts scene of San José, touching the lives of students, faculty, and performers as well as the larger San José community. The Hammer Theatre represents San José State University's commitment to high-impact practices that enrich our community. By providing a world-class performance space in Downtown San José, the Hammer Theatre will provide Silicon Valley with high-quality arts and entertainment for many years. We hope that you will support the SJSU-Hammer initiative!

To learn more about the Hammer Theatre, upcoming events, or rental information, go to: <http://www.sjsu.edu/hammertheatre/>

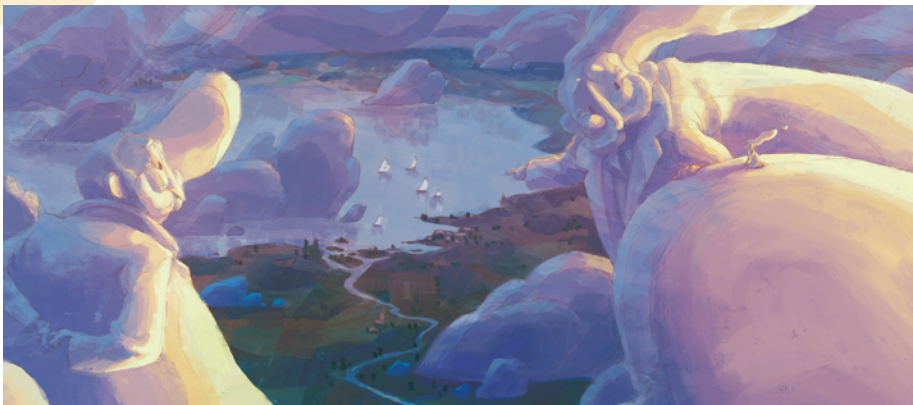


## animation/illustration: MAKING A DIFFERENCE BEYOND SJSU

Consistently ranked as one of the premier programs in the nation, the Animation and Illustration program at San José State is no stranger to success. Students regularly win prestigious national and international recognition at festivals, exhibitions, and screenings, and gain opportunities for employment at top studios and corporations. Graduates have gone on to work for companies like Apple, Disney, Electronic Arts (EA), Google, Lucasfilm, DreamWorks, and Pixar, to name a few, and have worked on feature films such as *Brave*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Star Wars*,

and many more, widening the impact that SJSU alumni are having on the film and game industry.

Noah Klocek, an artist and designer who graduated from the program in 2003, has worked for Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), DreamWorks, and Pixar, bringing to life animated films and shorts as well as picture books. Drawing inspiration from nature, his family, and the stories around him, Noah came to SJSU wanting to be a book illustrator, knowing very little about the animation industry, film design, or production. "I landed at



Artwork from *Cloud Country*,  
by Noah Klocek and Bonny Becker  
Image credit: imageblock.com



SJSU alumnus  
Noah Klocek

San José State just when the Animation/Illustration program was making a transition from book and editorial illustration into animation and film design," Noah recalled. "Along with an incredibly strong design skill set, SJSU's strongest effect on me and my career was carrying me along through the same transition from traditional illustration to development art and beyond." This transition would guide his career as he worked on his first project at Pixar Studios, *WALL·E*; he would go on to work on feature-length films such as *Brave*, *The Good Dinosaur*, and *Inside Out*, as well as the animated short *Partly Cloudy*, which was screened before Pixar's *Up*.

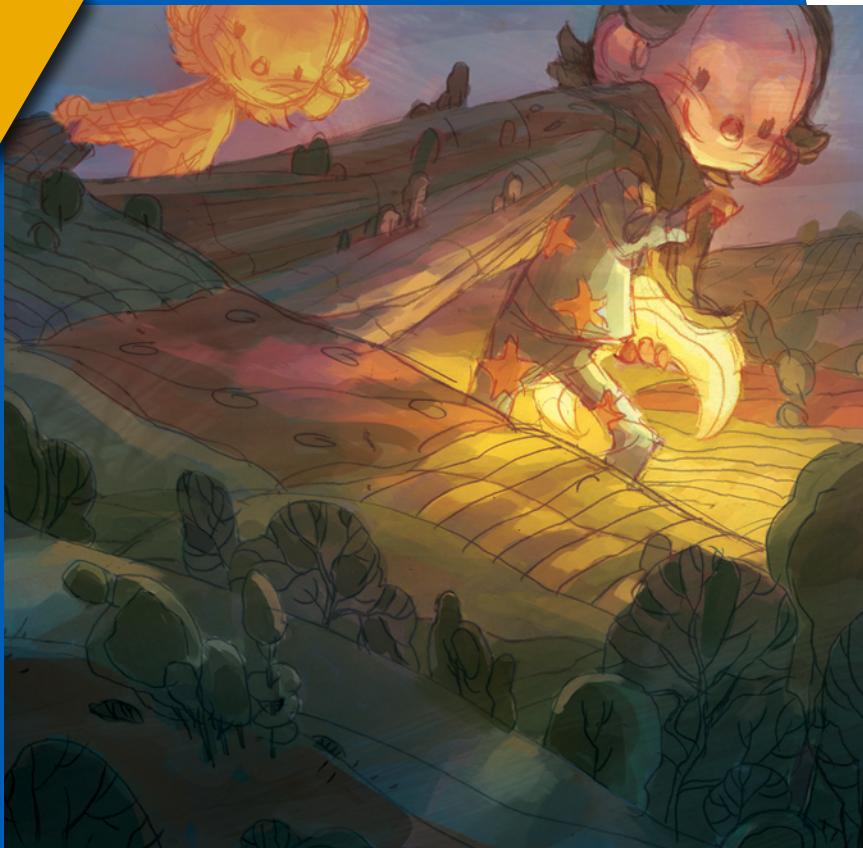


Illustration by Noah Klocek  
Image credit: imageblock.com

Noah's work in the film industry is done alongside his "passion project"—writing and illustrating picture books. He explains, "I strive to make the kind of books that I loved when I was young—books filled with drawings and paintings; books with characters and imagination and adventure." His first picture book, *Cloud Country*, was published in November 2015. As Noah went through the process of creating *Cloud Country*, he filled sketchbooks with drawings—*Cloud Country* would go through five complete versions before it was published. The dedication that Noah shows to his projects, both in the film industry and his own undertakings, is a testament to the rigor of SJSU's Animation and Illustration program.

"There is not a top-tier animation or video game studio I know of in the U.S.A. that does not have one or more SJSU alumni working with them," Noah remarked, highlighting the breadth of work and impact that SJSU graduates have on the entire industry. "The Animation and Illustration program at SJSU is something the University should be immensely proud of."

The Animation and Illustration program has also played a role in leading collaborations with other departments. Animation Professor David Chai is leading an interdisciplinary team to develop projects such as Green Ninja, an educational initiative designed to spark young people's interest in the science of and solutions associated with the changing climate. The project, which has garnered more than two million views on YouTube, brings faculty

and students from across the university together to make a difference, creating connections between the ever-growing SJSU community and the world around us. The College of Humanities and the Arts is proud that our programs provide students with an opportunity to gain the skills necessary to achieve excellence and effect social change through the arts.

You can check out more of Noah's work at [imageblock.com](http://imageblock.com). To see what Green Ninja is up to, visit [www.youtube.com/user/GreenNinjaTV](http://www.youtube.com/user/GreenNinjaTV).



Green Ninja Project

## *Martha Heasley Cox:* **A LEGACY OF GIVING**

The College of Humanities and the Arts is deeply grateful for a bequest from the estate of Martha Heasley Cox in the amount of \$4.8 million. The gift is dedicated to the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies, which houses one of the world's largest archives of materials related to John Steinbeck.

The Steinbeck Center grew out of Martha's single-minded commitment to Steinbeck's work. During her 34 years of teaching at SJSU, she focused her research on Steinbeck, and collected the materials that serve as the foundation for the Center's collection. Martha provided financial support for Center operations for many years, including the Center's signature Steinbeck Fellows Program, which provides emerging writers with a \$10,000 fellowship to finish a significant writing project. Approximately 75% of the bequest will

expand the Fellows program, which currently brings two to three scholars to campus per year to write and share their work. Thus far, the Center has hosted 38 Fellows, including writers of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

Associate Professor Nick Taylor, the Director of the Center for Steinbeck Studies, explains that the gift will bring the Steinbeck Fellows Program one step closer to Martha's vision. "Martha imagined that we would have enough money to bring all these people to campus—a fiction writer, a dramatist, a journalist, a marine biologist—and have them sit around a table and share their work." The bequest will allow the Center to greatly expand the program and invite a wider range of scholars to join the campus community as they further their work.



Martha Heasley Cox



▶ Martha leading a tour of Pacific Biological Laboratories (aka Doc Ricketts' Lab), Cannery Row, Monterey, 1975

Photo: Greta Manville



▶ Martha receiving the Tower Award from President Robert Caret



▶ Martha with Bruce Springsteen receiving the Steinbeck Award (1996)

The bequest will also allow the Center to expand its online secondary bibliography, a database that Martha dreamed would include “absolutely everything that’s ever been written about Steinbeck.” The bequest will allow the dedication of more resources to the project, working to realize Martha’s original vision.

“The true value of the vision of some people gets revealed years after they’re gone,” remarked Nick Taylor. “Martha was pretty insistent in her lifetime about what she wanted to do and what she wanted to accomplish. She proves that your work can

be continued on in exactly the same manner that you intended it long after you’re gone. All of the mechanisms are in place—endowments and physical spaces, collections, awards series. She was incredibly generous with the University; she loved this place. And she’ll never be forgotten.” Professor Cox’s generosity exemplifies the tremendous impact that a visionary donor can have on generations of students, faculty, and community members.

# thank you

## FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

To learn more about the College and how you can support our educational efforts, please contact:

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You also can make checks payable to the "Tower Foundation of SJSU" and mail to **MATTHEW TAYLOR SIEGEL**, Senior Director of Development, San José State University, One Washington Square, San José, CA 95192-0257.

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