

Laura Vena

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EDUCATION **Master of Fine Arts**, Creative Writing / Critical Studies, 05/08

California Institute of the Arts, Valencia CA

- Student Representative

Bachelor of Arts, English and Latin American Literature, 12/92

Loyola University, New Orleans, LA

- Dean's List, Honor Roll

EXPERIENCE **Teaching:** California Institute of the Arts, USC, Orange Coast College

Publishing: *TWO IF BY SEA* journal (Managing Editor & Co-Founder), *ENTROPY MAGAZINE* (Fiction Editor)

Book: *x / she: stardraped* (1913 Press First Book Award, Pushcart Prize Nominee)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

California Institute of the Arts —Valencia, CA

Fall 08- Present

Writing, Literature, Art & Culture (Critical Studies)

Design and teach creative and critical writing, literature, art, and culture courses that explore pluralistic literary practices and concentrate on developing skills in genre, technique, and representation in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Students have created scripts, poetry collections, dialectical journals, short fiction, graphic novels, hybrid texts, and films for the class.

USC—Los Angeles, CA

Spring 12-2014

Creative Writing

Taught graduate creative writing course, which concentrated on the ethical and aesthetic considerations of representation when working with documentary materials and writing fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Textual production included memoirs, scripts, graphic novels, poems, hybrid essays, and others.

Orange Coast College—Costa Mesa, CA

Spring 11-Present

Critical Writing & Literature

Teach Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition, a portfolio-based, introductory course in reading, writing, reflection, and discussion, emphasizing rhetorical analysis and strategies for conceiving, focusing, developing, and organizing writing, and Introduction to Critical Thinking in Literature.

Taking the Reins—Los Angeles, CA

09/06-05/12

Creative Writing & Photography

Taught a writing workshop for at-risk middle and high school students. Responsible for developing innovative pedagogical approaches to best inspire artistic production in a diverse group of students overcoming a number of social, educational, and economic challenges. Classes combined writing with photography, painting, mapmaking, performance and field studies, and resulted in exhibits and performances of student work.

List of Courses:

• **Intro to Creative Writing**

In this writing workshop, students integrate considerations of form, aesthetics, and social context into their writing practice, in the genres of fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, hybrid works, and / or drama. Through close reading in all genres, generative workshopping, and revision, students will produce and revise original work in the genre/s of their choice. The class also discusses the role of the artist in the world, with opportunities to explore the intersections between writing and other media/art forms, such as performance, digital media, visual art, and film.

- **Writing Culture**

For this graduate-level course, students practice various ethnographic and artistic approaches to writing from documentary materials, with close attention to issues of representation. Borrowing from the fields of anthropology, popular and cultural studies, and multi-cultural literature, students engage in an array of methodologies and approaches to artistic collaboration across cultures and difference. Readings include testimony, magical realism, trickster theory, dreamscapes, documentary poetics, and various forms of creative nonfiction.

- **A Collision of Voices: Fissure and Multiplicity in Latin American Literature**

This is a 300-level writing and reading course that engages with a tremendous range of works—manifestos, songs, testimonies, revolutionary accounts, poems, autobiographical texts, and performances—to investigate the pluralistic and hybrid nature of Latin American literary production. The course pays close attention to the dynamic history and politics of the region, as well as to the problematics of representation in multi-cultural environments marked by sharp socio-economic inequities. Responses include both analytical and creative works, as well as experimental translations and dialectical journals.

- **The Artist As Cartographer**

For this 300-level course, student artists will look to maps for aesthetic inspiration and to mapping as a conceptual mode for visual and written storytelling. Maps, traditionally understood as tools to help orient oneself within an environment, are also a form of storytelling—they are constructed narratives that represent how we see, translate, and package the world around us, and they are art, rich with coded visual language and meaning. From antiquity to the present day, maps have been subjective, distorted, and often beautiful, representations of the mapmaker's own particular view of the world. There are maps of the stars, of the brain, of sacred hunting grounds, of the body, of secret places. The course combines literary and theoretical readings, confronts concepts of cultural relativism, and experiments with conceptual constraints in a way that will stretch students both artistically and critically.

- **Fabulous Writing: Fusions of the Everyday, Fantastic, Mythical, and Nightmarish**

Students read and produce works that fuse the everyday, fantastic, mythical, and nightmarish, in renderings that blur traditional distinctions between “genre” and “serious” literature. Students experiment with a multiplicity of practices: fantasy, magical realism, gothic literature, the surreal, mythology, and science fiction, incorporating their elements into new works of both fiction and nonfiction.

- **Special Topics: Music, Culture, & Politics in Latin American Culture**

A 100-level course that examines a variety of musical styles from Latin America, while analyzing the political and historical context in which the music developed. The course tracks how artistic output is inexorably intertwined with the political currents of Latin America by exploring the ways in which historical events—such as slavery, colonialism, the shift to the city, industrialization, imperialism, intervention, and revolution—have influenced music, and how music in turn influences political and social events. Students look closely at the dynamics of ethnicity, race, and history, and seek to better understand the collision of cultures that created the rich musical styles and movements that are a product of this cultural exchange. Finally, the course investigates how the effects of globalization and cross pollination have impacted the music of the region and seeped outward, and how syncretism takes place within each country, as well as regionally, and in the world at large.

- **CAP Creative Writing Workshop**

This is a Creative Writing class for at-risk inner-city youth through the Community Arts Partnership Program. Workshops included interdisciplinary practices to help stimulate student expression and production, such as map-making techniques for the creation of poetic body maps, Polaroid photography and ethnographic fieldwork, and scrapbooking with sensory writing. Seminars end with performances, exhibits, and a student-published chapbook.

PUBLISHING EXPERIENCE & PUBLICATIONS

Partial List of Publications:

- Books:

x/she: stardraped, published Winter 2018, chosen by John Keene as the 1913 Press First Place Winner and nominated for a Pushcart Prize by Debra di Blasi. The book consists of a series of overlapping journeys—spiritual, cultural, linguistic, cartographic, geographical, psychic—mapping onto what was and has become the landscapes we know as Los Angeles and Southern California, most specifically along the L.A. River.

East of East: The Making of Greater El Monte (essay anthology)—2019

Rockhaven: A History of Interiors (print anthology)—2017

The Dirty Fabulous, Jaded Ibid Press (print)—2013

- Journals:

Bombay Gin Vol. 41 (print)—2015, *KCET Online Magazine*—2015-present (articles), *Devouring the Green* (print)—2015,

Entropy (reviews & original essays)—2014-current, *Public Access Journal*—Winter 2012, *Antennae*—Spring 2012, *Super*

Arrow (narrative maps)—Spring 2012, *Tarpaulin Sky* (visual poetry)—Fall 2010, *Black Clock*—Fall 2010, *In Posse Review*

(excerpt from *x/she: stardraped*)—Fall 2009, *HTML Giant* (reviews & essays)—10/11, Editor Debra Di Blasi, *[out of nothing]*

(translations)—January 2009

TWO IF BY SEA—Los Angeles, CA

December 2018-Present

Managing Editor & Co-Founder

Two If By Sea is a fine arts print and online journal that publishes water-related TEXT, SOUND, & VISUAL ART that encourages translations and international submissions; works that feature or figure signals, codes, or ciphers; communications that are adrift; works that reference displacement (of language, of culture), eroding borders, erosion. The journal is equally interested in works of a fantastic nature as in those that investigate the ethical and aesthetic considerations of how the ocean / open seas / water bodies have been victim to, and location of imperialism and displacement.

ENTROPY MAGAZINE—Los Angeles, CA

March 2014-Present

Fiction Editor

Responsible for reviewing, choosing, editing, and laying out all fictional works submitted to *Entropy Magazine*, an online journal and community space featuring literary and related non-literary content. *Entropy* seeks to create a space where writers can engage with other writers, participate in a literary community, and where writers can feel safe and included. *Entropy* especially strives to support marginalized voices and identities through publishing, offering resources, and community building, through engaging in topics such as small press literature, video games, graphic novels, interactive literature, science fiction, fantasy, music, film, art, poetry, and other topics in addition to literary reviews, interviews, conversations, essays, and articles on experimental literature, translation, small press practices, and performance.

Civil Coping Mechanism—Los Angeles, CA

March 2016

Book Editor

Responsible for editing and reviewing manuscript, overseeing publication process, including book & cover design, soliciting blurbs, booking interviews, and promoting book.

Black Clock—Los Angeles, CA

September 07-March 10

Production Editor

Responsible for overseeing production schedule, copyediting process, communication with writers and artists, and the printing process of the literary journal, *Black Clock*, a magazine that was dedicated to fiction, poetry and creative essays that explored the frontier territory of constructive anarchy. *Black Clock* was audacious rather than safe, visceral rather than academic, intellectually engaging rather than antiseptically cerebral, and not above fun. Produced by writers for writers, *Black Clock* encourages risk and eschews editorial interference.

CURATORIAL AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

TWO IF BY SEA Journal & Press (Co-Founder & Managing Editor): www.twoifbyseapress.org

BLOCKHEAD BRIGADE, Community Outreach & Animal Welfare Organization (Founder & Creative Director):
www.blockheadbrigade.org

Avenue 50 Studio, Highland Park, Poetry Coordinator (Curator)

STROPHE, Co-Director and Curator: Founder of an interdisciplinary arts organization that creates liaisons between artists and disciplines through fostering conversations and collaborations with ongoing workshops and exhibits throughout the city of Los Angeles.

Pasadena Museum of History Docent Trainer—Lead Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Training Series

Selected Conferences & Reading Events:

- &NOW Writing Conference (upcoming, 2019)—Panelist for RAD! Residencies, a critical-creative literary event in the spirit of alternative artistic and knowledge making practices, that bring together three points of convergence: poetics, curation, and literary community building.
- New Orleans Poetry Festival (2018)—Panelist & Chair for Bone, Memory, Muscle, Joint: The Embodied Poetics of Walking
- Poetic Research Bureau—RAD Residencies with Gillian Osborne, Women's Center For Creative Work for the reading series UNSCHOOLING, Artworks Pasadena for STAY LIT, Pop-Hop Books
- &NOW Writing Conference (2016)—Presenter, *Resonances & Repetitions: Poetic Reverie and Space* (Paper titled "You May No Longer Recognize Your Sediments: Seismologies of the Self and Other Bodies"—Published on *Entropy*)
- Day of the Dead Reading: Picture This Gallery (2015), CicLAvia LA River Reading Event— a spiritual, cultural, linguistic mapping the poetry of the River
- CalArts Working Artist Series Seminar—Presenter (2013)
- Southwest/Texas Popular & American Culture Associations 30th Annual Conference (2011)—Presenter and Panel Chair, *Extratextual: The Alchemy of Interdisciplinary Writings*
- UC San Diego &NOW Conference (2011)—Panelist, *The Mad Science of Narrative: Temporal Horizons and Neurological Transcendence*

REFERENCES

Jon Wagner, Director, CalArts MFA Writing / Critical Studies Program • jwagner@calarts.edu • 323-782-1861

Brent Blair, Director, Applied Theatre Arts Program, USC • bblair@usc.edu • 323-356-2552

Karin Johansson, Professor of Photography, Moorpark College, Former Assistant Director of Taking the Reins
• Kjohansson@vcccd.edu • 323-712-1463

Mady Schutzman, Professor, CalArts MFA Writing / Critical Studies (Retired) • mschutzm@calarts.edu • 661-253-7803

Josefa Salmón, Professor, Spanish and Latin American Literature and Culture, Loyola University, New Orleans
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