

BARD COLLEGE

ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THIRD

COMMENCEMENT



The Bard College Awards Ceremony

Friday

the twenty-sixth of May

two thousand twenty-three

6:30 p.m.

*Sosnoff Theater, Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York*

PROGRAM

Welcome

Jane Andromache Brien '89
Director, Alumni/ae Affairs, Bard College

Remarks

KC Serota '04
President, Board of Governors, Bard College Alumni/ae Association

Leon Botstein
President, Bard College

James C. Chambers '81
Chair, Board of Trustees, Bard College

The Bard Medal

Roland J. Augustine

James C. Chambers '81
Trustee Sponsor

Nayland Blake '82
Faculty Sponsor

The John and Samuel Bard Award in Medicine and Science

Babacar Cisse '03

Juliet Morrison '03
Trustee Sponsor

Swapan Jain
Faculty Sponsor

The Charles Flint Kellogg Award in Arts and Letters

Layli Long Soldier MFA '14

Elizabeth Ely '65
Trustee Sponsor

Ann Lauterbach
Faculty Sponsor

The John Dewey Award for Distinguished Public Service

Tom Begich '82

Stanley A. Reichel '65
Trustee Sponsor

Simon Gilhooley
Faculty Sponsor

Ting Ting Cheng '02

Hilary Pennington
Trustee Sponsor

Erin Cannan
Faculty Sponsor

The Mary McCarthy Award

Katherine Boo

Barbara S. Grossman '73
Trustee Sponsor

Dominique Townsend
Faculty Sponsor

The Bardian Award

Sanjib Baruah

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Michelle Murray
Faculty Sponsor

Laura Battle

Brandon Weber '97
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Laurie Dahlberg
Faculty Sponsor

Michèle D. Dominy

Brandon Weber '97
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Deirdre d'Albertis
Faculty Sponsor

Ellen Driscoll

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Daniella Dooling
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Robert Kelly

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Mary Caponegro '78
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Michael Lerner

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Steven Mazie
Faculty Sponsor

Lucy Sante

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Marina van Zuylen
Faculty Sponsor

Jean Wagner

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Miriam Felton-Dansky
Faculty Sponsor

Li-hua Ying
(posthumous)

Brandon Weber '97
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Nate Shockey
Faculty Sponsor

Closing
KC Serota '04

THE BARD MEDAL

Roland J. Augustine

Activists recognize that, at every moment, we have some capacity to effect positive change in the world around us if we are willing to look for it. They grasp the tools at hand rather than waiting for the perfect circumstance to arrive. Over the course of 72 years, Roland Augustine has both traveled the world and simply crossed the Hudson River, building a career that traversed multiple organizations while always looking for ways to transform them into tools for positive change. Born in Kingston, New York, he grew up with the familial examples of mutual aid and charitable work that laid the groundwork for his own development. He graduated from Georgetown University's School of Business in 1972 and went on to study music and art at SUNY Purchase.

Augustine pursued a career in the art world, and in 1985 he cofounded Luhring Augustine Gallery with Lawrence R. Luhring. The gallery's program was eclectic and international from its inception. Augustine also served as the president of the Art Dealers Association of America from 2006 to 2009 and used that platform to lobby the federal government for equitable taxation laws for artists, an effort that led to his friendship with the late Representative John Lewis. He also served as a board president for the artist-centered nonprofit Printed Matter and acted as an adviser for Bard's Center for Curatorial Studies.

In 2005, Augustine joined Bard's Board of Trustees. In addition to serving as chair of the Nominating and Development Committees and playing a leading role in the College's billion-dollar endowment campaign, he has devoted his talents to Bard College Berlin (BCB), where his efforts have emphasized supporting refugees from Syria, providing scholarships, and bringing awareness to the needs of refugee scholars. He has also focused on the Bard Prison Initiative, explicitly drawing a link between the carceral infrastructure of the Hudson Valley and the plight of displaced persons globally, a connection he realized while working on the ground with refugees in Calais. The Program for International Education and Social Change, which Augustine established at BCB in 2015 for students from areas of crisis and conflict, many of whom have

been forcibly displaced, has so far provided 66 students from Afghanistan, Brazil, Eritrea, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen with access to a liberal arts education.

Activist. Humanist. Gallerist. Philanthropist. We celebrate Roland Augustine's friendship and, more importantly, his deep commitment to a better society through civic engagement and the arts.

James C. Chambers '81
Trustee Sponsor

Nayland Blake '82
Faculty Sponsor

The Bard Medal honors individuals whose efforts on behalf of Bard and whose achievements have significantly advanced the welfare of the College. The Bard Medal was the inspiration of Charles Flint Kellogg '31, who believed that Bard should establish an award recognizing outstanding service to the College.

THE JOHN AND SAMUEL BARD AWARD
IN MEDICINE AND SCIENCE

Babacar Cisse '03

Dr. Babacar Cisse is a renowned neurosurgeon and scholar who conducts high-impact research on brain tumors. The education system in Senegal, where Cisse was born, did not allow him to study science in high school. Despite that limitation, he went on to become a Distinguished Scientist Scholar at Bard. During his scholarship interview, Cisse recalled saying, “I know that my background is not the typical background here, but . . . I hope to do well if you give me the opportunity.” At Bard, he won numerous awards including the Griffiths Award for Excellence in Chemistry and earned his chemistry degree. Cisse left a lasting impression on his peers and professors, who describe him as a gregarious, highly motivated, conscientious, hyper-focused, and kind human being.

After graduating, Cisse joined the Medical Scientist Training Program at the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University. He earned his MD and PhD with distinction and completed his neurological surgery residency at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medicine and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Since 2017, Cisse has been an attending neurosurgeon at NewYork-Presbyterian. In his clinical practice, he performs a range of surgical procedures on primary and metastatic brain and spinal tumors. He focuses on achieving the safest clinical outcomes for his patients by using modern tools such as advanced imaging, neuronavigation, motor and speech mapping, ultrasound technology, and other minimally invasive techniques.

In 2017, Cisse was appointed assistant professor at Weill Cornell Medicine Brain and Spine Center and clinical faculty at the Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute. In his laboratory, Cisse is principal investigator on studies of interactions between the immune system and brain tumors. His research focuses on glioblastoma to understand how brain tumors develop and grow, and to identify cellular targets against which therapeutic agents can be developed.

He has received funding from the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense. Cisse serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Neuro-Oncology*, and his work has been published in highly reputable peer-reviewed journals including *Cell*, *Clinical Cancer Research*, and *Journal of Neurosurgery*.

Babacar Cisse continues to give back to the community, in New York and Senegal, through health care seminars and workshops. “I found in medicine a niche where I can make everlasting changes in people’s lives,” Cisse said. His professional career and personal qualities epitomize the characteristics of the John and Samuel Bard Award in Medicine and Science.

Juliet Morrison '03
Trustee Sponsor

Swapan Jain
Faculty Sponsor

The John and Samuel Bard Award in Medicine and Science is named after two 18th-century physicians, father and son, whose descendant, John Bard, was the founder of Bard College. This award honors scientists whose achievements demonstrate the breadth of concern and depth of commitment that characterized these pioneer physicians.

THE CHARLES FLINT KELLOGG AWARD
IN ARTS AND LETTERS

Layli Long Soldier MFA '14

Layli Long Soldier belongs to the Oglala Lakota Nation. She received her BFA from the Institute of American Indian Arts before entering Bard's interdisciplinary MFA in writing in 2011. At Bard, Long Soldier found herself estranged from her landscape, culture, and community; she spent her first two summers (of a three-summer program) as an observing presence, listening and watching, rarely speaking, except to share her ongoing work with her new cohort of aspiring writers and artists. By her third summer in Annandale, she had awakened in the community an awareness of the specific history, language, and cultural traditions of the Lakota Nation. Her final thesis engaged President Obama's 2009 Apology to all Native Peoples, a congressional resolution created in response to the history of genocidal policies and actions the United States federal government had enacted.

In 2017, *Whereas*—the series of poems that began as her thesis—was published by Graywolf Press to great acclaim. A finalist for the National Book Award in Poetry, it won the National Book Critics Circle Award and the 2018 PEN/Jean Stein Book Award. The poems in *Whereas* braid stories from Long Soldier's own life as a daughter and mother into the language of public address, palpably demonstrating the resolution's failure to assuage the inheritance of suffering of the Lakota people. The PEN judges commented, "An elegant and fierce introspection defines this volume of poetry, as does a rectifying spirit of restless invention. The deep wound in the American psyche is genocide; and here, Long Soldier skillfully disrupts easy abridgments that render that inheritance a simple matter of an official Apology."

Long Soldier has been awarded a National Artist Fellowship from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, a Lannan Fellowship for Poetry, and a Whiting Award. Her creative work has continued to engage both writing and visual installation, often in collaboration with other native artists; she has become an eloquent spokesperson for her community and its living arts traditions. In 2022,

she gave a talk at the Open Society University Network's Center for Human Rights and the Arts, "My Art is a Being: Building a Relationship to Art through Agreement, Ethics, and Pleasure." In it, she spoke of having "regard" for her work and said, "I clear the space as if I were with a guest or a friend." We are honored and happy to welcome Layli Long Soldier back to Bard.

Elizabeth Ely '65
Trustee Sponsor

Ann Lauterbach
Faculty Sponsor

The Charles Flint Kellogg Award in Arts and Letters is given in recognition of significant contributions to the American artistic or literary heritage. It honors Charles Flint Kellogg '31, an internationally respected historian and educator, and Bard College trustee. Kellogg was instrumental in establishing the award, which, before his death, was given in the name of noted journalist and biographer Albert Jay Nock (class of 1892), who was also a College faculty member.

THE JOHN DEWEY AWARD FOR
DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE

Tom Begich '82

Alaska-born Tom Begich returned West after graduating from Bard to embark on a life of music and politics, culminating in three terms of service in the Alaska Senate with two as the minority leader. Prior to assuming office, Begich was a fixture in Alaskan Democratic politics, working as aide to two Alaska State House majority leaders and as the chief of staff to the Alaska State Senate Caucus chair. Before entering office, Begich had been an advocate for education, acting as a government affairs director for the Coalition for Education Equity, and for juvenile justice through work with Reclaiming Futures.

Begich carried those interests, and particularly that of education, into office with him, insisting, “you cannot have a great state without a great education system.” Working from the Committee on Education to fight cuts to Alaska’s education budget, secure universal pre-K education, and craft legislation to facilitate early literacy intervention, Begich sought to protect and enhance Alaskans’ access to education. His efforts culminated in the Alaska Reads Act in 2022, which furthered the Alaska constitution’s commitment to the provision of public education for all children of the state.

But great education does not end with formal schooling, and Begich has been an equally strong advocate for public understanding of history and the institutional governance of his state. He successfully sponsored bills to secure recognition of Black History Month and to enshrine April 24 as Vic Fischer and Jack Coghill Constitution of the State of Alaska Day.

As he stepped down from his position in the Alaska State Senate, Begich wrote: “If there is that moment when you say, ‘This is the work of my life,’ then I have found it in fighting to hold on to that vision of who we are and how we are as neighbors and fellow citizens of a great democracy.” Such a sentiment echoes the values of John Dewey, after whom this award is named. Indeed, one would

be pushed to find a better representation of Dewey’s values than in Begich’s life’s work, dedicated as it has been to public service in the defense of education as the foundation of a democratic society.

Stanley A. Reichel '65
Trustee Sponsor

Simon Gilhooley
Faculty Sponsor

The John Dewey Award for Distinguished Public Service was established in 1990 to recognize extraordinary contributions by Bard alumni/ae and others to the public sector or in the public interest. It continues Bard’s tradition of honoring public service embodied in the Episcopal Layman Award, which was given until 1983. The award honors John Dewey, father of progressive education and advocate of a system of universal learning to advance this country’s democratic traditions.

THE JOHN DEWEY AWARD FOR
DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE

Ting Ting Cheng '02

Ting Ting Cheng has always been a boundary pusher: a self-effacing, social justice leader whose fierceness has earned her multiple accolades, including the Amy Biehl Award and designation as a “troublemaker” by TroubleMakers, an organization featuring women “who cause trouble to change the world.” Cheng immigrated to the United States from China at the age of nine, her human rights lens already forming through the influence of her two very different grandmothers; her paternal grandmother was one of the first women to earn a law degree in China, and her maternal grandmother was a farmer and community advocate with no formal education. Cheng is an advocate who believes deeply that “there’s a story in every life and everyone’s life story is inspiring.”

Studying human rights and music at Bard, Cheng developed a framework for understanding fundamental freedoms and was deeply influenced by international human rights law. She earned a law degree from the City University of New York School of Law, where she received the Frank Durkan Fellowship for work dedicated to human rights.

After receiving her law degree, Cheng clerked at the Constitutional Court of South Africa for Justices Albie Sachs and Edwin Cameron, and she interned with the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Center for Constitutional Rights, and Civil Rights Bureau of the New York State Attorney General’s Office. She went on to advocate for immigrants as a public defender at Brooklyn Defender Services and litigate gender discrimination cases at Legal Momentum, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing women’s rights. Cheng also served as the legal director of the Women’s March on Washington on January 21, 2017, helping to organize the largest single-day protest in US history.

Cheng is currently the director of the Equal Rights Amendment Project at Columbia Law School’s Center for Gender and Sexuality Law. She develops expert legal guidance and conducts rigorous academic research on the Equal Rights Amendment and its role in advancing the larger cause of gender-based justice. Cheng has written for a range of publications and has offered commentary for numerous media outlets including CNN, NPR, *New York Magazine*, *Bloomberg*, and *The 19th*.

Cheng has spent her career advocating for marginalized communities while disrupting and intercepting systems of injustice. In her words, “We must address the random forces that exist outside of an individual’s control that dictate assigned social roles despite individual talents.”

Hilary Pennington
Trustee Sponsor

Erin Cannan
Faculty Sponsor

The John Dewey Award for Distinguished Public Service was established in 1990 to recognize extraordinary contributions by Bard alumni/ae and others to the public sector or in the public interest. It continues Bard’s tradition of honoring public service embodied in the Episcopal Layman Award, which was given until 1983. The award honors John Dewey, father of progressive education and advocate of a system of universal learning to advance this country’s democratic traditions.

THE MARY McCARTHY AWARD

Katherine Boo

It is rare to encounter an investigative journalist with a novelist's sensibility and flair for storytelling. Katherine Boo proves the exception in her longform narrative nonfiction. Boo's deeply researched accounts of poverty and inequality are full of evocative descriptions and gripping dialogue that read like fiction. When reading Boo, one often wishes the stories she tells *were* fiction, given their demonstration of systemic injustice and human failure.

Invisible Lives, Invisible Deaths, the series of articles in the *Washington Post* for which Boo earned a Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2000, is painful to read and must have been much more painful to document. Boo investigated for-profit group homes for people with developmental disabilities in Washington, DC. Her reporting provides abundant evidence of mistreatment, neglect, and corruption in spaces meant to care for people. Boo was groundbreaking in her commitment to documenting these stories, exposing a kind of open secret. The series conveys horrible abuses but respects the resilience, humanity, and humor of the group homes' residents.

Widely lauded, Boo won a MacArthur "Genius Grant" in 2002 and the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 2012 for *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. That book reflects the years she spent reporting on children and families living in a "slum" near the Mumbai airport who grapple with grave poverty and social inequality in the midst of India's growing middle class. The book is loving without being sentimental, unflinching without being overwrought, and relentless without being manipulative. The weight of the injustice and the countless consequences of such a skewed distribution of wealth and opportunity are laid bare through the personal stories of individuals the reader comes to feel they know.

Boo's work is extraordinary for the care and endurance it demonstrates. She perseveres with years of field research, meticulously recording rich descriptions of the settings she investigates. She never oversteps to editorialize or sentimentalize. She doesn't project or judge, but rather witnesses with an

unflinching attention that is almost agonizing. The experience of interiority readers experience, and the chance to connect affectively with her interlocutors, comes not through Boo's imagination but through yearslong attention to the communities she connects to and documents. Boo's aim, in her words, is "to make readers with power engage more deeply in the dilemmas of people without power." Indeed, she does.

Barbara S. Grossman '73
Trustee Sponsor

Dominique Townsend
Faculty Sponsor

The Mary McCarthy Award is given in recognition of engagement in the public sphere by an intellectual, artist, or writer. Mary McCarthy taught at Bard from 1946 to 1947 and again in the 1980s. The award honors the combination of political and cultural commitment exemplified by this fearless, eloquent writer and teacher.

THE BARDIAN AWARD

Sanjib Baruah

Sanjib Baruah arrived at Bard in 1983. Throughout his career he has distinguished himself as a leading scholar of India and its borderlands, and an inspiring teacher and mentor to generations of students.

Though trained as a political scientist at the University of Chicago, Baruah conducts research that transcends disciplinary boundaries, taking inspiration from and finding resonances with anthropologists, historians, sociologists, policymakers, and other area specialists. He is at once a political theorist, comparativist, ethnographer, historian, and policy analyst. His writing traces the roots of our contemporary political formations all while recognizing the contingency of history and the configurations of global power that make our present possible. And he encourages us, by the force of his own example, not to limit our ideas to the hallways of the academy but to contribute to debates in the public sphere. Indeed, Baruah has proven himself to be a leading public voice on a range of policy matters.

Baruah's most recent book, *In the Name of the Nation: India and Its Northeast*, explores the tensions and paradoxes intrinsic to India's northeastern borderlands. The third in a trilogy of influential books, *In the Name of the Nation* shows how the afterlives of colonialism and limitations of the nation as a political form contribute to a particular kind of security politics in India's Northeast that leaves the region destabilized by violence. Critics praised this award-winning book for its rich historical sensibility, lucid prose, and urgent message about the fragility of democracy in our contemporary moment.

In the classroom, Baruah embodied the values of liberal arts education. He taught broadly, incorporating the wider social sciences and humanities into his pedagogy. His courses taught students to think critically and encouraged them to take positions on complex problems. When racial justice protests erupted across the country in summer 2020, Baruah designed a course on the politics of race in the United States; he wanted his teaching to speak to the moment. As a

Senior Project adviser, he gave his students the freedom to chase an idea to see where it might lead them, instilling in them the value of understanding learning as an ongoing process.

Today we celebrate Sanjib Baruah for his fierce intellectual spirit and commitment to ideas, and the example he set as a teacher and a scholar. He has left his mark on the Politics Program and on Bard. And for that we are all better.

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Michelle Murray
Faculty Sponsor

The Bardian Award formalizes the Bard College Alumni/ae Association's tradition of honoring the service of longtime members of the Bard community.

THE BARDIAN AWARD

Laura Battle

Having spent part of her childhood living in Egypt, Laura Battle is stamped with the character of an explorer. Perhaps this experience helped prime her for a lifelong fascination with the wide visual world—its cultural geographies, but also its surfaces, forms, and colors. Her attention is drawn toward the infinite space of the sky, but also to the surprising things that hide in plain sight; she is as much a mushroom hunter as a sky watcher.

Laura’s art is based in subtlety and restraint, where contemplative choices of color, line, and shape seem to go beyond terms like “balance” and “harmony” to something more like mathematical proofs. But her explorations of geometries and plottable points also gesture toward metaphysical and spiritual equivalents. She walks a Möbius loop of contraries: restless and focused, metaphysical and material, and, as she says, “knowing and imagining.” While she continues her practice as a painter and artist in works on paper, Laura has also recently turned to sculpture, creating elegant columns composed of ceramic elements bearing diagrams and ciphers. Installed in a landscape, they suggest pieces of arcane wisdom—machines for answering questions we don’t yet know to ask. Inspired by the Jantar Mantar, the eighteenth-century astronomical instruments of India, Laura has relished this plunge into new territory, which has required not only a conceptual shift from two to three dimensions but has meant teaching herself a whole new set of materials and skills.

In a word, Laura is game. This quality has made her a beloved teacher and mentor. After earning her BFA at the Rhode Island School of Design and MFA at Yale University School of Art, Laura joined Bard’s Studio Arts Program in 1986, becoming a linchpin of painting and drawing. Painting classes are always in high demand, but Laura was never content to teach drawing as a “foundation” for other art practices; she taught drawing as an end in itself, a medium with its own unique possibilities, which she has practiced obsessively.

Teaching and advising students for nearly forty years, Laura has earned a reputation as a teacher who pulls no punches: honest, pragmatic, tough, and staunchly supportive, a well of sage and practical advice who has modeled the kind of all-in work ethic necessary to be an artist. Our deepest thanks go to Laura Battle for sharing her creative and pedagogical life with the wide Bard community.

Brandon Weber ’97
Trustee Sponsor

Laurie Dahlberg
Faculty Sponsor

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Michèle D. Dominy

It is hard to imagine anyone appointed to the faculty over the last two generations who has made a more lasting contribution to the life of the College than Michèle D. Dominy.

Since her 1981 arrival in Annandale, Dominy has exemplified the ideal of the scholar-teacher so often aspired to but rarely achieved in the groves of academe. Uniquely inspiring to young researchers, she has mentored others throughout her career with precision, discernment, and generosity, understanding well what is needed to sustain a lifetime of critical inquiry. With the establishment in 2015 of the Michèle Dominy Award for Teaching Excellence, her legacy as an educator lives on as we consider annually who best attains excellence in the classroom according to the standards Dominy herself set for nearly four decades.

Born in the United Kingdom, Dominy's intellectual life has been shaped by a strong sense of curiosity about, and connection with, ideas of belonging that influenced her undergraduate studies at Bryn Mawr College and graduate work in anthropology at Cornell University. With exquisite awareness and attention, she carries with her an abiding interest in how identit(ies) are constituted in relation to a sense of place. As an ethnographer, Dominy traveled to pastoral, high-country sheep stations in New Zealand and Australia to study place attachment and land contestation, culminating in *Calling the Station Home: Place and Identity in New Zealand's High Country*. Her current research, connecting anthropology of place and environment with colonial and postcolonial ecologies, has taken her to Darjeeling, Devon, and New Zealand to explore the anthropology of plants in the British diaspora.

No account of Dominy's life and work at Bard would be complete without reference to the transformative impact of her tenure as vice president and dean of the College from 2001 to 2015. She embraced challenges and championed diversity and equity in the student experience as well as among the faculty as a whole.

A founding book review editor for the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Dominy was among the dedicated visionaries who built what is now the Gender and Sexuality Studies concentration at Bard. She oversaw unprecedented curricular innovation in support of her vision of Bard as an ever-evolving place of belonging. For all those fortunate enough to serve with her, Michèle D. Dominy models impeccable professional and personal standards of conduct both within the bounds of the College and in the wide world beyond.

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Deirdre d'Albertis
Faculty Sponsor

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Ellen Driscoll

At her core, Ellen Driscoll is an ardent and persistent advocate. Using her witty vernacular, Ellen speaks truth to power through her art, teaching, activism, and leadership.

Ellen came to Bard in 2013 as director of the Studio Arts Program after twenty-one years at Rhode Island School of Design. A true egalitarian, she took a deep dive into the ecosystem of the program upon her arrival through comprehensive meetings with every member of its faculty. After gathering what she would call “intel,” Ellen saw an urgent need to address issues of financial equity for students taking classes in studio arts. Within a year she had created the now-legendary Fund for Visual Learning. Ellen’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion underscored her time at Bard. Her generosity, spirit of collaboration, investigative processes, and interdisciplinary interests led her to initiate such cross-disciplinary courses as Mapping: You Are Here, Art and Climate Change, and Earth/Air/Water.

As an artist, Ellen promised to work exclusively with repurposed or found materials. Her drawings and sculptures cross-pollinate to open new ideas and forms. In *Sculpture* magazine, Jennifer McGregor writes: “Whether working in ghostly white plastic, mosaic, or walnut and sumi inks, her projects fluidly map place and time while mining historical, environmental, and cultural themes,” taking on “consumption, excess, and the effects of the petrochemical industry” and “the resilience displayed by the natural world in the face of sociopolitical threats.”

Professor of studio arts at Bard, Ellen earned her BA degree at Wesleyan University and MFA at Columbia University. Recipient of such honors as a Guggenheim Fellowship, Anonymous Was a Woman grant, American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, and Outstanding Educator Award from the International Sculpture Center, Ellen has maintained a career that includes

more than thirty solo exhibitions, twenty public commissions, and over one hundred group exhibitions. Her art is in major collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Whitney Museum of American Art.

Leading by example, Ellen makes her carbon footprint as small as possible while advocating for necessary and positive change in every aspect of life. She sums up her art: “If indeed the tiniest speck of dust can be considered the trace material of the Big Bang, then my work inserts a human index to make points and lines of connection on that continuum from the infinitesimal to the gigantic.”

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Daniella Dooling
Faculty Sponsor

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Robert Kelly

So all the enterprise of language is just breath

This line of Robert Kelly's can almost literally be applied to his life and art. For Kelly, to breathe is to say is to write; he exhales poetry, his work infused with the imperative to say all that can be said. His approximately one hundred (!) books stand as testament, spanning genres effortlessly, widely translated, and earning accolades such as the Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, an honorary doctorate from SUNY Oneonta, the inaugural Los Angeles Times Book Prize for poetry, and the title of Poet Laureate of Dutchess County. Each public reading Robert gives commences with the poem composed that day.

Such prodigious output can be daunting. But for all the erudition and ambition of Kelly's visionary work, its allegiance is to eros, not instruction. And its forbidding aspect is offset by the intimacy, beauty, and accessibility of every line. Guy Davenport, who placed Kelly beside Louis Zukofsky as "the most musical poet of our time," wrote that "no American poet except perhaps Wallace Stevens has his sense of balance in a line. What Eliot and Pound slaved over Kelly seems to have an innate gift for."

A quintessential autodidact who enrolled in City College of New York at fifteen, Kelly also has an innate gift for teaching. He has taught at the College for more than sixty years, arriving in 1961 as an instructor of German, and becoming, over time, the face of poetry at Bard, which under his aegis became a magnet for aspiring writers. He codirected the Written Arts Program for many years and was a founding member of the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts.

During his six decades of service, Kelly has mentored hundreds of students, many of whom went on to become highly respected writers and teachers themselves. One might presume someone who knows as much as Kelly would be condescending or pretentious, but the Asher B. Edelman Professor of Literature treats his interlocutors seriously, as if they knew as much as he, ever

eager for their insights and opinions. He has nurtured students to believe in their own powers of expression and transformation, and modeled for them the highest intellectual aspirations. A number of them contributed to *A City Full of Voices: Essays on the Work of Robert Kelly*, published in 2020 by Contra Mundum Press, where alongside noted scholars and writers, they seek to preserve his legacy and continue to cherish his words.

Brandon Weber '97
Trustee Sponsor

Mary Caponegro '78
Faculty Sponsor

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Michael Lerner

A few days into the 2002–03 school year, a scholar of twentieth-century American history showed up in the Social Studies Department of Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) Manhattan. A last-minute hire, Michael Lerner arrived on the Lower East Side, PhD from New York University in hand, with no experience teaching adolescents, breezing into an upstart school that had just moved across the river from Brooklyn to begin its second year. Michael was asked to jump in to teach not one core high-school class but two: ninth-grade American History and tenth-grade Global Studies.

Michael took the leap without hesitation or drama. A poster on his office wall advised us to “Keep Calm and Carry On,” and that he did, teaching survey courses to adolescents brilliantly and with humor, with barely a day of preparation. In subsequent semesters, Michael developed college electives in his field and challenged BHSEC upper-level students with curricula worthy of Bard College credit. Three years later, he stepped into a leadership role, serving as associate dean of studies from 2005 to 2008 and as dean of studies from 2008 to 2010. While guiding the school and teaching his students, he found the time to publish *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* with Harvard University Press, a book that wound up on three best-book lists of 2007.

When founding Principal Ray Peterson, BHSEC’s Dumbledore, announced his retirement, Michael leapt again. He took the reins and led the school through its second decade with wisdom and compassion. He worked earnestly to advance the mission of our early college but never took himself too seriously, even volunteering to be a victim in the dunk tank for one spring event. When the pandemic hit and so many other schools dropped expectations for students and faculty alike, Michael fought to ensure that our high standards and commitment to student engagement remained intact.

Michael’s colleagues say he “does not lose sight of the vision while facing challenges,” that he has “a great eye for teaching talent,” and that he possesses “that remarkable combination of dedication, intensity, and calm.” Indeed, Michael has “warmth and intelligence in equal degrees—a rare combination in academia, particularly among administrators.” And finally, an apt summation: “He always had a clear view of the big picture: what’s best for the school and what’s best for the students.”

Brandon Weber ’97
Trustee Sponsor

Steven Mazie
Faculty Sponsor

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Lucy Sante

Author, essayist, teacher, rebel, portraitist of modern life—Lucy Sante’s path is as uncommon as it is groundbreaking. Born in Verviers, Belgium, she has never belonged to one culture or one style of writing, or indeed one gender. How apt that her 1998 memoir, *The Factory of Facts*, opens with nine different versions of how her life could have turned out. One version began in 2022, when she started her gender transition: “a shaft of light appeared in my subterranean cavern and I was able to see the whole prospect of my life at once.”

Sante’s work has complicated and enhanced our understanding of photography, music, pop culture, punk, poetry, and prose. Her wry sensibility has uncovered the undersides of New York and Paris in her own writing, and she has contributed introductions and prefaces for the works of Georges Simenon, Walker Evans, Bob Dylan, Chester Himes, Stephen Crane, and Émile Zola. Her books include *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*; *Evidence*; *The Factory of Facts*; *Kill All Your Darlings: Pieces 1990–2005*; *Folk Photography: The American Real-Photo Postcard, 1905–1930*; *The Other Paris*; *Maybe the People Would Be the Times*; and *Nineteen Reservoirs* (photography by Tim Davis ’91). She translated and edited Felix Fénéon’s *Novels in Three Lines*.

Sante’s career began in the mailroom of the *New York Review of Books*. She proofread for *Sports Illustrated*, taught at Columbia University School of the Arts, the New School, and, since fall 1999, Bard College, in art history, photography, and written arts. She follows Gustave Flaubert’s quest for *le mot juste*, as allergic to a bad assonance as she is to false consciousness. Her aversion to clichés has given her subjects a second life in critical writing for *Interview*, *The New Republic*, *New York Magazine*, *Spy*, *New York Review of Books*, *New York Times*, *Harper’s*, *Village Voice*, *Artforum*, *Bookforum*, and *Vogue*. Sante’s honors include a Grammy (for album notes), Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Infinity Award for writing from the International Center of Photography, Guggenheim Fellowship, Cullman Fellowship, and Whiting Award in nonfiction.

Simultaneously erudite and obstinately unpedantic, Lucy Sante embraces life “as a cloud of unknowing, where certainties break down,” making us the “custodians of a history of which [we] are seldom consciously aware.”

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Jean Wagner

Over the course of more than twenty years as a Theater and Performance faculty member, Jean Wagner has been a vital contributor to the flourishing of theatrical education; a mentor to generations of aspiring actors, directors, playwrights, and theater historians; and a force for celebrating female artists. As Theater and Performance colleague Chiori Miyagawa recalls, “Sharing her office over the years, I met many students who were devoted to her as a mentor and a friend. I will miss witnessing her genuine and heartwarming relationships with students.”

Jean studied at Wesleyan University before earning a master’s degree in dramatic literature and directing from Smith College. In 1990, she cofounded the theater company Voice and Vision, which was dedicated to developing and producing new works by and about women. Under Jean’s artistic directorship, the company produced new plays by Lynn Nottage, Mabou Mines, and Kia Corthron, among others. The company’s central program was the annual developmental ENVISION retreat, held at Bard each summer and followed by workshop productions in New York.

As a director, Jean brought rigorous inquiry and generosity of spirit to all of her projects. Her professional directing work included world premieres by Anastasia Traina, Wendy Kesselman, and Katt Lissard (for Mabou Mines). She also reenvisioned all-but-forgotten plays by women writers such as the medieval secular canoness Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim. At Bard, Jean directed students in new and classic works, often bringing attention to underappreciated feminist stories, such as in her 2012 theatrical adaptation of Christa Wolf’s *Kassandra*.

Wagner fostered many collegial relationships at Bard, including a long-lived collaboration with fellow director JoAnne Akalaitis, who was director of Bard’s Theater Program when Jean arrived. The two founded a monthly New York City-based women’s salon, bringing together a multigenerational group of female theater artists for conversation and companionship. Akalaitis remembers

that, at Bard, Wagner “ignited the students with her passion for great dramatic literature,” adding that at the heart of Wagner’s work is “a fresh eagerness and curiosity which Jean embodies and shares with all who respect and love her.”

Theater and Performance at Bard is in Jean Wagner’s debt for a wealth of contributions, and we are honored to be able to recognize her with the Bardian Award.

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THE BARDIAN AWARD

Li-hua Ying

A native of Kunming, China, Li-hua Ying graduated from Yunnan Normal University and received her MA and PhD from the University of Texas at Austin. She came to Bard in 1998 and immediately set to work starting the College's Chinese curriculum, an endeavor that would span her life and career and make Bard the place it is today.

At a time when only a few languages were taught on campus, Li-hua moved heaven and earth to initiate Chinese language studies, swiftly gathering student commitment and making Asian Studies an indispensable part of the College's curriculum and intellectual life. She crafted a remarkable intensive program through which students with no knowledge of Chinese could achieve mastery in short order. Each summer for decades, Li-hua would accompany students to Qingdao, China, overseeing their journeys to fluency and sharing her love for Chinese language and culture. Bard's thriving Asian Studies Program today is in large part the result of Li-hua's energy and initiative, with much of its expansion occurring under her leadership.

Li-hua helped set the stage for Bard's growth into an international institution, playing a crucial role in the expansion of the Conservatory and its deep ties to China, establishment of the US-China Music Institute, design of Bard's first-in-the-nation MA in Chinese Music and Culture, and creation of many other conduits of exchange and partnership.

She was also, of course, a scholar; her work on the literatures of the Chinese borderlands was ahead of its time, and her meticulously compiled *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature* remains a valuable resource. Li-hua was deeply committed to the art of Chinese calligraphy and served as the executive director of the American Association of Shufa Calligraphy Education for many years.

Li-hua was a beloved teacher to generations of students who were transformed by her pedagogy, at once demanding and nurturing, rigorous and supportive. She was likewise a cherished mentor to countless faculty members who turned to her for counsel. All held her in admiration for her steadfastness, grace, energy, and resilience, and benefited from her generosity of spirit and perseverant commitment to her mission.

Throughout her last years, as she bravely battled cancer, Li-hua worked ceaselessly to ensure the fortitude and future of the Chinese curriculum that was her life's work. She never stopped teaching, saying that the classroom was the place where she felt strongest, most energized, and most herself.

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