

## **Benenson Awards in the Arts: 2017 Awardees**

The Edward H. Benenson Awards in the Arts are given annually to undergraduate students to broaden their educational and professional perspectives in the arts. The awards are made on a competitive basis for the most outstanding project proposals and are determined by a committee of distinguished faculty representing all areas of the visual and performing arts. There were 16 award winners in 2017.

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### **Neha Agrawal (2017)**

#### ***Photographing the Influences of Budo in Japan***

Neha Agrawal will create a photography project in Japan that depicts the cultural and historical context of Aikido, a Japanese martial art, by incorporating traditional influences on Budo. Neha aims to incorporate Zen and Neo-Confucian principles in the photographs while sharing and conveying the embodiment of Budo to viewers. This project will deepen Neha's understanding of Aikido and aid in her growth as a photographer.

### **Mariana Calvo (2017)**

#### ***Cocaine: How the Movement of a Drug Moved Millions***

Mariana's project titled Cocaine: How the Movement of a Drug Moved Millions, documents how the cocaine trade displaced millions of Colombians. I will be using photography, audio, and oral histories to show the connections between drug violence and displacement. She hopes to provide a new perspective on the War on Drugs through the eyes of ordinary Colombians to critique the devastating effects of American demand for drugs.

### **David Geng (2019)**

#### ***"Pianistic Immersion at the Brevard Music Center Summer Institute & Festival"***

David is particularly interested in two facets of the Brevard Music Center Summer Institute: (1) the intensive and versatile training in classical piano performance and (2) the interdisciplinary experiences; in particular, the frequent chamber music and orchestral collaborations. He believes that both of these aspects will be invaluable as he continues his journey as both a solo and collaborative pianist.

### **Elliot Golden (2018)**

#### ***'Tobacco Project'***

'Tobacco Project' is an exploration of the photographic history of tobacco. Grounded in a historical investigation into the 130 years of the photographic representation of tobacco, and culminating in a documentary photo-essay examining the reality of tobacco today, the project will analyze how the vicissitudes of tobacco's social identity were constructed in, as well as reflected by, the photographic image.

### **Amanda Hedgecock (2018)**

#### ***Nationalism in Music: Eastern Impressions of the Western Music Tradition***

Amanda will participate as a soloist and as a chamber musician at the Beijing International Music Festival and Academy in August 2017. Through an intensive week of lessons, masterclasses, and chamber sessions, she will examine eastern perspectives of western music. Amanda will utilize these new perspectives and associated skills to conduct a comparative study on nationalism and music across American, European, and Asian works.

**Yizhou Jiang (2017)**

***The Chinese Diaspora***

The Chinese Diaspora is a documentary photography project that documents and presents the lives and living conditions of people of Chinese descendants from all walks of life, in various countries. The project hopes to help viewers reflect on their identity and the possibilities of their lives.

**Erin Mathias (2018)**

***Erin Mathias Fashion Show***

Erin began this project by sketching and planning a cohesive runway show. She has recently begun the process of sewing and putting the garments together. Erin loves design, and she loves fashion, and she knows that this is what she wants to do with her future. Not only will this show fulfill a requirement of the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Certificate, but Erin hopes that this project will propel her future career in fashion.

**Robert Meese (2020)**

***Summer Festivals for Conducting and Trombone***

This summer, Robert Meese will attend the Eastern Music Festival (or NU Wind Conducting Symposium, USC Conducting Institute, and STS) where he will study conducting or trombone. EMF provides young musicians the opportunity to receive training with world-class faculty and perform with highly devoted peers while preparing full orchestral concerts every week, mirroring the environment of a professional orchestra.

**Rhys Morgan (2019)**

***Classified Document Alpha-60 (or: The Case of Art and its Uselessness)***

Classified Document Alpha-60 is an experimental film presented as a stylized internal documentary from a near-future fascist regime. It will explore the deterioration of language and art in a society determined by an invasive mass media and homogenized culture. The work will display the logical consequences of a society in which art has become an entirely utilitarian pursuit due to lack of public interest and funding.

**Elise Nelson (2017)**

***Documentary Poetry and Skate Culture in Durham, NC***

Elise's goal is to capture the distinct culture of Durham's skate park via a series of investigative poems. Through observation and interviews with local skaters, she will gather the stories she needs to weave a rich poetic tapestry that inspires and informs readers. This project will push her limits as a poet in both method and style, necessitating the discipline to gather material and creativity to write in documentary form.

**Elaine Pak (2017)**

***Nomad.***

Nomad - a short experimental documentary film, is about the journey of Elaine's grandfather, Gwanghyun Pak, during the Korean War as a teenage soldier and afterwards as a nomad uprooted from his hometown and separated from his family. It is a film about borders and the human toll that arbitrary national borders impose upon families.

**Paul Popa (2018)**

***Training at the Shakespeare Academy @ Stratford***

This summer, Paul will be participating in the Shakespeare Academy @ Stratford, a 6-week program that offers rigorous training, a unique rotating repertory performance opportunity, and a fierce commitment to ensemble collaboration. Paul will participate in this program to strengthen the foundation of his acting technique in an immersive and rewarding way and to prepare for the rigor of a graduate training program in acting.

**Alex Sanchez Bressler (2018)**

***Excavations: an auto-ethnography exploring the poetics of Black feminism amidst the imagination of queer futurity***

The principal aim of this auto-ethnography is to record the memories and lived experiences of Alex's family through creative reflection. Alex will travel to San Antonio, TX to "excavate" his grandmother's house through the lens of my relatives' memories. These excavations will be contextualized amidst the creative affect of Black feminists and the theoretical "time-travelling" of queer futurists.

**Quinn Scanlan & Hunter Stark (2018)**

***Pizza Nights and Dumpster Diving: Our Generation's Counterculture***

Counterculture movements often serve to provide a window into the hardships and problems of the generations that they endeavor to represent. By photographing and interviewing the members of two alternative living communities in Ireland and Portugal, Quinn and Hunter hope to uncover why it is they have chosen to leave behind "normal life" in favor of alternative living. Then, in a gallery presentation, they will share their findings.

**Madeline Taylor (2018)**

***Williamstown Theatre Festival Apprentice Program***

The WTFestival Apprentice program provides training, observation, experience, and exposure to young artists with a vision to create theater professionally.

**Christopher White (2017)**

***American Graffiti: Documenting Stories from Drive-In Theaters in the American South***

Christopher is collecting stories from the American Drive-in theater, a staple of Americana. As an activity that has been dying out for decades, now is the ensure an active and thorough archive exists. A look into these stories in more depth can tell us about adolescence, rebellion, counterculture, and the desire for privacy.