



## 2016 RAC ARTIST FELLOWS



### Ron Austin - Literature

Ron Austin holds a MFA from the University of Missouri–St. Louis and serves as a senior editor for *december*. His stories have been placed in *Story Quarterly*, *Ninth Letter*, *Black Warrior Review*, *The Masters Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, *Natural Bridge*, and other journals. He has taught creative writing at the Pierre Laclède Honors College, and he is now finishing his collection of stories, *Avery Colt Is A Snake, A Thief, A Liar*. He, his wife Jennie, and son Elijah live in St. Louis with a whippet, Carmen. Visit his website [here](#).



### Terry Barber – Music

Terry Barber, internationally acclaimed countertenor is known for his extraordinary range both vocally and stylistically. Past member of the multiple Grammy winning group, Chanticleer, Terry Barber has been a soloist for the best venues around the world, from the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall, to Moscow’s Svetlanov Hall, and has on recordings for major record labels with a variety of artists from Madonna to the London Philharmonic. Terry Barber began his education as a double major in engineering and music at Northwestern University where he completed the musical theater program and a music technology certificate. He received his Masters degree in historically informed performance and a postgraduate certificate *with distinction* from Trinity College of Music, London. Barber is founder of Artists For A Cause Inc., a nonprofit which supports artists who serve community needs. Visit his website [here](#).



### Damon Davis – Media Arts

Damon Davis is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist who works and resides in St. Louis, Missouri. His scope includes illustration, painting, printmaking, music, film, and public art. His most identifiable work, *All Hands on Deck*, helped shape public perception of the Ferguson Uprising as part of the broader international human rights movement. Davis has work in the permanent collection at the Smithsonian Museum of African American History, and has exhibited

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at the MoCADA and San Diego Contemporary Museum of Art. Davis is founder of independent music and art imprint, Far Fetched. The documentary short *A Story To Tell* (2013), which profiled Davis, his work and creative process, won an Emmy Award Mid America for Best Short Form Program. Davis is a 2015 Firelight Media Producers Lab Fellow and a 2016 Sundance Institute Music and Sound Design Lab Fellow at Skywalker Sound. *Whose Streets?*, co-directed with Sabaah Folyan, is his first foray into feature-length documentary and will be featured in the 2017 Sundance Film Festival.



#### **Jess Dugan – Visual Arts**

Jess Dugan is an artist whose work explores issues of gender, sexuality, identity, and community. Dugan holds an MFA in Photography from Columbia College Chicago, a Master of Liberal Arts in Museum Studies from Harvard University, and a BFA in Photography from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Dugan’s work has exhibited internationally at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, the San Diego Museum of Art, the Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College, the Catherine Edelman Gallery, the Grey House Gallery in Krakow, Poland, the Griffin Museum of Photography, Gallery Kayafas, Carroll and Sons Gallery, the Leslie/Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, and at many colleges and universities nationwide. Dugan’s photographs have been featured in the New York

Times, CNN, The Advocate, Slate, The Huffington Post, and the Boston Globe. In 2015, Dugan founded the Strange Fire Artist Collective to highlight work made by women, people of color, and LGBTQ artists. Visit her website [here](#).



#### **Ted Mathys – Literature**

Ted Mathys is the author of three books of poetry, *Null Set* (2015), *The Spoils* (2009), and *Forge* (2005), all published by Coffee House Press. The recipient of fellowships and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, and Poetry Society of America, his poetry and critical writing has appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Boston Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *PBS NewsHour*, and elsewhere. Mathys teaches at Saint Louis University and co-curates the 100 Boots Poetry Series at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. Visit his website [here](#).



#### **Robert McNichols Jr. – Music**

Robert McNichols Jr. is a graduate of the Lyric Opera of Kansas Apprentice program where he sang in many performances including Masetto in *Don Giovanni*, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata* and the dual roles of Jim and Daniel in the world premiere of the opera, *John Brown*. As an American Baritone, McNichols has been making a name for himself for a number of years “as an artist worthy of being noticed.” (The Kansas City Star, 2010). He has performed with the Gateway Opera in *Lucrezia*, with the Kansas City Metropolitan Theater in *Kiss Me Kate*, at the Edison Theater in *Passing Strange*, with the St. Louis Black Repertory Theater Company in *Paul*

*Robeson and Once on this Island*, with Springfield Regional Opera in *Così fan tutte*, and with the Kansas City Metropolitan Ensemble Theater in *Ragtime*. He has done additional performances throughout Missouri, Kansas, Indiana and beyond. McNichols also works at Opera Theatre of St. Louis (OTSL) as the Manager of Community Engagement and Events, where he works to create greater awareness of opera and OTSL in the St. Louis metropolitan area.



### **Rich O'Donnell – Music**

Rich O'Donnell has 64 years as virtuoso percussionist, composer, designer and builder of percussion and electronic instruments, teacher, writer and producer. O'Donnell is director of the Electronic Music Studio at Washington University, and co-founder of HEARding Cats Collective. While a drummer of 1 O'clock Lab Band at NT State, he premiered the first jazz mass in the US. In addition to the 200 concerts a year with the St. Louis Symphony, he has performed over 80 concerts as a soloist or collaborating with artists in all media including Eleazar de Carvalho, Jocy de Oliveira, Walter Susskind, Leroy Jenkins, John Butcher, Robert Dick, Bill Kohn, Van McElwee, Elvis Presley and Dean Martin among many, many others. His focus now is on abstract

drumming with virtual percussion using KYMA computer system. He creates timbrel sound environments to entice you to actively listen and evolve your own endless, imaginative horizons. View his website [here](#).



### **Ruth Reese – Craft/Traditional Arts**

Ruth Reese is a clay artist living and working in St. Louis. Reese graduated with her MFA in Sculpture from Washington University and her BA in English at Loyola University in New Orleans. She has exhibited widely, including at Red Heat (OK), Visions in Clay (CA), NCECA (AZ), the Racine Art Museum (WI), the San Angelo Museum of Fine Art (TX), the Evansville Museum (IN) and many more. As an artist in residence, she taught clay classes at Craft Alliance Center of Art + Design, as well as, at many colleges and universities in the bi-state area. Ruth Reese is also director of Reese Gallery, an artist-run space, which highlights artists pursuing a nuanced understanding of material and process. View her website [here](#).



### **Mariah Richardson – Theater**

Mariah Richardson is a native of St. Louis and received her BA in Communications from the University of New Mexico and an MFA from Smith College in Playwriting. Mariah began her acting career while in New Mexico. Afterwards, she returned to St. Louis and did two seasons with the St. Louis Black Repertory and three seasons with Metro Theater Company. Her HBO/New Writers Project solo performance show, *all that...* has toured throughout the country. Her play, *Sistahs Indeed!* was a main stage production at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park in 2008. In 2007, she was commissioned to write *Delilah's Wish*, which won a Kevin Kline Award in 2011 and was published by Dramatic Publishing. Her play about being Afro Latina, *iSoy Yo!* was commissioned by

Gitana Productions and premiered in June 2013. Her latest play, *Idris Elba is James Bond* is scheduled for spring 2017. She is also a budding filmmaker, an accomplished poet, an Assistant Professor at St. Louis Community College, and has taught in after school programs, residencies, and homeless shelters from LA to New England.



### **Agnes Wilcox – Theater**

Agnes Wilcox is the founder and former artistic director of Prison Performing Arts in St. Louis. She directed plays and taught poetry in the Missouri prison system for over twenty years. Agnes developed and directed two museum-theatre projects for the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, *Staging Old Masters* in 2010 and *Staging Reflections of the Buddha* in 2012. Those productions involved former prison inmates and homeless veterans as creators and performers of a series of scenes exploring the artwork in a museum exhibition. For 13 years, Agnes was artistic director of The New Theatre in St. Louis, directing and producing new and contemporary plays, most of them St. Louis premieres. Agnes is best known for her production of *Hamlet* (2000-2002) with inmates

at a high-security, Missouri prison, a performance featured on NPR's "This American Life" with Ira Glass. Warner Brothers developed a script based on this show, written by Suzan-Lori Parks. Visit her website [here](#).

### **About the RAC Artist Fellowships**

The RAC Artist Fellowships initiative was created based on the findings of the landmark 2012 Artists Count survey. It indicated that the most pressing need of regional artists was financial support in order to pursue their art and their careers. The goal of the fellowship is to advance the individual artist's creative journey by providing funds to allow for time and space to study, reflect, experiment, explore and create. The RAC Artist Fellowships are awarded each year to ten St. Louis area artists of various disciplines to foster and invest in the careers of individual artists. The award amount is \$20,000 for each fellow.

### **About the Regional Arts Commission [www.racstl.org](http://www.racstl.org)**

The Regional Arts Commission (RAC) is at the forefront of efforts to transform St. Louis into a more vibrant, creative and economically thriving community by elevating the vitality, value and visibility of the arts. It is the largest annual funder of the arts in the region, and since its inception in 1985, RAC has awarded more than 6,900 grants totaling over \$97 million to support nonprofit arts, individual artists, cultural organizations, consortiums and programs. Directed by a board of 15 commissioners appointed by the chief executives of St. Louis City and St. Louis County, RAC is a pivotal force in the continuing development and marketing of the arts in the region. Visit [www.racstl.org](http://www.racstl.org) for more information, or follow us on Facebook at [Regional Arts Commission](https://www.facebook.com/RegionalArtsCommission) or Twitter [@RACStLouis](https://twitter.com/RACStLouis).