

LISA DiFRANZA

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LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Festival Coordinator, Maine Jewish Film Festival	2024 – present
Project Coordinator, “Love This City” Realize Bradenton, Bradenton, FL	2021 – 2022
Cultural Curator, Art Ovation Hotel, Sarasota, FL	2017 – 2020
Assistant Principal for Arts Education, Manatee School for Arts, Palmetto FL	2015 – 2017
Founder and Director, The Living News Theater Project, Chicago, IL	2010 – 2017
Assistant Director, First Year Seminar, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago IL	2014 – 2015
Interim Director, The Children’s Theater of Maine, Portland, ME	2007
Interim Director, The Center for Cultural Exchange, Portland, ME	2006
Consultant/Symposium Producer, Maine College of Art, Portland ME	2001– 2002
Literary and Education Director, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME	1999 – 2002
Artistic and Executive Director, The Children’s Theater of Maine, Portland, ME	1991– 1998

TEACHING

Artist in Residence, Children’s Museum + Theater, Portland Maine	2024
Guest Artist/Instructor, New College of Florida	2023
Workshop Leader, Art Ovation Hotel arts program	2017 – 2020
Senior Lecturer, First Year Seminar program, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL	2012 – 2015
Lecturer, First Year Seminar program, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL	2007 – 2012
Adjunct Instructor, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Chicago, IL	2014 – 2015
Visiting Artist, International Writing Program, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA	2003 – 2009
Adjunct Instructor, Department of English, University of New England, Portland, ME	2004 – 2007

SELECTED ARTISTIC PRODUCTION: VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Studio Artist, Sarasota, FL and Portland, ME	2020 – present
Director, <i>Conscience</i> , Portland Stage Company mainstage, Portland ME	2024
Founding Cultural Curator Art Ovation Hotel, Sarasota, FL	2017 – 2020
Director, The Living News Theater Project, Chicago, IL	2010 – 2017
Theater Director, Summer Dance-Theater Projects, Portland, ME	2008 – 2015
Guest Director, International Writing Program, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA	2002 – 2012
Affiliate Artist, and Guest Director Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME	2002 – 2012
Artist-in-Residence, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA	2002 – 2003

EDUCATION

Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA

M.A. in Arts and Theology, *cum laude*, focus on arts, ritual and community

Bates College, Lewiston, ME

B.A. in Theater, directing emphasis; Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts

WORK HISTORY: DETAILS

Maine Jewish Film Festival (2024 – present)

Festival Coordinator

Coordinating all aspects of the 2025 Film Festival, to be presented in several locations in Portland and beyond.

Studio Artist, Sarasota, FL and Portland ME (2020 – present)

Artist

Solo exhibition at the Francis Hotel, Portland, ME. Solo exhibits at Saks Fifth Avenue Sarasota, MARA Gallery, Art Ovation Hotel, Gaze Gallery in Sarasota, FL. Group exhibitions at Ad Hoc Gallery, Sarasota, FL; ArtCenter Manatee, Bradenton, FL; Art Center Sarasota, Sarasota, FL; Art Ovation Hotel, Sarasota, FL. Cottonmouth Southern Kitchen, Bradenton, FL and One of A Kind Show and Sale, Chicago, IL.

Realize Bradenton, Bradenton FL (2021- 2022)

Project Coordinator

Coordinated and managed high visibility citywide project "Love This City", a business redevelopment initiative to promote Downtown Bradenton. Collaborated city-wide. Developed and rehearsed community storytelling performances.

Art Ovation Hotel, Sarasota, FL (2017 – 2020)

Cultural Curator

Founding curator for innovative arts hotel. Curated art exhibitions, gathering guest talent in visual, media and performing arts programs; established community partnerships; collaborated with community organizations; created educational programming, led workshops and arts training for staff and community.

Manatee School for the Arts, Palmetto, FL (2015 – 2017)

Assistant Principal for Arts Education

Managed arts curriculum; created interdisciplinary and integrated learning opportunities for students; worked with colleges state-wide to bridge pathways for art students; collaborated with administration, faculty, students, parents and community members; created and led innovative professional development workshops; initiated arts festivals and town hall meetings.

Columbia College Chicago (2007 – 2017)

Lecturer /Senior Lecturer, First Year Seminar , New Millennium Studies

Developed and taught interdisciplinary courses; served as guest faculty in English and Theater departments, curated student exhibitions; Leading member of the Teaching Academy, a think tank for curriculum development and teaching strategies; Faculty Senator, Academic Affairs; Task Force on Interdisciplinarity and Collaboration; Research Mentor; Emcee for first annual Faculty/Staff Convocation.

The Living News Project, Chicago, IL (2010 – 2017)

Founder and Director

Created a multi-year collaboration between students, politicians, journalists, and staff and residents (of all ages) at a homeless shelter, to create a theatrical living newspaper investigating the complexity of homelessness. Produced readings and community discussions through the Illinois Humanities Council's Collaborative City initiative.

The Children's Theater of Maine, Portland, ME (2007)

Interim Director (short term contract - hired for transition period)

Led the organization through an artistic/business merger, working closely with board of directors and community volunteers to reshape the institution and hire a fresh leadership team.

The Center for Cultural Exchange, Portland, ME (2006)

Interim Director (short term contract – hired for transition period)

Led the institution through a leadership transition, facilitated a restructuring of the organization which included the establishment of a foundation and the sale of a large property.

Maine College of Art, Portland ME (2001-2002)

Consultant/Producer of "Artists Now," a national symposium

Coordinated/produced a national symposium about the artist's role in changing times.

Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME (1999 – 2002)

Literary and Education Director

Produced and directed annual festivals of new work. Supervised review of play scripts; worked with writers on scripts in process; selected scripts for production; mentored college interns; taught classes and workshops; led post-play discussions; edited "Little Festival of the Unexpected 2000 & 2001," a volume of plays published by Stage and Screen, NY.

The Arts Academy at Portland Arts and Technology High School (1998 – 1999)

Portland Public Schools, Portland, ME / Maine Arts Commission

Founding Director (position funded by the Maine Arts Commission)

Designed and launched an innovative, high caliber public school arts program for high school students, created as a pilot program for the State of Maine. Worked with community board of directors to establish the vision and mission of the program; developed curriculum.

SELECTED AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

2023 Sarasota 10 x 10, selected to speak on the creative process

2023 Selected as artist for Fine Art Gallery, One of A Kind Show + Sale, Chicago

2021 HaO Arts Fellowship Award for 365 days of Covid, painting project

2019 Speaker, Art Ovation Hotel, "Why Does Art Matter?"

2017 Imagining America National Conference, Presenter, "The Living News Project"

2017. Farm Theater, New York, Bullpen Session, Presenter, "The Living News Collaboration"

2015 Faculty Development Grant, Columbia College Chicago, *Painting it Out*, book project

2014 3ARTS grant award for community-based Living News Project, SHELTER/CHICAGO

2014 Illinois Humanities Council Collaborative City Award for SHELTER/CHICAGO

2014 The Columbia College Chicago Dean's Award for Outstanding Creative Work

2013 City of Chicago Grant from Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

2012 Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies, Luce Fellowship

2011 Faculty Development Grant, Columbia College, essay project

2010 Faculty Development Grant, Columbia College Chicago, theater collaboration grant

2010 Keynote Speaker, Columbia College Chicago, New Student Scholarship Gala

2010 First Year Experience 1st Annual Faculty Award, Columbia College Chicago

ARTISTIC PRODUCTION: DETAILS

SELECTED GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

The Francis Hotel, Portland, ME, solo exhibition of paintings
Saks Fifth Avenue, Sarasota, FL, solo exhibitions of paintings
One of A Kind Show, Chicago IL, selected as an "Emerging Artist"
MARA Gallery, Sarasota, FL, "Time Lapse" Solo exhibition of paintings and works on paper
MARA Gallery Sarasota, FL, group exhibitions, "Justified+Ancient", "Black and White"
Cottonmouth Southern Kitchen, Bradenton FL, solo exhibition of paintings and prints
Art Ovation Hotel, Sarasota, FL, solo exhibitions of paintings and prints
Art Ovation Hotel, Sarasota, FL group exhibitions
Artcenter Manatee, Bradenton, FL group exhibitions
AdHoc Gallery, Sarasota, FL, group exhibitions
Art Center Sarasota, FL, group exhibitions
Creative Liberties, Sarasota, FL, group exhibitions

SELECTED FULL PRODUCTIONS DIRECTED

Conscience, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
Leaner Than Light, by Lisa Schlesinger, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
Over the Tavern, by Tom Dudzick, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
As You Like It, by William Shakespeare, Stage at Spring Point, Portland, ME
The Price, by Arthur Miller, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
The Miser, by Moliere, Stage at Spring Point, Portland, ME
The Foreigner, by Larry Shue, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
A Perfect Ganesh, by Terrence McNally, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
Jack and the Beanstalk, adaptation by Charles Ludlam, Children's Theatre of Maine, Portland, ME
Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury, Children's Theater of Maine High School Program, Portland, ME

SELECTED NEW PLAYS CREATED IN COLLABORATION

The Living News Project: SHELTER/CHICAGO; Director, Lead Playwright, Chicago, IL
Bullying: What We Weren't Taught, Lead Playwright/Director, Dance Theater Projects, Portland, ME
Letters to the President, Director, created at Ocean Avenue Elementary School, Portland, ME
Tea, a Performance Project, Playwright, Portland Arts & Technology High School, Portland, ME

SELECTED PLAYS DIRECTED IN DEVELOPMENTAL READINGS

The Living News Project: SHELTER/CHICAGO, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago Cultural Center, Cornerstone Homeless Shelter, Chicago, IL
Leaner than Light, by Lisa Schlesinger, University of Iowa, Iowa, IA
Celestial Bodies, by Lisa Schlesinger, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
The Good People of Nemus Gravida, by Micah Ariel James, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL
Rooms for Breathing, by Akisha Al Amin, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL
Dog Act, by Liz Duffy Adams, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
Kidding Jane, by Gus Schulenburg, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME
House of Games, by Nihad Sirees, Portland Stage Company, Portland, ME