



The Chicago Academy for the Arts

ART. There's a future in it

ALUMNI

Artist.Leader.AcademyGrad.





“I feel like it put me ten years ahead of everyone else that I knew.”

Photo from [instagram.com/tranterjustin](https://www.instagram.com/tranterjustin)



JUSTIN TRANTER

MUSICAL THEATRE, CLASS OF 1998

A prolific musician and songwriter with the band **Semi Precious Weapons**, Justin Tranter now has seen great success writing hits for some of the music industry's most notable pop stars. Tranter most recently penned Justin Bieber's "Sorry," Gwen Stefani's "Used to Love You," and Fall Out Boy's "Centuries." Around The Academy, Justin is revered for founding our **Annual AIDS Benefit**, a student-run variety show with proceeds donated to supporting AIDS research and families affected by the disease.



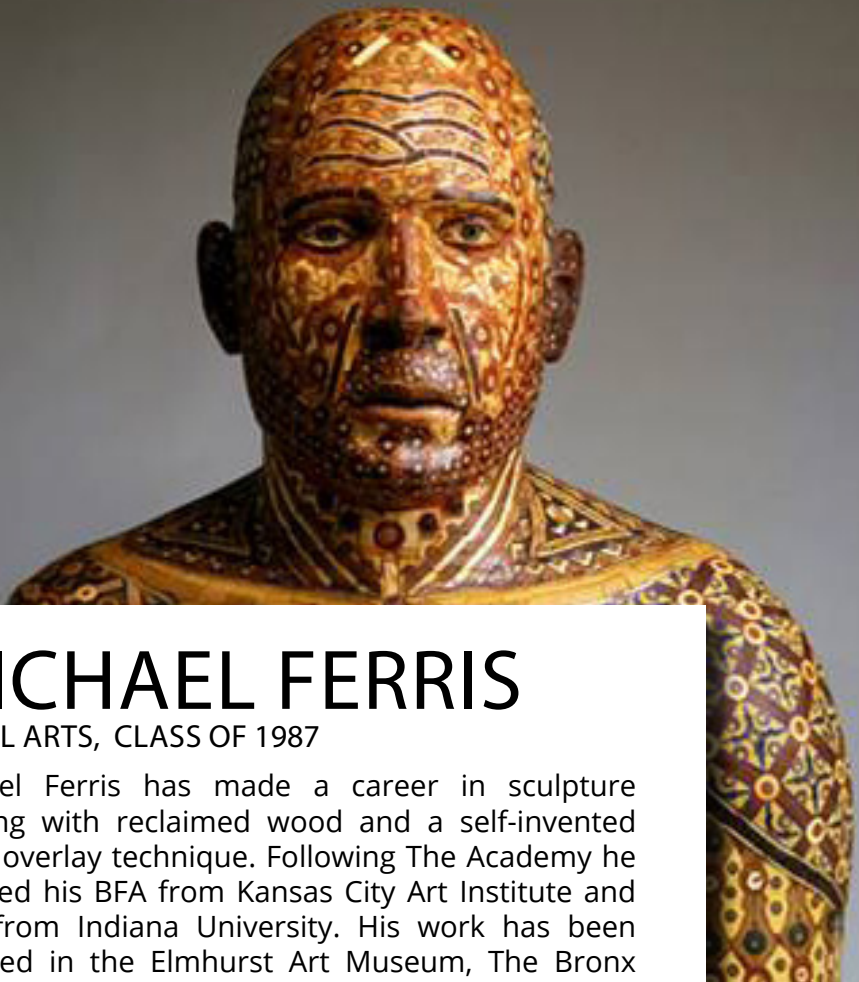
“[The Academy is] a uniquely nurturing environment within which students felt entirely at ease to be themselves.”



NATHAN LAUBE

MUSIC, CLASS OF 2004

Nathan Laube is an accomplished organist and Assistant Professor of Organ at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Most recently, Nathan performed on the 2016 **Grammy Award Winner** for Best Classical Compendium ***Grand Concerto***, composed by Stephen Paulus. Nathan has also been featured on American Public Media's weekly program "Pipedreams" and regularly performs around the world.



MICHAEL FERRIS

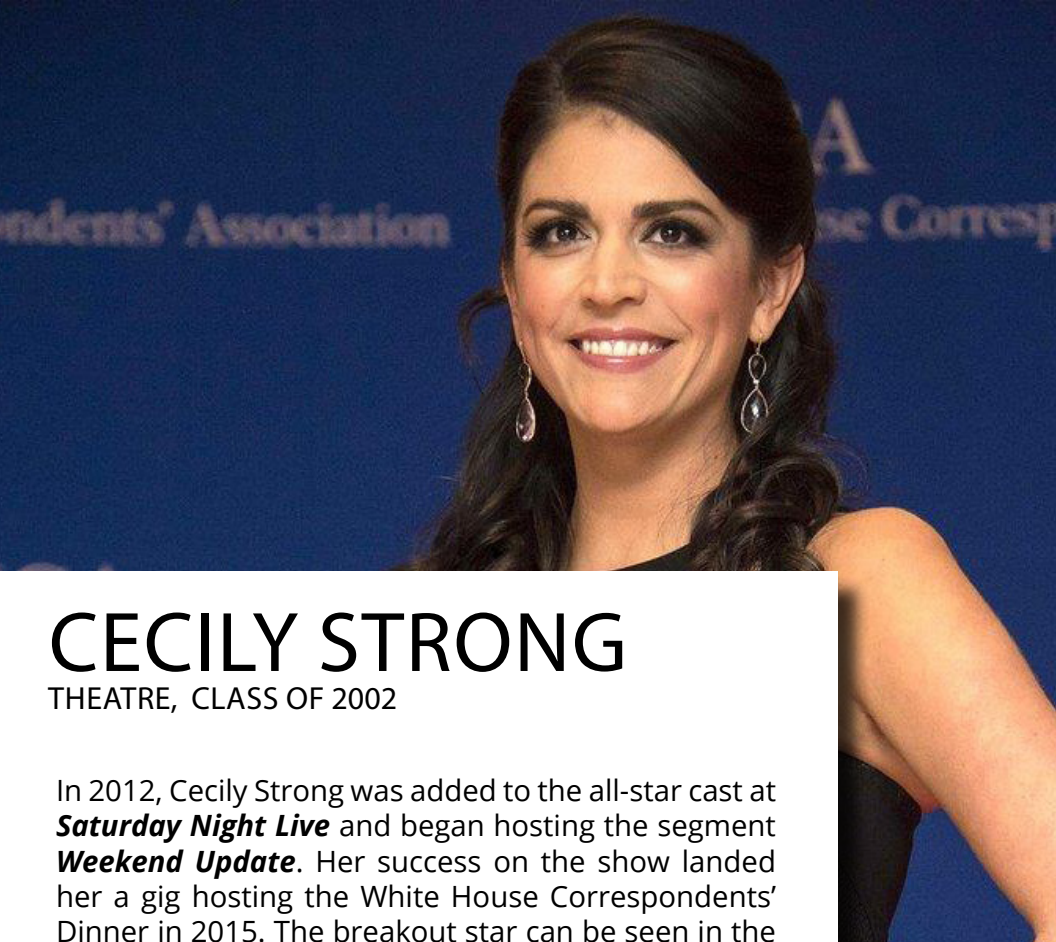
VISUAL ARTS, CLASS OF 1987

Michael Ferris has made a career in sculpture working with reclaimed wood and a self-invented wood overlay technique. Following The Academy he received his BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and MFA from Indiana University. His work has been featured in the Elmhurst Art Museum, The Bronx Museum, and the Queens Museum of Art, as well as reviewed by The New York Times and The Chicago Tribune. Michael teaches ceramics at the Arturo A. Schomburg Satellite Academy in the Bronx.

“ It is because of [the faculty’s] dedication, and the influence of The Academy as a whole, that I am the artist I am today.”

Photo by Jacqueline Lemieux





CECILY STRONG

THEATRE, CLASS OF 2002

In 2012, Cecily Strong was added to the all-star cast at ***Saturday Night Live*** and began hosting the segment ***Weekend Update***. Her success on the show landed her a gig hosting the White House Correspondents' Dinner in 2015. The breakout star can be seen in the films ***The Bronze***, ***Staten Island Summer***, and the upcoming remake of ***Ghostbusters***.

Photo from NBC





“At The Academy, I learned that performance, putting ideas into action, is what really matters.”



Photo from westfallonline.com

CHRIS WESTFALL

THEATRE, CLASS OF 1984

Chris Westfall embodies the comprehensive and diverse value of the Academy experience. Author of ***The NEW Elevator Pitch*** and a US National Elevator Pitch Champion, Chris has coached clients on ***Shark Tank***, helped entrepreneurs raise millions from investors, and successfully rebranded companies, products, and services around the world. He lives in Houston, Texas with his wife and two children and has used his influence to be an avid supporter of the visual and performing arts.



Photo from forrestsolis.com



“I was challenged to discover my unique artistic voice.”

FORREST SOLIS

VISUAL ARTS, CLASS OF 1997

A figurative painter focusing on women's issues, Forest Solis has had works exhibited nationally at venues such as Sylvia White Gallery, The ARC Gallery, The Torpedo Factory, and The Hive Gallery. Furthermore, her work has been published in American Art Collector, Arts+Culture Magazine, and Direct Art. Forrest holds a position as Tenured Associate Professor in the School of Art at Arizona State University.



“This place, this sanctuary, was and still is an integral part of me.”

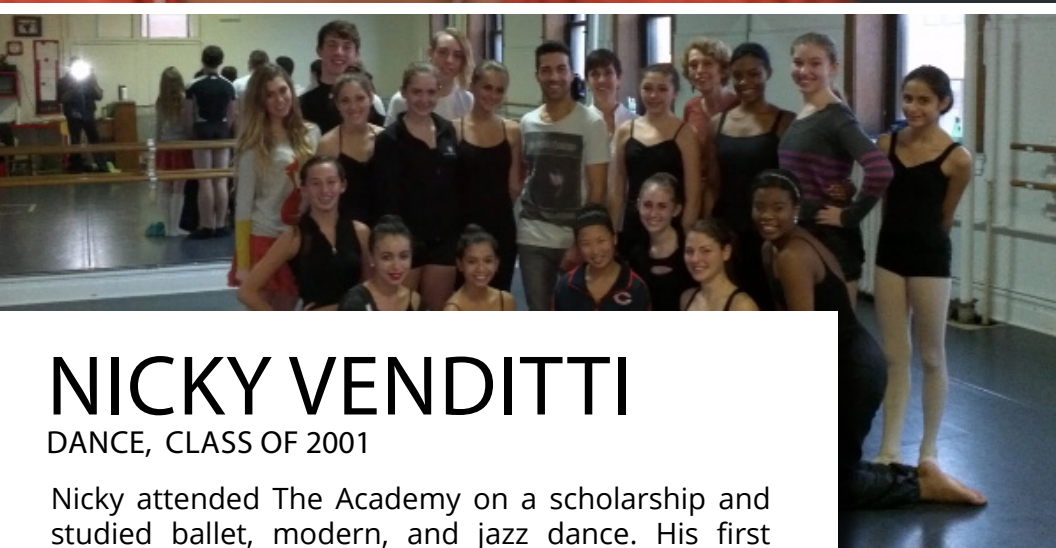
RENA BUTLER

DANCE, CLASS OF 2007

Rena Butler has been a featured dancer in Dance Magazine, The Dance Enthusiast, FORMA Magazine, and Refinery 29. She currently dances for Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and has had her choreographic work featured in the **Joffrey Ballet School**. Previously, she danced with Abraham. In.Motion, David Dorfman Dance, Mettin Movement, and the Luna Negra Dance Theatre.



“ I continue to reap the benefits of the exceptional guidance given to me from my teachers, the lifelong friendships that I acquired, and the overall acceptance that I encountered while at The Academy.”



NICKY VENDITTI

DANCE, CLASS OF 2001

Nicky attended The Academy on a scholarship and studied ballet, modern, and jazz dance. His first national tour came with the musical ***Swing!*** From there Nicky went on to land dream roles in ***A Chorus Line*** and ***Contact***. Recently, his time has been spent with the Broadway hit ***Wicked*** where he served as dance captain for two years. In addition, he has provided choreography for the Off Broadway musical ***Trip of Love***.

Photo by Henry Leutwyler



“I learned that it was OK to be different, to be an individual.”

CRAIG HALL

DANCE, CLASS OF 1997

Craig Hall joined the New York City Ballet in 2000 and since has had featured dance roles in ***Apollo, Episodes, The Four Temperaments, and The Nutcracker***. In addition, he has been featured in the films ***Center Stage*** and ***NY Export: Opus Jazz***. Currently, Craig is working with world-renowned choreographer and NYC Ballet Resident-choreographer Justin Peck as ballet assistant.

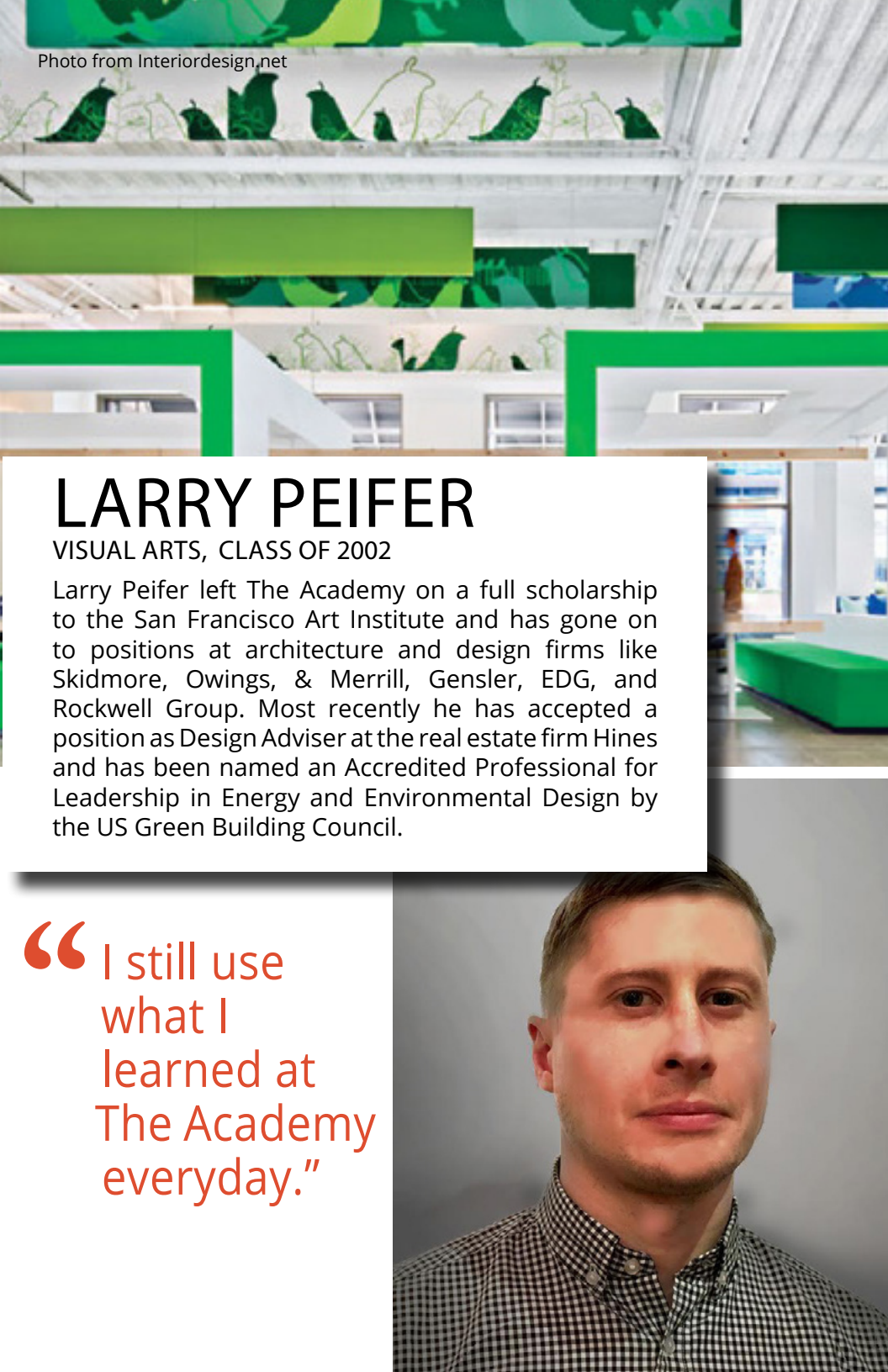


Photo from Interiordesign.net

LARRY PEIFER

VISUAL ARTS, CLASS OF 2002

Larry Peifer left The Academy on a full scholarship to the San Francisco Art Institute and has gone on to positions at architecture and design firms like Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill, Gensler, EDG, and Rockwell Group. Most recently he has accepted a position as Design Adviser at the real estate firm Hines and has been named an Accredited Professional for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design by the US Green Building Council.

“I still use what I learned at The Academy everyday.”





PREPARING FUTURE LEADERS IN THE ARTS AND LIFE.

QUICK FACTS

- Academy students' composite ACT scores were nearly 20% higher than the state average in 2015.
- The class of 2015 earned \$7.2 million in scholarships, an average of \$171,428 each.
- Over 70% of our college acceptances 2010-15 were to institutions ranked in the Top 300 Colleges and Universities in America by Forbes Magazine.
- Students participate in more than 75 productions, including concerts, plays, readings, screenings, and exhibitions each year.

