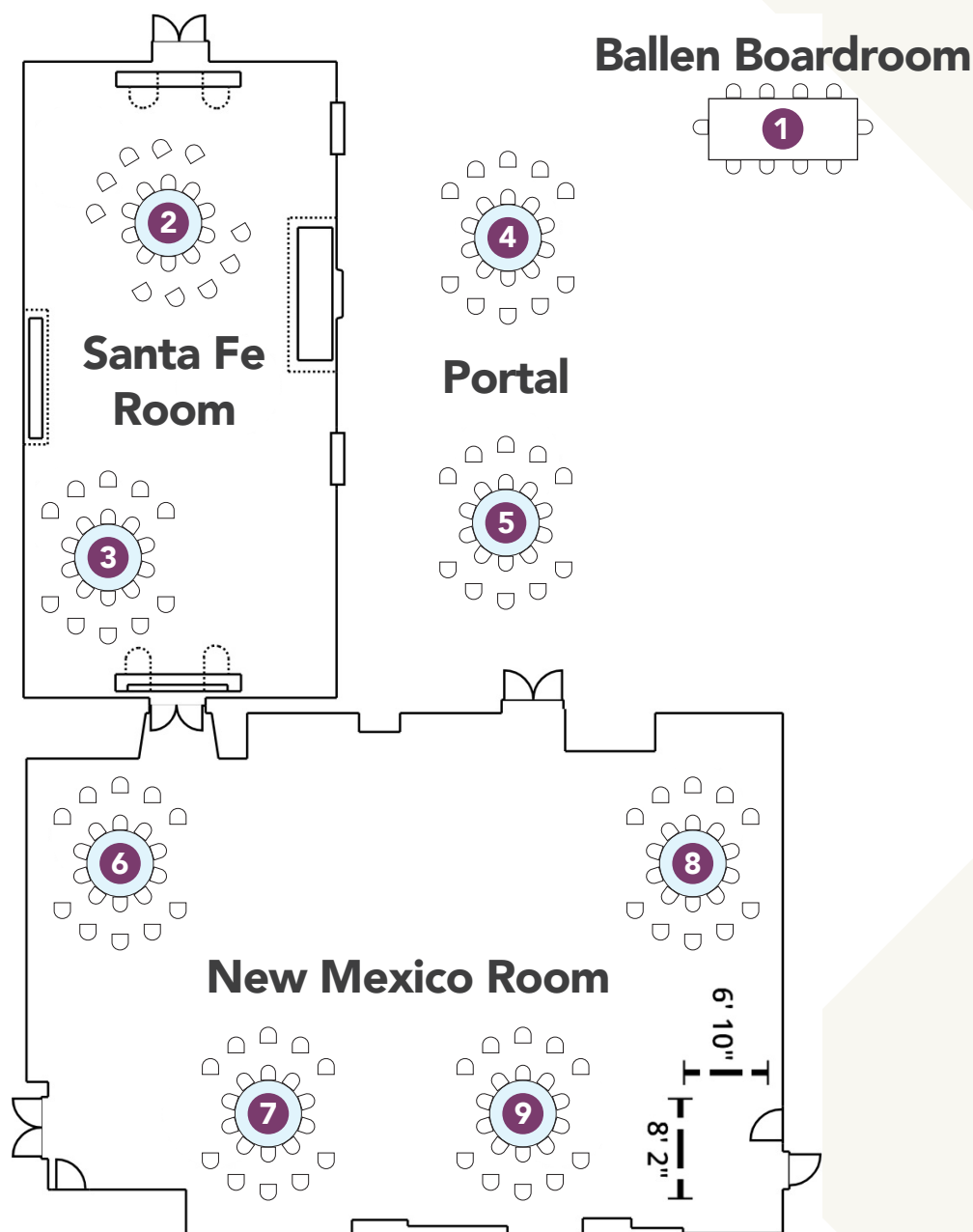


## Roundtable Location Map

- 1 Beyond Icebreakers and Office Hours
- 2 Communicating Creativity
- 3 Considering Gender Identity and Expression in Arts Education: Continuing the Discussion
- 4 Cultivating Cultural Context: Crafting Fine Arts Programs with Regional Relevance
- 5 From Classroom to Backlot
- 6 Humanizing Performance Assessment in Complex University Environments
- 7 Post-Pandemic Changes to the Arts Executive Search Process
- 8 Sustaining the Arts When Resources are Scarce
- 9 University-Prison Partnerships



## Beyond Icebreakers and Office Hours: Implementing an FYE Course for Students in the Arts to increase retention

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

Retention is a nation-wide priority for all colleges and universities. For many, the first-year seminar (FYS) or first-year experience (FYE) course can be a strategy in positively influencing student retention. This session will share the experience of implementing a FYE course within a college of communication and fine arts including class structure, course content, successes, and challenges.



**MELISSA BERKE** Associate Dean for the College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media at the University of Nebraska at Omaha

In this position she oversees academic affairs including faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure, curricular matters, and assists with college operations. Prior to her role in administration, Dr. Berke served as the first female and first chair of color in the UNO music department where she also taught undergraduate and graduate courses in music education. Her specialization in early childhood/elementary music made her a sought-after clinician at many national and regional conferences. Melissa received both her Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music Education degrees from Drake University, and her PhD from The University of Arizona.



**ABBIE SYREK** Assistant Dean for the College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

In this role, she oversees student success, which includes recruitment, retention, degree audits, advising, and college event planning. Prior to this position, she served as Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication where she taught undergraduate and graduate courses in Communication Studies. She also supervised Graduate Teaching Assistants and served as Course Coordinator for oral competency curricula. Abbie Syrek was also the Director of Forensics for 17 years, during which she won several regional and national awards for coaching and teaching excellence. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and her Master of Arts in Communication from Kansas State University.

## Communicating Creativity: Using Data to Shape Narratives for Arts Education in a Complex Landscape

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

Arts colleges face headwinds with students, parents and authorizers about the real and perceived value of arts education and creative careers. It is vital to both share the inspirational and human-centered value of the arts, but also to shape multiple narratives grounded in the workforce, economic and health impact of arts work for stakeholders in our rapidly changing landscape. This session will explore how the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project data and key state and regional workforce and economic data tools can be deployed to help admissions, fundraising and administrative leaders craft clear, compelling and data-driven conversation frameworks for arts education and its value in our shifting world



### LEE ANN SCOTTO ADAMS Executive Director of SNAAP (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project)

Lee Ann Scotto Adams brings nearly 20 years of expertise in nonprofit management, higher education, and the arts. She holds a B.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and an M.S. in Nonprofit Management from Northeastern University. As the executive director of SNAAP (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project), Lee Ann is committed to promoting the value of arts education and supporting and advancing the arts research ecosystem. Previously, she served as executive director of the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) and assistant director of programs and operations at the Association of Independent Colleges of Art & Design (AICAD)—making meaningful contributions to the field in each of these roles. Her career also includes roles in admissions at RISD and as an administrator in the Fine American Paintings Department at Christie's Auction House. Lee Ann is deeply engaged in the Rhode Island arts community, having served as treasurer of the Rhode Island Art Education Association, and is currently serving as Vice President for DownCity Design, a community design/build non-profit that empowers youth through design education. In addition to her leadership roles, she maintains an active creative practice as a painter and is passionate about strengthening the arts through her professional contributions and board service.



### JENNIFER GILLIGAN COLE (JEN) Jordan Schnitzer Dean of Pacific Northwest College of Art at Willamette University in Portland, Oregon

Prior to her appointment as Dean, she was the Chief of Staff at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University the largest comprehensive art and design college in the U.S. While there, founded The National Collaborative for Creative Work—an applied research center focused on artist/culture work and social change in America. Cole served nearly a decade as Nashville, Tennessee's chief cultural officer working with the mayors, elected officials, artists, and cultural organizations to explore how arts and cultural participation were central to community prosperity. While there she led national models in equitable creative placemaking, public funding and policy for the arts. She is a thought leader in cultural policy and planning, artist economies and urban arts ecosystems and has held board and advisory positions with Americans for the Arts, IL Arts Alliance, Western State Arts Federation (Creative West), ArtPlace America, Creative Capital, Grantmakers in the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Cole is the co-founder of the Cultural Policy Action Lab, a national community of practice program for public sector workers who seek to advance racial equity through arts, culture and public policy. She holds a B.A. with honors, in English from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA.

## Considering Gender Identity and Expression in Arts Education: Continuing the Discussion

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

Providing adequate support for our trans and gender-expansive students requires challenging the traditional paradigms of voice type, gendered casting, traditional stagecraft, etc. Our earlier panel discussion started the discussion about and sharing of best practices, and this roundtable will provide space for continued contemplation and dialogue centered around inclusive teaching and creating a safe and welcoming space to ensure our students can authentically express their gender identity.

This discussion will be facilitated by Lisa Brooks, Dean, Jordan College of the Arts, Butler University.



**LISA BROOKS** Dean, Jordan College of the Arts, Butler University

Lisa Brooks came to Butler in 1994 as a member of the violin faculty. Prior to her appointment as Dean of JCA, she served as Chair of the School of Music and Director of the Graduate Music Program. She held previous faculty appointments at Baylor University, the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, Messiah College, and Dickinson College. Brooks received both a bachelor's and master's degree in violin performance from West Virginia University. Her doctorate in violin performance is from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

## Cultivating Cultural Context: Crafting Fine Arts Programs with Regional Relevance

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

As fine arts colleges seek to recruit students in our increasingly connected world, finding ways to differentiate programs and offer special and even unique value has become more important than ever. While accreditation standards can have the effect of leading programs toward similar structures, flexibility within those same standards allows for creativity and exploration of opportunities that are location-specific. These include leveraging local arts and cultural values, engaging with community resources, collaborating with local artists and arts organizations, and integrating regional traditions and practices into the curriculum. This discussion looks at the progress of two schools in working to enhance and develop programs specific to their geographic locations and their efforts to foster a sense of place within their fine arts programs.



### COURTNEY CRAPPEL Dean, the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory

Courtney Crappell joined the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory as Dean in 2022. Since then, he has been leading strategic planning efforts focused on interdisciplinary initiatives and community-centered learning and research. As a specialist in piano and piano pedagogy, Dean Crappell authored the book *Teaching Piano Pedagogy: A Guidebook for Training Effective Teachers* (Oxford, 2019), which has been described as “essential to the professional pedagogue’s bookshelf.” In 2021, his interdisciplinary research team’s article, “The Effects of Group Keyboard Music Making on the Mood States of College Students,” appeared in the journal *Psychology of Music*. He is currently preparing a book chapter titled, “Training the Teachers,” for the forthcoming Oxford *Handbook of Piano Pedagogy* with co-author Liz Haddon (Univ. of York, England). Active in service for national and international organizations, Dean Crappell is an elected member of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) Commission on Accreditation. He also serves on the board for the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) and is a member of the College of Examiners (Piano) for the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Canada.



### ANDREW DAVIS Founding Dean of the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts at the University of Houston

Andrew Davis is Founding Dean of the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts at the University of Houston and holds the Cullen Foundation Endowed Dean’s Chair. His work has focused on integrating interdisciplinary training into the curriculum and on establishing the arts as a leading force for social engagement and community impact. He is an advocate for the value of a fine-arts and liberal-arts education; the benefits of international study-abroad opportunities for students; and the opportunity for the arts to actively engage and transform universities and their cities. A music theorist by training and a long-time board member of the Texas Society for Music Theory, he has published and lectured widely on opera and instrumental music of the Romantic and late-Romantic periods. He is the author of two books: *Il Trittico, Turandot, and Puccini’s Late Style* (Indiana University Press, 2010) and *Sonata Fragments: Romantic Narratives in Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms* (Indiana University Press, 2017). He is co-founder and moderator of the Council of Texas Arts Deans and in Houston serves on numerous boards, including the Phi Beta Kappa Alumni Association of Greater Houston, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Houston Arts Alliance, and the Frank Liù Jr. Academy of Music and the Arts. He is President of the Board for Workshop Houston, an innovative non-profit committed to resource development for under-served youth through education and the arts.

## From Classroom to Backlot: Rethinking Film Education in a Decentralized Industry

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

College campuses are rethinking their academic offerings in film studies and production as the entertainment industry expands beyond traditional hubs like Hollywood and New York. With Netflix, Paramount, and other studios opening production facilities in states like New Mexico, Montana, and Texas, the demand for skilled talent in these regions is growing. As a result, campuses in these states are adapting their curricula to better align with industry needs.

Programs that once focused primarily on film theory are integrating hands-on courses in cinematography, sound design, commercial music, visual effects, and production management. Schools are partnering with studios and local film commissions to offer internships and apprenticeships, giving students direct access to professional projects. Additionally, campuses are incorporating regional storytelling, Indigenous cinema, and documentary filmmaking to reflect the unique cultural narratives of these areas. As industry decentralizes, universities must evolve, ensuring students graduate with practical skills that meet the demands of an expanding film landscape.



**DENNIS BREE** AIA, LEED AP, Global Design Leader, Principal, DLR Group

Dennis has experience in multiple phases of design and project development. He has worked in a variety of building types including institutional, governmental, and specializes in cultural and performing arts facilities. He is often employed in fundraising efforts including rendering production and public outreach. He is committed to design excellence. Dennis is a faculty associate at the Design School at Arizona State University, where he has taught both undergraduate and graduate design studios in architecture.



**JAMES STONE** Department Chair, Film and Digital Arts, University of New Mexico

Dr. James Stone has served as chair of the department of Film and Digital Arts at The University of New Mexico since 2015. He has spearheaded the transformation of the department's curriculum to adapt to film, animation, and gaming industry opportunities. This change has resulted in explosive enrollment, a pipeline of skilled graduates finding well-paid jobs at Netflix and other major companies, and national attention for a department that is now a destination for out-of-state students eager to study and build their network at the heart of a burgeoning digital media scene.

Under Stone's stewardship, the department instituted The Show, a large-scale real world moviemaking experience with students taking the lead and working alongside industry professionals, and The Mentor Series, an ongoing symposium in which film luminaries offer advice to students and community members on how to find success doing what they love. Stone also helped develop the UNM Sitcom Boot Camp, an immersive, six-week course in sitcom creation taught by Hollywood director Brian Levant.

Stone's primary academic interests are in British cinema, American popular culture, apocalyptic imagery, and gender studies. His book *America Through a British Lens: Cinematic Portrayals, 1930-2010* is published by McFarland.



## Humanizing Performance Assessment in Complex University Environments

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

Academic colleges, schools or faculties are inherently complex entities where multiple levels of work and competing priorities must be carefully balanced. Leaders are responsible for managing two broad categories of staff: academic staff, who must engage meaningfully across the four pillars of teaching, research, administration, and service, and support and administrative staff, who must navigate the dual demands of faculty imperatives and directives from central administration. In this layered environment, performance assessment is both necessary and challenging.

In the increasingly technocratic management regimes of big universities, productivity measures and performance evaluation frameworks have become rigid and heavily reliant on quantifiable metrics. Human Resource (HR) solutions often employ elaborate systems of Key Performance Areas (KPAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), with goal libraries that require individuals to assign weightings to different tasks. While these frameworks offer a structured approach, they often limit the ability of line managers to recognize and reward the intangible qualities that contribute to exceptional performance – particularly in disciplines within the creative arts, where innovation, collaboration, creativity, and mentorship are critical components of success.

This facilitated discussion will focus on my experience in aiming to humanize performance assessment processes while maintaining alignment with ambitious university performance goals. I will explore the challenges of navigating institutional accountability structures while ensuring that faculty and staff feel valued beyond rigid metrics. Key themes will include:

- The limits of conventional HR-driven assessment models in creative and academic settings.
- Strategies for recognizing and rewarding contributions that do not fit neatly within quantifiable frameworks.
- The role of faculty leadership in fostering a culture where assessment supports both institutional objectives and individual professional growth.
- Practical approaches to balancing accountability with flexibility in performance management.

Participants will be invited to reflect on their own experiences, share best practices, and collectively explore ways to refine assessment models to better serve the complex and dynamic nature of academic faculties. The discussion will be particularly relevant to those in leadership roles seeking to balance institutional mandates with the human elements that drive academic and creative excellence.



**FEDERICO FRESCHI** Executive Dean: Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture University of Johannesburg

Federico previously served as Professor and Head of College of Te Maru Pūmanawa | Creative Practice & Enterprise at Otago Polytechnic | Te Pūkenga in Dunedin, New Zealand. An internationally published art historian, he has held leadership roles including Vice-President of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) and President of the South African Visual Arts Historians (SAVAH). He sits on the advisory committee of Forum Kunst und Markt (Technische Universität Berlin), is a member of the Cultures, Histories, and Identities in Visual Studies Research Network (University of Otago), and was lead editor of *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* while in New Zealand. His recent publications include the co-edited volumes *Troubling Images: Visual Culture & the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Wits University Press, 2020) and *The Politics of Design: Privilege and Prejudice in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and South Africa* (Otago Polytechnic Press, 2022). His forthcoming edited volume, *Lines Through Time: GLH Architects 1945–2025*, will be published by University of Johannesburg Press in 2025.

## Post-Pandemic Changes to the Arts Executive Search Process

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the focus of arts school executives as they navigated crisis management while keeping arts education programs afloat. The post-pandemic climate has affected not only the skills that executives are intended to possess but also the search and interview process itself. This discussion will explore how arts executives are recruited and selected, leadership attributes, and how the pandemic has changed the search process. The discussion will be led by an experienced partner from an executive search firm and a current dean.



### JACQUELINE "JACKIE" MILDNER

Jacqueline "Jackie" Mildner joined Isaacson, Miller in 2005, continuing her career in executive development for associations and higher education institutions. An active member of both the arts and culture and STEM practices, she has recruited leaders for non-profit and international organizations, including the New York Botanical Garden, the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Chicago Botanic Garden (current search), Heifer International, the Chautauqua Institution, the Mutter Museum at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Jeanne Tannenbaum Center for Creative Practice, the Crocker Art Museum, the Ulrich Art Museum, the Weatherspoon Art Museum, the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology and the Please Touch Museum.

Before coming to Isaacson, Miller, Jackie led the Congressional Fellows Program of The Brookings Institution, which brought young, promising executives to Capitol Hill. At the International Women's Forum, she worked with women of accomplishment and prestige who served as mentors to women at the critical mid-point of their careers.



### bruce d. mcclung Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG)

bruce mcclung is Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), a position he has held for the past six years. With thirty-three years' experience in higher education, mcclung has held academic appointments at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) where he served as Interim Dean for two years and Thomas James Kelly Professor of Music. At the University of Cincinnati, mcclung received the A. B. "Dolly" Cohen Award for Distinguished Excellence in Teaching and the Graduate School's Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring Award and was elected to the University's Academy for Fellows of Teaching and Learning. mcclung is the author of *Lady in the Dark: Biography of a Musical* (Oxford University Press), which received an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award, the Kurt Weill Prize, and the George Freedley Memorial Award's Special Jury Prize. He is co-editor of the two-volume critical edition of *Lady in the Dark* for the Kurt Weill Edition and served as the musical and text consultant for the Royal National Theatre's production of that musical play. Dean mcclung currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Carolina Theatre of Greensboro. He holds a PhD in musicology, an MA in musicology, and a MM in organ performance in literature from the Eastman School of Music, and a BM in organ performance from the New England Conservatory.



## Sustaining the Arts When Resources are Scarce

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

As public funding for arts education continues to decline, especially at state colleges and universities outside major metropolitan hubs, academic leaders face mounting pressure to demonstrate the value and viability of their arts programs. This round table will explore how integrating STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) into curriculum and campus facilities can serve as a powerful tool to attract students and support from potential donors. By combining artistic practice with hands-on experience in technology and innovation, academic institutions can create programs that are not only culturally vital but also economically relevant. Deans and administrators will share ideas on how to build these connections across departments, secure external partnerships, and advocate for investment in creative infrastructure.

The University of New Mexico (UNM) offers a compelling example of this approach through its new Center for Collaborative Arts and Technology (CCAT). Situated in Albuquerque, a growing hub for film, television, and digital media production, the CCAT connects students with innovative tools and industry-relevant experiences. This session will highlight how UNM is aligning its arts programming with the state's thriving creative economy, giving students opportunities to build careers in animation, film, XR, and design, all within reach of their classrooms. Participants will consider how similar strategies might be adapted in their own regions, using local industries and interdisciplinary collaboration to sustain and elevate the arts in resource-limited environments.



**STEWART SKYLAR COPELAND** ARTSLab Director (Arts, Research, Technology and Science), University of New Mexico

Stewart Copeland is a transdisciplinary artist with a passion for emergent media, new narrative genres, and artistic research. His art often incorporates technology as a means to explore, dissect, and interrogate technological systems themselves. Collaboration across disciplines plays a major role in his practice, particularly in the field of science where he often works with biologists, engineers, ecologists, and wildlife management personnel.

Stewart was a documentary filmmaker and professional musician in Tennessee before moving to Providence where he received his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. He was a lecturer in New Media at the University of Illinois and instructor in the Digital + Media and Landscape Architecture departments at RISD. Since 2018, Stewart has worked as a consultant and researcher for Nature Lab where he handles EPSCOR related visualization and imaging projects. He is a co-creator of VIS-A-THON, a collaborative art-based visualization program funded by the National Science Foundation and the RI C-AIM.

## University-Prison Partnerships: Facilitating Transformation through the Arts

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 16

Engaging in the arts can facilitate healing, expression, identity, and community. For those inside carceral spaces, the opportunity to express themselves through the arts is particularly impactful as it can provide them the vital experiences of freedom, imagination, and possibility necessary to survive, perhaps even thrive. For university leaders, faculty, and students, the practice arts and art therapy in prisons is a rich opportunity for mutual learning, community building, and creative practice. Between them, Annie Buckley and Dave Gussak have 50 years of experience bridging cultures by bringing the arts and art therapy to those that are imprisoned. Join them in dialogue to learn and explore the ways that Universities and Colleges can leverage such creative experiences to build partnerships with local corrections organizations. Participants will explore such questions as: How and why does creative expression thrive in what is essentially an uncreative space? What are the specific benefits that the arts bring to those inside? What unique partnerships exist between universities and carceral systems that bring the arts and the art therapies inside its walls? Ultimately, this round table will initiate discussions that will continue well past its allotted time, resulting in an expansion of awareness of—and a desire to facilitate—such transformations.



**ANNIE BUCKLEY** founding Director of the Institute for the Arts, Humanities, and Social Justice at San Diego State University

Annie Buckley, MFA is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and founding Director of the Institute for the Arts, Humanities, and Social Justice at San Diego State University, where she is also Professor of Visual Studies. Buckley is also the founder and director of Prison Arts Collective, a statewide initiative in California that has brought arts to over 8,000 people in prisons since 2013, and VISTA (Valuing Incarcerated Scholars through Academia), an SDSU BA degree at Centinela State Prison.

Buckley is the author of more than 250 reviews and essays on contemporary art in international publications including Artforum and Art in America and has written extensively about her work in prisons for the Los Angeles Review of Books. She is the editor, most recently, of Higher Education and the Carceral State (Routledge, 2024) and is at work on a monograph. Buckley has been awarded numerous grants and contracts from the California Arts Council, CDCR, the NEA, and the Mellon Foundation.



**DAVID GUSSAK** Ph.D., ATR-BC, HLM is Professor for the Florida State University Art Therapy program

David Gussak, Ph.D., ATR-BC, HLM is Professor for the Florida State University Art Therapy program; for 10 years, he served as Chairperson for the university's Department of Art Education. Dr. Gussak has more than 30 years of clinical and practical experience as an art therapist in numerous settings, including various forensic systems, several correctional institutions, a private practice and as the Project Director of the FSU/FI Department of Corrections Art Therapy in Prisons program. In 2025, Gussak developed and now directs the Florida State University Institute for Art and Art Therapy with the Imprisoned [AATI].

He has presented extensively internationally and nationally on—amongst many topics—forensic art therapy and art therapy in forensic settings. Along with more than 50 journal and chapter publications, he has authored several books, including Art on Trial: Art Therapy for Capital Murder Cases [2013, Columbia University Press], Art and Art Therapy with the Imprisoned: Re-Creating Identity [2019, Routledge], and The Frenzied Dance of Art and Violence [2022, Oxford University Press]. He is co-editor [with Dr. Marcia Rosal] of the upcoming 101 chapter textbook The Wiley Handbook of Art Therapy [2nd edition].