

## **MARIEKE MICHELLE DAVIS**

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Curriculum Vitae

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### **Education**

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MFA in Visual Arts, *Summa Cum Laude*, Columbus College of Art & Design  
(Spring 2023)

Arizona State University, *Summa Cum Laude*, 4.00 cum. gpa (2017)

BFA, Studio Art (Drawing), English Literature Minor, Women's & Gender Studies  
Minor, Certificate in Creative Writing

MFA Thesis Exhibition, Premiere of Children's Book, *Lily, the Blind Unicorn*, CCAD  
Beeler Gallery, (Spring 2023)

BFA Senior Exhibition: "Tell-Tale Art: An Exhibition of Narrative Art," featuring  
the world premiere of Volume I (Prologue & Chapter 1) of the graphic series  
*Ember Black*, in audio and print versions (Fall 2016)

### **Academic Awards and Honors**

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Lighthouse Guild Graduate School Scholarship - \$10,000 to Create MFA Thesis  
Project in print and audio (2022-23)

The Jennica Ferguson Memorial Scholarship - \$1500 Award from the National  
Federation of the Blind-Ohio (NFB-OH) to Produce my MFA Project (2021)

Venture Scholarship, Columbus College of Art & Design for MFA Visual Arts  
Program - \$25,000/yr., Renewable for Second Year (Fall 2021)

Dean's List, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, ASU (2012-2017)

The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi (2016)

ASU Alumni Association/Medallion Scholarship (2012-2016)

ASU New American University (NAMU) Dean's Award (2012-2016)

John W. Luttrell/Children's Cancer Network Scholarship (2012-2016)

Golden Key International Honour Society (2015)

The J. Russell & Bonita Nelson Art Scholarship for Outstanding Senior (2015)

Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation Scholarship (2013-2015)

ASU School of Art Talented Artist Scholarship (2012, 2014)

Gilbert Lions Club Scholarship (2012-2013)

### **Non-Academic Awards and Honors**

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WINNER (one of five teams), Accessible Comics Design Competition for Vizling  
Audio App Supporting Selections from "Life is Blurry" - \$1500 Award Deferred  
to Production Team at Wichita State Univ., Darren DeFrain, Director (Dec. 2022)

FIRST PRIZE, Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation Art Contest (April 2021)

GRANT RECIPIENT, ARIZONA COMMISSION ON THE ARTS - \$5,000

Research & Development Grant to complete Chapter 2 of graphic series, *Ember Black*,  
in print and on audio by March 31, 2019

VSA EMERGING YOUNG ARTIST (one of 15 artists chosen nationally) - Program  
sponsored by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Volkswagen

(Aug./Oct. 2017), entailing a \$2,000 award, three days of art entrepreneurship development seminars, curated exhibitions in Washington, DC and Herndon, VA, and a year-long national exhibition tour including work from the other VSA finalists. AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD, Herberger Institute IDEA Showcase, for Volume 1 of the graphic series, *Ember Black*, with audio companion specially designed for the visually impaired (April 2016)

FIRST PRIZE, Phoenix Sister Cities International Competition, for original drawing, “An Extended Hand” (2014), including a \$500 award and permanent exhibition at Warehouse 1005, Phoenix, AZ (Theme: “Breaking Barriers ... Opening Doors”)

FIRST PLACE, *ChoiceMagazineListening.com* National Poster Contest, advertising alternative reading formats for the visually impaired (2014)

## **Exhibitions & Presentations**

MFA Thesis Exhibition, Premiere of Children’s Book, *Lily, the Blind Unicorn*, CCAD Beeler Gallery, March 30-April 23, 2023), in Braille and regular print formats. During the Exhibition and first weekend, I sold over \$350 in print copies alone.

CCAD Exhibition for Disabled Artists, Beeler Gallery, Spring 2023. I exhibited my fine art pieces, including my self-portrait, “Unicorn in the Garden.”

ACLU of Arizona Traveling Exhibit, “In This Together: An Art Exhibition on the Disability Rights Movement”—Tempe History Museum. I participated as an art exhibitor for my drawing, “An Extended Hand,” and a panelist during the Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> opening reception, presenting the topic of disability discrimination in education. <https://action.aclu.org/webform/az-inthistogether-tempe> (Oct.-Dec. 2019), and <https://youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=tghJcMrmxSE&feature=youtu.be>

Phoenix Fan Fusion, “Creating *Ember Black – Chapter 2*” in Print & Audio: World Premiere of *Ember Black – Chapter 2: Searching for Emily*—launch of the complete audio with PowerPoint presentation of the print version, followed by panel discussion with five of our voice actors (May 26, 2019).

Phoenix Comic Fest Panel, “The Philosophy of *Rick & Morty*” and Presentation, “So Funny, It Hurts: Introducing the Autobiographical Comic Strip, *Life is Blurry*, and Other Comics Created By and About the Disabled” (May 25-26, 2018)

VSA Emerging Young Artists Program Curated Exhibition at the Rayburn Office Building in Washington, DC and the Volkswagen Headquarters in Herndon, VA (Oct. 24-27, 2017), prior to year-long national tour. Entry: Excerpts from my autobiographical comic strip, “Life is Blurry.”

Phoenix Comicon Panel, “Creating *Ember Black*, in Print and in Audio, for the Visually Impaired” (May 2017). This panel explains the process I employed in creating two versions of the first installment (Prologue/Chapter 1) of my graphic series, *Ember Black*, and includes an excerpt from both versions, a discussion with my sound engineer and voice actors, and an audience Q&A session.

BFA Senior Art Exhibition, “Tell-Tale Art: An Exhibition of Narrative Art” (Fall 2016). As part of a group with four other artists in my ART 482 – Portfolio & Exhibition class (BFA Art capstone course), I was responsible for creating, writing, editing, and distributing the press release, advertising the theme and content of the Exhibition,

which ran Sept. 26-29, at Gallery 100, on the ASU Tempe campus. I also was responsible for arranging the catering for the Exhibition's reception on Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>, managing the budget, locating and communicating with the caterer, ordering the food, collecting group members' contributions, and paying the caterer for services. As an Exhibitor, I chose 13 works that best expressed all my ASU degree programs, as well as my evolution as a "visually impaired visual artist": self-portraits ("Inspiration," "Self Portrait in Gold"), Intermedia ("Sight of Hand," utilizing my first white cane for the visually impaired, embellished with Found Objects), the "Women of the Apocalypse" series (creating a "cognitive dissonance" juxtaposing Alphonse Mucha's *Art Nouveau* stylized, romantic depictions of women with their real-world struggles, cast within a biblical framework of "War," "Famine," "Pestilence," and "Death"), and the World Premiere of my graphic series, *Ember Black, Vol. I*, the Prologue and first chapter of my graphic novel, in both audio and print formats. I displayed and allowed the Exhibition audience free access to both formats, with an invitation to purchase. As a result, I sold ten copies to the public and distributed 24 more as complimentary copies to my voice actors, sound engineer, professors, mentors, and the media. As an Exhibitor, I prepared my Artist's Statement, cleaned gallery walls and floors, and installed (and then de-installed) my own work.

Exhibitor, Arizona Opera Company, "Young Artist Showcase" (2013-14), Caitlyn Deegan, curator. As one of a group of young artists, I exhibited two of my abstract works—"Bouquet" and "Color Flow"—to celebrate the new location for the AOC (1636 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ) in its inaugural season.

## **Publications**

*Lily, the Blind Unicorn* - A children's book, printed in Braille and regular formats, Spring 2023. Produced as a Creative Audio Companion ([mariekedavis.bandcamp.com](http://mariekedavis.bandcamp.com)), July 2023

*Ember Black – Chapter Two: Searching for Emily* – Continuation of Graphic Series, In Print and Audio, Funded—in part—by a grant from the AZ Commission on the Arts, March 2019.

*Ember Black, Vol. I* (Prologue & Chapter 1: "Ignite!"), first installment of graphic series, Fall 2016. Self-Published through the ASU Print & Imaging Lab.

"Disappearing Act," a one-act, one-scene play, published in *Canyon Voices*, an on-line literary magazine, [canyonvoices.asu.edu](http://canyonvoices.asu.edu), Issue 13, Spring 2016.

Five Original Drawings—"An Extended Hand," and the "Women of the Apocalypse" series: "War," "Famine," "Pestilence," and "Death"—published in *Marooned*, ASU Undergraduate Creative Review, Volume 13, Fall 2015.

"The Onlookers," short story, published in *Marooned*, Undergraduate Creative Review, Volume 12, Fall 2014.

In addition, I have authored and copyrighted the short stories, "The Shift," "Cracked," "The Toll," "True Colors," eight poems, and other one-scene plays (2012-16). Continuing projects include *Ember Black* (graphic series), *The Soul Keeper* (novel), and *Life is Blurry: A Graphic Memoir*.

## **Articles, Interviews, & Features**

### Print:

- “Blindness No Roadblock for Gilbert Artist,” by Paul Maryniak. *Gilbert Sun News*, Oct. 8, 2023. <https://digitaledition.gilbertsunnews.com>
- “Lily the Blind Unicorn and the Value of Inclusion,” by Rachel Pulver, The Phoenix Foundation for Blind Children, Aug. 21, 2023. <https://seeitourway.org/lily-the-blind-unicorn-and-the-value-of-inclusion>
- “Life is Blurry, #25,” Reprinted in zine, “To Be Young (And Disabled), Vol. 1. <https://fliphtml5.com/rmwyc/qwmo> , pgs. 22-23, May 2021.
- “A Different P.O.V. - #3: ‘In the Cave of Hoarders,’” by Marieke Davis, @ability360 (Facebook), May 1, 2020.
- “Taking a Humorous Approach – Because Life is Blurry,” a blog by Marieke Davis, #MyBlindStory (March 18, 2020), [https://blindnewworld.org/taking\\_a\\_humorous\\_approach\\_because\\_life\\_is\\_blurry/](https://blindnewworld.org/taking_a_humorous_approach_because_life_is_blurry/)
- “A Different P.O.V. (Point of View), by Marieke Davis,” *LivAbility Magazine*, ed.19, <https://ability360.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020-01-livability-magazine-edition-19.pdf>, Winter 2020.
- “Life is Blurry’ Comic Strip #25 – by Marieke Davis,” *LivAbility Magazine*, ed. 18, <https://ability360.org/livability/art-livability/life-is-blurry-comic-strip-number-25/> Fall 2019.
- “Marieke Davis and ‘Ember Black’: Creating an Artistic Vision Accessible By All,” by Kira Assad. *Accents of the Department of English at Arizona State University*, Vol. 22, June 12, 2019. <https://english.asu.edu/node/2798>
- “Marieke Davis/Blind Beauty Issue 43,” [www.boldblindbeauty.com](http://www.boldblindbeauty.com), June 28, 2018.
- “The Passion of Narrative Art,” *DIVERSEability Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2018, [www.diverseabilitymagazine.com](http://www.diverseabilitymagazine.com)
- Interview with Attie Murphy, “Coloring Outside the Lines,” *State Press Magazine*, Vol. 17, Issue 5, March 1, 2017.
- Interview with Chris McCrory, “ASU Student Shows Off Superpower: Creating Comic Books,” *State Press*, Nov. 16, 2016, [www.statepress.com/article/2016/11spcampus-ember-black-comic](http://www.statepress.com/article/2016/11spcampus-ember-black-comic) .
- Interview with Marshall Terrill, “Reimagining the Comic Book Genre,” *ASU Now*, May 2, 2016, <https://asunow.asu.edu/20160502-creativity-reimagining-comic-book-genre> .
- Interview with Eric Mungenast, “Partially Blind Gilbert Resident Earns Accolades for Talents in Visual Arts,” *East Valley Tribune*, June 18, 2014. [www.eastvalleytribune.com/local/gilbert/articles\\_09faabb2-f356-11e-990e-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/local/gilbert/articles_09faabb2-f356-11e-990e-001a4bcf887a.html) .
- “Adversity Doesn’t Prepare Teen for Gun Tragedy,” *The Gilbert Republic* Guest Op-Ed & Political Cartoon, June 2, 2012.

### Audio & Video:

Interview with Monica Garcia, KPNX Channel 12, May 24, 2018;

<https://www.12news.com/mobile/video/news/entertainment-news/comic-fest-blind-artist/75-8139070>

Interview with Dr. Lorraine Festa for her show on *AZ State Talking News*, “Lifestyles with Lorraine,” a program serving the blind and visually impaired, on June 6, 2016. Dr. Festa interviewed me about my work creating an audio version of *Ember Black* for the blind and visually impaired, what it is like to be a “visually impaired visual artist,” and about my future plans for the graphic series.

Interview with Jimmy Jenkins, *KJZZ (91.5 FM): The Show*, May 16, 2016; <https://theshow.kjzz.org/content/306880/ember-black-graphic-novel-drawn-artists-unique-perspective>. Mr. Jenkins interviewed me about creating audio and printed versions of *Ember Black*, as well as my perspective on the potential of graphic series and comics (“Comics can be so much more than people punching each other”). The KJZZ web site also includes an audio excerpt of the *Ember Black* Prologue.

Video: *ember on vimeo*,” May 2, 2016; <https://vimeo.com/163615555/d0abe5503f>.

Produced by ASU for the *ASU Now* article, this is a short video about my concept and vision for *Ember Black*, and includes my hand-drawn story board panels.

## **Work Experience**

Since the ASU School of Art had no faculty to teach me how to create a graphic series, I taught myself by consulting “how to” books, such as *Framed Ink: Drawing and Composition for Visual Storytellers*, by Marcos Mateau-Mestre, *How to Draw Noir Comics: The Art and Technique of Visual Storytelling*, by Shawn Martinbrough, and *Writing and Illustrating the Graphic Novel: Everything You Need to Know to Create Great Work and Get it Published*, by Daniel Cooney. I was also impressed and heavily influenced by Scott McCloud’s *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology Are Revolutionizing an Art Form* and *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*.

Under the auspices of Professor Forrest Solis, I wrote the script and created the story board for the *Ember Black* Prologue during the Spring 2015 semester. Motivated by the success of this Independent Study, I proceeded to use the techniques I learned in my creative writing classes to write three drafts of my first chapter during the summer of 2015. Inspired by my ASU Disability Resource Center (DRC) Alternate Formats Liaison (Jessica Newton), who once told me that her daughter is also a visual artist, but—since Jessi is completely blind—she has never been able to see her daughter’s work, I resolved to create an audio version of *Ember Black*, to serve the needs of the visually impaired, similar to how my printed class materials are converted to audio formats. In order to entertain all audiences, however, I envisioned an audio version complete with voice actors, music, sound effects, and the addition of a narrator to describe what the fully sighted take for granted when viewing my artwork. I converted my story board script to an audio script during the 2015 winter break, even while I continued to create the story board for my first chapter in the next two Independent Study courses, under the supervision of Professor Henry Schoebel during the 2015-16 academic year.

Thanks to the assistance of ASU President Michael Crow, I was able to have Professor Jake Pinholster, Director of the School of Film, Dance, and Theatre, supervise the Independent Study for my audio project. For this, I conducted two rounds of auditions for

seven voice actors—all ASU students—located rehearsal space and set up a schedule, directed my voice actors, and worked with a sound engineer, Derek Stevenson, an Arts, Media, and Engineering student, to create an audio recording at the AME lab studio. All my voice actors and Mr. Stevenson signed contracts and were compensated for their work; in addition, everyone received a copy of the CD and the print version during my BFA Senior Exhibition (Fall 2016). I worked with Mr. Stevenson, post-production, to refine and edit the sound effects and music, and the audio project was completed by April 2016, two weeks after the project won the Audience Choice Award at the First Annual Herberger Institute IDEA Showcase, so the prize money helped pay my crew.

In my fifth and final Independent Study during the summer of 2016, I worked with Photoshop and Illustrator to move my hand-drawn story board into a printable, digital format, inserting captions, banners, dialogue balloons and some color in what is essentially a “noir” comic. I completed this last part of the project under the auspices of Dr. Heather Green; however, since her knowledge was very general, I relied upon the graphic artists in Brian Miller’s Hi-Fi Color Facebook group to give me invaluable direction, suggestions, and advice. With their wonderful assistance, I was able to complete the first installment of *Ember Black*, which was then published by the ASU Print and Imaging Lab in August 2016, thus realizing my dream of creating an All-ASU senior project that is a credit to the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of Arizona State University.

Since no such internship or job existed in the so-called “real world,” I created my own opportunity, and learned far more than I ever thought possible. The experience extended my perceptions of my capabilities, exposed me to unique situations and taught me how to plan, organize, and solve problems when they arose. This was the most consequential project in my life, and it gave me the confidence to pursue and win an Artist Research & Development Grant (ARDG) through the Arizona Commission on the Arts in 2017, to create *Ember Black – Chapter Two* in print and audio. Since I was no longer an ASU student, I had to rely upon a private sound studio and recording engineer to create the audio version, but I was fortunate in that most of my voice actors from the ASU project signed on for this second project. I was even more fortunate to have my “Legends” course instructor, Professor Lawrence Ellis, agree to voice the part of a new character, the mysterious, dark sorcerer known as Necra. The entire project took 1-1/2 years to complete, and was considerably more expensive than the previous ASU project, but I stayed within my \$5,000 budget and all my contracted cast and crew were well paid for their work; however, I concluded that audio productions of graphic literature on a college campus is not only more financially feasible—it is also more educationally satisfying, in that every member of my cast and crew learned something about interdisciplinary collaboration and creating a unique work of art that is accessible for the visually disabled while enhancing the experience for the fully sighted.

As I continue to create new chapters of *Ember Black* I know what I will do differently, and I believe that I can teach others how to create their own graphic series—rendering an experience and education uncommon in the commercial, private sector.

Working as an art entrepreneur since my 2017 graduation from ASU, I am also adding to the original seven “Life is Blurry” comic strips that I created for my Women’s & Gender Studies course, “Chronicling Women’s Lives.” I created a web site (@lifeisblurry) on Facebook, and excerpts from this comic earned a VSA/Kennedy Center Emerging Young Artist Award, one of fifteen awarded nationally, making me only the third Arizonan to have ever been so honored. This, in turn, has led to my employment with Ability 360’s quarterly publication, *LivAbility Magazine*, as a feature cartoonist, from August 2019 until July 2021, just before leaving for Columbus, OH to begin an MFA Program in Visual Art at the Columbus College of Art & Design. In addition to creating “Life is Blurry” strips, I created a new feature for *LivAbility*, “A Different P.O.V.,” to meet their request for “more edgy content.” This new comic featured current events with an ironic twist, through the perspective of people with disabilities. My last contribution to *LivAbility* was providing a request from the editorial staff for an illustration for an article on computer accessibility for disabled users.

After graduating *summa cum laude* with my MFA in Visual Arts from the Columbus College of Art & Design in May 2023, I returned to Arizona and set about creating the audio companion to my thesis project, my first children’s book, *Lily, the Blind Unicorn*, since it is my mission to expand the audience for visual art to include the blind and visually impaired while enhancing the experience for the fully sighted. I worked with a sound engineer/designer, newly graduated from ASU’s Arts, Media, & Engineering program, and two voice actors, in addition to voicing the part of Lily myself. Professional lutenist Isidoro Roitman kindly gave us permission to use two of his pieces, “Greensleeves” and “Packingtons Pound,” and we produced sound effects in studio on the ASU campus to avoid copyright restrictions. The audio companion is offered, free of charge, on Bandcamp ([mariekedavis.bandcamp.com](http://mariekedavis.bandcamp.com)), because I do not believe that people with disabilities should be required to pay more for accessibility. Moreover, as before, all my actors and crew were under contract and compensated for their services, because I believe that all artists deserve payment for their work.

## **Community Involvement**

Most recently, I accepted an invitation from Prof. Darren Defrain at Wichita State University to join its Vizling/Voice Over Advisory Board to Develop Accessible Comics for the Blind. While attending CCAD, I was an Accessibility Consultant for the Columbus Museum of Art, a member of the National Federation of the Blind - Ohio Chapter and a volunteer for the 2021 Thurber Dog Trot 5K at Green Lawn Cemetery to support the work of Thurber House and the Thurber Museum, situated in the childhood home of the late *New Yorker* cartoonist and humorist James Thurber in Columbus, OH.

In Arizona I served on the ASU Medallion Scholarship screening committee (Jan.-March 2020 and 2021), evaluating incoming freshmen applications and interviewing finalists for the 4-year scholarship program. I also served as an art exhibitor and panelist for the ACLU of Arizona event, “In This Together: An Art Exhibition on the Disability Rights Movement,” on the topic of disability discrimination in education (2019). As a past recipient of the ASU Alumni Association Medallion Scholarship (2012- 2016), I

participated in a variety of community activities, with my student class cohort and as an individual, such as Pat's Run and ASU Cares. In addition, I volunteered with the Children's Cancer Network, assisting with events such as the Cancer Awareness Fair, the Holiday Party, and the Spring Fashion Show. I also volunteered at the Foundation for Blind Children in Phoenix, helping children create audio comics, and this experience has inspired me to create a version of my MFA Thesis Project that would be accessible in three formats--text, audio, and iPad. Prior to the pandemic, I have also served as a Safety Escort for Planned Parenthood of Arizona, Tempe Branch. In Sept. 2018, I was a presenter for the Phoenix Area "Badge Bonanza" event at Glendale Community College, where I helped Girl Scouts create comics for badge credit. Later that year, I gave a motivational presentation to 15 high school seniors at The School for the Deaf & Blind – Tucson, AZ: "My Journey as a Visually Impaired Visual Artist."