

Derek Spencer

DIRECTOR / TEACHING ARTIST

EDUCATION

- 2023-25 **School of the Art Institute of Chicago**
Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art, Performance
Chicago, IL (expected Spring 2025)
- 2010-14 **University of Chicago**
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy; Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy
Chicago, IL

SELECTED THEATER DIRECTING

- 2024 **Field of Flesh**
Immersive theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by and performed at Leisure; 4-week run
Chicago, IL
An intimate performance taking place entirely at an overflowing dinner table shared by audience and actors. Dinner is always “almost ready” and a dying patriarch calls out from his hospice bed in the corner.
- 2022 **Loser**
Theatrical production, written by Derek Spencer & Soren Royer-McHugh
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed at Art Share L.A.; 5-week run
Los Angeles, CA
A man accidentally locks himself in the bedroom of his late incel cousin.
- 2022 **FURY**
Site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ball State University, performed at Cornerstone Center for the Arts;
1-week run
Muncie, IN
An expressionist, ritualistic retelling of The Eumenides, devised with an ensemble of undergraduate acting students.
- 2020 **Everyone Agrees It’s about to Explode**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed at The Brewery Arts Complex; 6-week run
(cut short by COVID-19)
Los Angeles, CA
Environmental theater piece about a radical anarchist collective reeling from the disappearance of their enigmatic leader. Audience members are cast as new recruits witnessing the group’s unraveling at a covert meeting.

- 2018 **The Rose Theater Presents...**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed at O' Project Space alongside Matthew Haywood's solo visual art show *The Rose Theater*; 2-week run
Los Angeles, CA
A meta-theatrical performance constructed in response to the paintings of Matthew Haywood. The show is almost always about to begin, if only the players could wake from their nostalgic dreams.
- 2018 **The Stars**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed as part of Hollywood Fringe Festival;
3-week run
Los Angeles, CA
A 1-audience adventure down the Walk of Stars. Each of the 5 scenes is commentary on what came before: a dialectic exploration of fame, legacy, and consumerism amid the touristy, hyper-realistic dreamscape of Hollywood Blvd on a summer night.
- 2018 **They Who Saw the Deep**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun; 4-week run
Los Angeles, CA
A dreamy retelling of The Epic of Gilgamesh in which every character is a different version of Gilgamesh, staged in a 33-room, 17,000 sq. ft. abandoned Koreatown building. Audience members roam freely and follow the character of their choice on a doomed quest for immortality.
- 2018 **Agnosia**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed at Lacy Lofts; 126-performance run
Los Angeles, CA
A 1-audience choose-your-own-adventure melodrama in which two characters ask for the audience's help as they both grieve the other, followed by a light-hearted coda in which a stranger wanders the halls looking for his lost cat.
- 2017 **Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed at Montserrat DTLA; 2-week run
Los Angeles, CA
A fever dream inspired by J.G. Ballard's The Atrocity Exhibition that imagines Reagan's California as a psychosexual playground.
- 2016 **Grandpa Johnson Is DEAD**
Immersive, site-specific theater production; devised by ensemble
Produced by Ceaseless Fun, performed at Grandpa Johnson's Cocktail Club;
1-week run
Los Angeles, CA
Audience members entering the bar are handed a menu of scenes that they order from the DJ booth, each themed around American desire, nostalgia, and indulgence.

SELECTED FILM DIRECTING

- 2025 **Nostalgia Hell**
2-channel video installation
A man in a rocking chair tries and fails to recall events from his past as an ensemble of actors reenacts his mutterings.
- 2024 **Personally I Find It Rude to Be Boring**
Experimental narrative short film
2024 Official Selection Chicago Underground Film Festival
2024 Honorable Mention Video Art and Experimental Film Festival
An underground LA rave descends into chaos.
- 2024 **I Think Our Best Work Is Behind Us**
2-channel video installation
An ensemble of actors and a film crew work to get “the shot,” but no one agrees on what “the shot” is.
- 2023 **Whenever I Talk I Am Talking about Myself**
3-channel video installation
An actor delivers a monologue directly to the camera over and over, despite rising tensions between her and the director.

TEACHING

- 2024 **Leysin American School**
Teacher, Summer in Switzerland
Course: Film & Literature
Leysin, Switzerland
- 2024 **School of the Art Institute of Chicago**
Instructor of Record
Course: Advanced Survey of Modern to Contemporary Art and Architecture
(Spring, 2024)
Chicago, IL
- 2023-24 **School of the Art Institute of Chicago**
Teaching Assistant
Courses: Theater Is NOT NOT Performance (Fall, 2024), Site Practices (Spring, 2024), Introduction to Performance (Fall, 2023)
Chicago, IL
- 2022 **Ball State University**
Guest Artist
Courses: Movement Studio 3, Senior Capstone Immersive Learning, Scenic Design & Technology (Spring, 2022)
Muncie, IN

AWARDS, GRANTS, RESIDENCIES

- 2024 **Foundation OBRAS**
Residency
Estremoz, Portugal

- 2023-25 **School of the Art Institute of Chicago**
Visionary Scholars Award
- 2023 **Directors Lab West**
Selected Participant
Pasadena, CA
- 2022 **Plyspace Residency Program**
Resident Fellowship
Muncie, IN
- 2020 **Foundation for Contemporary Arts**
Grant Recipient (*Everyone Agrees It's about to Explode*)
- 2018 **Hollywood Fringe Festival**
Golden Key Award Nomination (*The Stars*)
Los Angeles, CA
- 2014 **University of Chicago**
UChicago Careers in Journalism, Arts, and Media Apprenticeship Grant

WORKSHOPS, TALKS

- 2024 **The Ensemble: Polyphony, Cacophony, Collaboration**
Artist talk at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Chicago, IL
- 2024 **Devised Theater**
2-day workshop for Odyssey Festival at Stevenson High School
Lincolnshire, IL
- 2024 **Artist Talk**
Foundation OBRAS
Estremoz, Portugal
- 2022 **Artist Talk**
Plyspace/Ball State University
Muncie, IN
- 2019, 2021 **Soft Focus**
Monthly devised theater workshop at Thymele Arts
Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 **Feedforward/Feedback: Fostering Connectivity in Immersive Performance**
The League of Experiential and Immersive Artists
Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 **Immersive 101 Panel**
Hollywood Fringe Festival
Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 **Ensemble Devising Workshop**
6-week course at Thymele Arts
Los Angeles, CA

2018 **Dissecting the Devising Process**
The League of Experiential and Immersive Artists
Los Angeles, CA

ARTS LEADERSHIP

2016-present **Ceaseless Fun**
Artistic Director
Los Angeles, CA
Ceaseless Fun fosters empathetic and socially engaged discourse through feverishly philosophical and playfully illicit live performances. Our work is always collaboratively devised, staged in unconventional spaces, and affords the audience agency.

2017-21 **The League of Experiential and Immersive Artists**
Founding Board Member
Los Angeles, CA
LEIA seeks to advance the immersive and experiential arts through collaboration, education, and advocacy on behalf of creators and producers.

GROUP SHOWS

2024 **Tangible Pneumonics**
No Nation
Chicago, IL

2024 **Experimental Self-Portraiture**
SAIC Galleries
Chicago, IL

2015 **Kitchen Sync**
Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts
Chicago, IL

ADDITIONAL THEATER CREDITS

2019	Cages by CJ Baran and Benjamin Romans	Immersive Consultant	Woolf and the Wondershow	LA
2019	Re-lease devised by ensemble	Associate Director	Dir. Meredith Treinen	LA
2017	Grief devised by ensemble	Associate Director	Dir. Meredith Treinen	LA
2016	The Re-Gift of Life by David Clifford Turner	Director	Tiny Rhino	LA
2016	Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite by Derek Spencer	Director	Montserrat DTLA	LA
2016	The Battle of Philippi by Derek Spencer	Director	Montserrat DTLA	LA
2015	Batty Old Biddies by Marty Siegel	Sound Designer	Athenaeum Theater	Chicago
2015	The Antitheatrical Prejudice devised by ensemble	Ensemble/ Sound Designer	Rhino Fest	Chicago

2014	Twain's World	Assistant Stage Manager	First Floor Theater	Chicago
2014	A Crackup at the Race Riots by Harmony Korine	Director	University Theater	Chicago
2014	Godspell by Stephen Schwartz	Pit Orchestra (electric bass)	University Theater	Chicago
2013	Hamletmachine by Heiner Müller	<i>Gertrude-Hamlet</i>	University Theater	Chicago
2013	The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare	<i>Duke</i>	University Theater	Chicago

ADDITIONAL FILM CREDITS

2025	Club Gala short film	Creative Producer	Dir. Josh Brainin	Chicago
2025	You Should Say Fuck Too video art series	Editor	Dir. Tilcara Webb	Chicago
2023	Soft Air short film	1st Assistant Director	Dir. Chelsea Swan	Chicago
2021	Everyone Agrees It's about to Explode short film	Editor/Executive Producer	Dir. Nic Murphy	LA
2020	Scare Me Most music video	Performance Director	Dir. Jasmine Osean Thomas	LA
2020	Kombucha Growler music video	Principal	Dir. Stephen Marsiano	LA

WRITING

2017	We Found Love Short play commissioned by Futureramen
2016	On Baldness Ceaseless Fun 001: Solar Anus
2016	The Manifesto of Futurism Short play commissioned by Tiny Rhino
2016	Flower Office VideoVideoZine
2016	I listened to an album each day for a year. Here's what I learned about culture and taste. Vox
2015	Ceaseless Fun Self-published zine
2015	Untitled Ketazine
2015	Manic Pixie Slaughterhouse Apocrypha & Abstractions

PRESS

- 2024 Chicago Reader: [“Last Supper.”](#) Kerry Reid
- 2024 Your Chicago Guide: [“Field of Flesh”](#)
- 2024 Chicago Stage and Screen: [“Putting the FUN in Dysfunctional Family.”](#) Angela Allyn
- 2024 Third Coast Review: [“Surreality Abounds in Field of Flesh.”](#) Adam Kaz
- 2024 No Proscenium: [“Review Rundown”](#)
- 2019 Do New: [“Immersive Theater Life: Interview with Writer/Director Derek Spencer”](#)
- 2018 FringeReview: [“The Stars”](#), Guy Picot
- 2018 Haunting: [“The Stars Shine Bright in a Year to Remember from Ceaseless Fun.”](#) Chris Wollman
- 2018 My Haunt Life: [“Hollywood Fringe Fest 2018 - Week One Reviews”](#)
- 2018 Hollywood in Toto: [“Ceaseless Fun Takes Immersive Theater Out for a Poetic Spin.”](#) Lawrence Meyers
- 2018 My Haunt Life: [“Catching Up From Life”](#)
- 2018 No Proscenium: [“Hollywood Fringe 2018: The NoPro Diary”](#)
- 2018 We Like LA: [“‘They Who Saw the Deep’ is Like Being Lost in the Weirdest Dream You Can Possibly Imagine.”](#) Juliet Bennett Rylah
- 2018 No Proscenium: [“Sometimes The Abyss Looks Back: They Who Saw The Deep.”](#) Noah Nelson
- 2018 Haunting: [“Ceaseless Fun’s They Who Saw the Deep Redefines an Epic.”](#) Cristen Brinkerhoff
- 2018 Media Geeks: [“Ceaseless Fun: They Who Saw the Deep.”](#) Lacey Rae
- 2018 No Proscenium: [“After Dark with Ceaseless Fun”](#)
- 2018 My Haunt Life: [“Stash House, Agnosia, Sleep No More, and Then She Fell”](#)
- 2018 Haunting: [“Agnosia Reflects on the Divinity of Darkness.”](#) Chris Wollman
- 2018 Immersive Junkie: [“Agnosia by Ceaseless Fun”](#)
- 2018 No Proscenium: [“Grief As Fractal Art: ‘Agnosia.’”](#) Noah Nelson
- 2017 No Proscenium: [“NoPro Podcast Episode 123: Derek Spencer of Ceaseless Fun”](#)
- 2017 No Proscenium: [“Crash Course: A Reagan Obsessed Fever Dream Explodes In LA.”](#) Noah Nelson
- 2015 QtL Podcast: [“Charles Murray Justifies the Canon”](#)