

Michael Gorman

Playwright / Writer / Director / Installation & Experimental Theater Artist



Mike Gorman is a playwright, installation and experimental theater artist, and founder of “The Forty Hour Club”, his current production company formed by a collective of independent artists dedicated to creating installations and productions that ask the question “To what consequence?” Mike’s work focuses on the economic, environmental and systemic destruction facing working communities and the paramount issue of sustainability.

For the past two decades, Mike has been writing and producing plays about the opiate epidemic. At the forefront of his work is a trilogy of plays —“The Honor and Glory of Whaling”—that deals with the issue of opiate addiction in the commercial fishing community of New England. His newest play —“Chasing the New White Whale”—further explores the current National opioid crisis through the unique lens of the fishing industry, and draws inspiration from Moby Dick and Ahab’s obsessive pursuit of the Great White Whale.

Gorman’s personal interest in the subject originally grew from his own family history with opiate addiction (his brother, Kevin, a commercial fisherman, died of a heroin overdose). Gorman’s past work has inspired him to embark on a creative journey that has led to the creation of a new model of theater aimed at addressing the opioid crisis head-on, and one that Gorman hopes to take on the road to working communities hardest hit by the epidemic. Through direct engagement with the community, Gorman’s project “Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction” combines theater, performance, multi-media installations, and an arts & advocacy model that together address the opioid crisis that is taking place in those communities. Says Gorman “this project is not simply about personal sadness and loss; it is about a regional and national health crisis and an artistic call to action. It is not

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intended to be my plaintive voice but the echo of the over 70,000 lives lost to opiate addiction each year.”

As an artist, Gorman is obsessed with the idea of invisibility—that there is a whole class and culture of people among us that feels, for all intents and purposes, invisible. His work on this project features a mythical chorus of ghostly whale hunters and modern day commercial fishermen inspired by Ahab's stowaway crew—"Fedallah and the Phantoms"—who represent those who are often “invisible” in our society—the addict; our abandoned and alienated working communities; the marginalized.

By presenting performances in non-traditional “venues”, such as locations in and around working waterfronts, Gorman’s work has the unique ability to creatively connect with the individuals and working communities being devastated by the opioid epidemic. Through this “direct approach” model, Gorman hopes to engender a greater awareness of the epidemic and the underlying disease of addiction; engage the audience in a creative dialogue that propels constructive change; and emphasize the need for more understanding and compassion.

“To make visible the invisible, and in the process, restore dignity to a people who have been stripped of it by fatal forces often beyond their control—that is my current goal as an artist.” — Michael Gorman

Mike lives and works in Maine and New York City.

The Playwright's Work: (Most recent)

- ***"Chasing The New White Whale"*** – (2018)
Written & produced by Michael Gorman.
Using Melville's 19th-century monster as a metaphor for the modern plague of opioid addiction, Gorman's newest theatrical production explores the current National opioid crisis through the unique lens of the commercial fishing industry, and draws inspiration from Moby Dick and Ahab's obsessive pursuit of the Great White Whale. The play premiered Off-Broadway at The Ellen Stewart Theatre at La MaMa in New York City on November 24 – December 9, 2018.

- ***"The Honor And Glory of Whaling" –A Trilogy***
Written & produced by Michael Gorman.
This trilogy of plays constitutes a major body of work by Gorman, written and performed over nearly 2 decades. Inspired by the life and death of the playwright's oldest brother, a commercial fisherman, the plays deal with the issue of opiate addiction and recovery in the commercial fishing industry of New England, and charts the rise and fall of a young commercial fisherman. All three works premiered individually at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in NYC: *If Colorado Had An Ocean* (2014); *The Honor & Glory of Whaling* (2008); *Ultralight* (2000, 2003).

Past Productions / Experience:

Mike has had a long-standing relationship with La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in NYC, and has produced many of his plays there. A complete history of the playwright's theatrical works and a timeline of his produced plays can be found here: www.fortyhourclub.com/the-playwrights-work.html

Mike was also the Co-Creator of "The Fabulous Giggin' Bros." – An experimental performance troupe originated at Clark University. He later spent several years on the Island of Vinalhaven, ME, developing the Giggin' Bros." signature style of roots-based absurd theater and performance spectacle before arriving in NYC and debuting at La MaMa with their production of *Biffing Mussels* and several other short plays in 1994.

Installation Works: (Most recent)

- ***“Ambergris”–Mining The Net Yard for the Roots of Addiction and New Models of Sustainable Fishing–*** (2018).
 “Ambergris” was an environmental installation and performance that explored the roots of the disease of addiction and the economic devastation being caused by the ongoing opiate epidemic within the commercial fishing community. This multi-media community event was held outdoors on the working waterfront in The City of Portland, Maine at the Portland Fish Exchange & Net Yard, and featured performers, dance, live music, artwork, and video and photographic projections. “Ambergris” (funded by a grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts) was part of Gorman's on-going project/arts & advocacy model “Chasing The New White Whale”.

- ***“The Chase”–***(2017).
 An installation and staged reading series inspired by Gorman’s trilogy of plays, “The Honor and Glory of Whaling”, that deals with the issue of opiate addiction in the commercial fishing industry of New England. The installation and readings were created and performed at the La MaMa Galleria in NYC in April 2017 and CMCA (Center for Maine Contemporary Art) in Rockland, ME in June 2017.

- ***“Fishing for Paradise”–*** (2014).
 A multi-media installation “Fishing for Paradise” was a deconstruction of the playwright’s creative process for his trilogy of plays, “The Honor and Glory of Whaling”. The installation took participants on a dramatic journey of epiphanein discovery through the playwright’s world as he unearthed the layers of production history of his epic cycle of plays that plumb the depths of addiction and recovery in the commercial fishing industry. The installation incorporated the work of several other visual artists as well, and was created in the La MaMa Galleria in NYC on December of 2014, to coincide with the production of Gorman’s play “If Colorado had an Ocean ...”

Awards, Grants, & Residencies: (Most Recent)

- April 2017- Mike was appointed "**Playwright in Residence**" at **La MaMa Theater** in NYC for the 2018-2019 season, where his newest play "Chasing The New White Whale" was produced and premiered in Nov-Dec 2018. Mike will be continuing his residency with La MaMa into 2019, where his duties include creating and teaching a playwrighting program for students.
- August 2017- Mike received a six-month **Artist Residency and Grant from the Ellis Beauregard Foundation** in Rockland, ME, to continue his playwrighting and installation work.
- January 2018- Mike received a 2018 **Kindling Fund Grant (Andy Warhol Foundation for The Visual Arts)** to pursue his environmental installation—"Ambergris"—at The Portland Fish Exchange in the heart of the working waterfront in Portland, Maine.
- July 2018- Mike received **The Project Grant For Artists through The Maine Arts Commission**, which he used to create a video companion piece to his project "Chasing The New White Whale".

Education:

- 1986-1988– B.A. in Literature –Clark University, Worcester, MA.
Mike pursued independent studies and began his playwrighting career at Clark, earning a B.A. in literature. He was also nominated for The Rhodes Scholarship and received the Russ Granger Award as the University's outstanding Scholar-Athlete. He was also nominated for induction into the Clark University Athletic Hall of Fame (soccer).
- 1984-1986–School of Landscape Architecture at The College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, NY.
- 1982-1984–Associate's Degree in Landscape Development, SUNY Cobleskill, NY. Mike was also honored as an Academic All-American soccer player.