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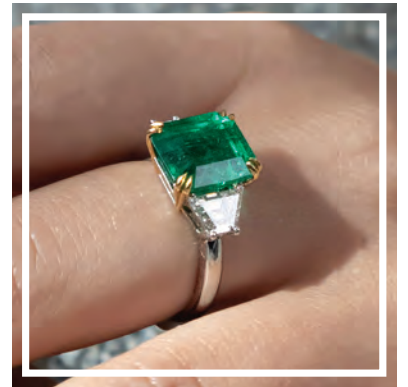
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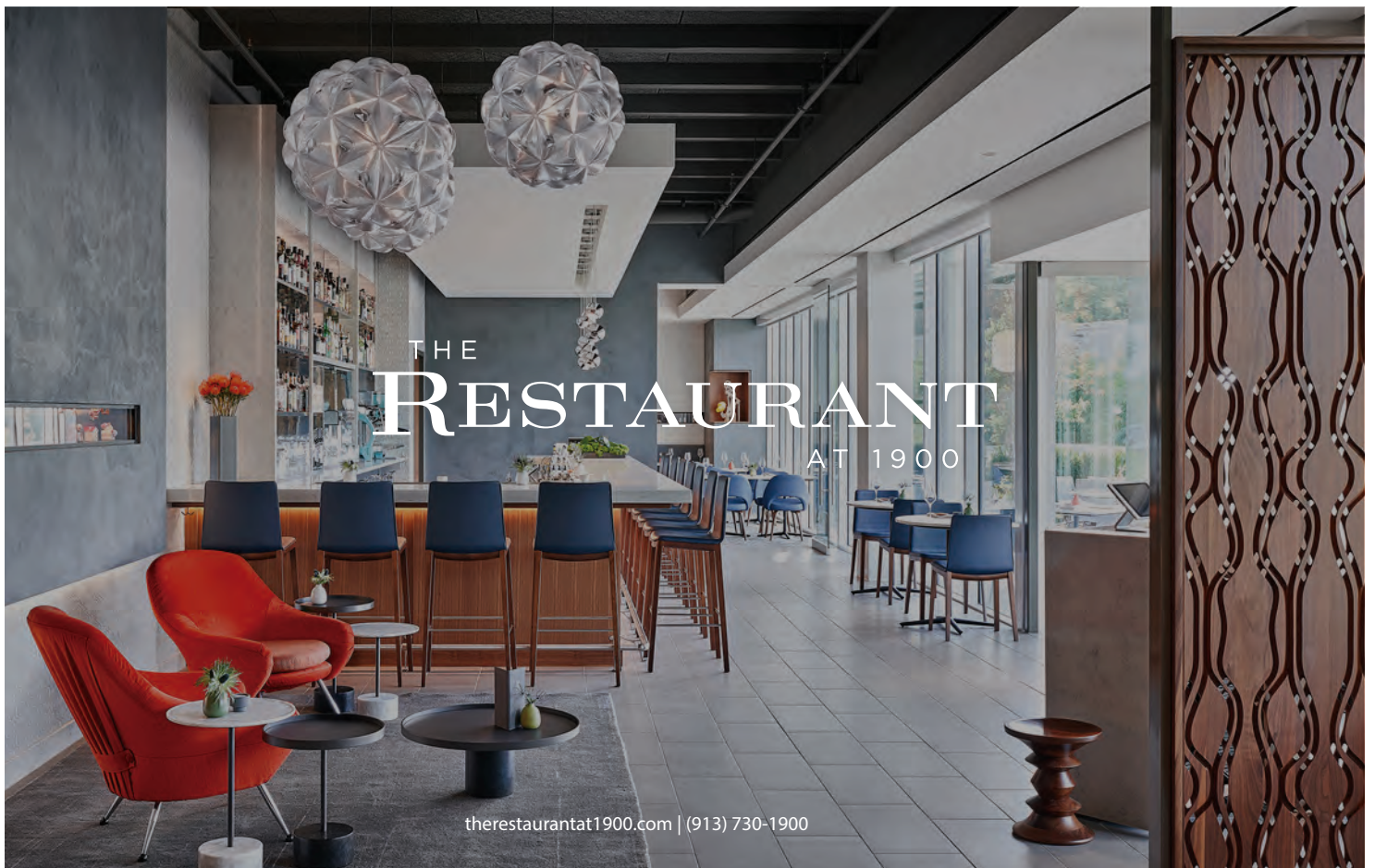


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PHOTO BY E.G. SCHEMPF

Installation view of "Amy Kligman: The Salon for Possible Futures," through Dec. 21 at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park. See [www.kcstudio.org](http://www.kcstudio.org) for Matthew Thompson's review of the exhibit.

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**ON THE COVER:** Detail of Dean Mitchell's "Miss Highbaugh" (1993), oil on panel, part of his exhibit "Heritage & the Human Condition" at the Museum of Art + Light in Manhattan, Kansas, through March 9, 2026.

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#### PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER

H. Guyon Townsend III

#### CO-FOUNDER

Heidi Nast

#### EDITOR

Alice Thorson

#### ART DIRECTOR

Kim Tappan

#### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Robert Brown  
Robert Butler  
Nan Chisholm  
Pete Dulin  
Natasha Ria El-Scari  
Carmen Fanning  
José Faus  
Brandan Griffin  
Libby Hanssen  
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Matthew Thompson  
Robert Trussell  
Victor Wishna

#### PHOTOGRAPHER

Jim Barcus

#### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Janella Williams

#### WEB DEVELOPER

Nathan Lang

#### WEB DESIGNER

Amanda Rehagen

#### SPECIAL SECTIONS CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Edelman, Anne Kniggendorf,  
Kimberly Masteller, Patrick Neas,  
Karen Paisley, Karen Wood

#### COPY EDITOR

Anne Thorson

#### SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Jennifer De Luca  
Ted Massing

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Sally Milgram

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PHOTO BY MARK BERNDT



The problem is not going away. In this issue, Robert Trussell chronicles the climate of fear created by government attacks on

DEI. The good news is the quiet determination demonstrated by arts organizations to maintain a firewall against all such efforts.

Also in this issue, we celebrate the accomplishments of two old friends, including eminent American artist Dean Mitchell, who initially made his name in Kansas City where he worked for Hallmark and distinguished himself by winning innumerable national watercolor compositions and placing works in the collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art.

He's back. Continuing through spring 2026, the Museum of Art + Light in Manhattan, Kan., is presenting a sweeping overview of Mitchell's compelling portraits, landscapes and other subjects in two exhibitions, including a digital extravaganza, both explored in our article by Brian Hearn, page 52.

The other old friend featured in the current issue is cartoonist Tom Toro, also a former KC resident who for several years contributed his clever cartoons to KC Studio. Now Toro, whose reputation rests on the many cartoons he has published in the New Yorker, is out with a new book, reviewed in these pages by Brian McTavish.

There are still three and a half months left in the run of the Andrea Carlson show at Kemper Museum, which has stepped up its game this fall under executive director

Jessica May and chief curator Jessica Hong by presenting concurrent special exhibitions of eminent national artists, with the Carlson show overlapping with the major video exhibition, "Stan Douglas: Metronome."

Thanks to the Kemper, KC's exposure to Carlson's work is timely rather than behind the curve, opening before the Denver Art Museum's "Andrea Carlson: A Constant Sky," her first museum survey, and "Andrea Carlson: Endless Sunshine," a solo show opening March 2026 at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

And the hits just keep on coming with the Kemper's Nov. 14 opening of Caddo nation artist "Raven Halfmoon: Ride or Die," which promises a new twist on the cowboy mythology so central to American identity.

On a more personal note, we offer heartfelt thanks and a fond goodbye to our talented long-time designer Carrie Brophy, who left her post as art director for KC Studio in October to pursue other opportunities. In her 10 years at the magazine, Brophy distinguished herself as much more than a designer, contributing her good judgment and keen eye to all facets of the magazine's production, including finding an experienced and capable successor.

Going forward we welcome Kim Tappan, who previously worked under Brophy as graphic designer and with the Nov/Dec issue, has assumed the post of art director.

And Happy Holidays! Although we have discontinued our standalone holiday supplement, see our five-page Holiday Gift Guide, page 87 for some seasonal fun and great gifts. — **Alice Thorson**





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## CONTRIBUTORS



UMKC graduate **Gustavo Adolfo Aybar** is a Dominican-born writer and translator, whose essays, poetry, and other writing have been published in Delmarva Review, Dos Gatos Press, 3 Taos Press ABC-CLIO, The Rupture Magazine, Manteca! An Anthology of Afro-Latin@ Poets, The Library of America Anthology: Latino Poetry and South Florida Poetry Journal.



**Jim Barcus**, KC Studio staff photographer, is a 1995 graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute and has been photographing professionally for 20 years. His work is available through [jimbarcusphoto.com](http://jimbarcusphoto.com).



**Jackie Batista-Martinez** is a writer based in Kansas City, Missouri. She holds a degree in anthropology and art history from Missouri State University. Jackie is currently exploring themes of memory, epistemology, chronic illness and cultural identity in her writing practice.



**Nan Chisholm** is an art consultant and appraiser of 19th- and 20th-century paintings. After a long association with Sotheby's, she founded her own business in 2003. She has appeared as a fine art appraiser on "Antiques Roadshow" since its inception in 1995.



**Pete Dulin** is the author of "Expedition of Thirst: Exploring Breweries, Wineries, and Distilleries Across the Heart of Kansas and Missouri," "Kansas City Beer: A History of Brewing in the Heartland" and two other books. His work has appeared in AFAR Magazine, Feast, Kansas City Magazine, KCUR, Zócalo Public Square, The Kansas City Star, The Boston Globe, and The New Territory, where he is a member of the board.



**José Faus** (He,Him) is a visual artist, performer, writer, independent teacher/mentor with an interest in the role of artists as creative catalysts for community building. He received degrees from the University of Missouri at Kansas City in painting and creative writing. He is a founder of the Latino Writers Collective.



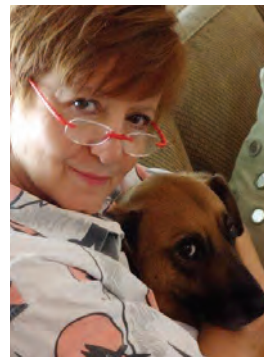
Originally from Indiana, **Libby Hanssen** covers the performing arts in Kansas City. She is the author of "States of Swing: The History of the Kansas City Jazz Orchestra, 2003-2023." Along with degrees in trombone performance, Hanssen was a fellow for the NEA Arts Journalism Institute at Columbia University. She maintains the culture blog "Proust Eats a Sandwich."



**Brian Hearn** is an art advisor, appraiser, curator and writer interested in all things art, cave painting to contemporary.



**Vivian Kane** is a writer and editor living in Kansas City. She primarily covers politics and pop culture and is a co-owner of The Pitch magazine. She has an MFA in Theatre from CalArts.



**Elisabeth Kirsch** is an art historian, curator and writer who has curated over 100 exhibitions of contemporary art, American Indian art and photography, locally and across the country. She writes frequently for national and local arts publications.





PHOTO BY ESTUARDO GARCIA

**Amy Kligman**, executive artistic director at Charlotte Street from 2015 to 2024, is an artist, writer and co-founder with her husband Misha Kligman of the new Special Effects gallery in the Studios INC building.



**Heather Lustfeldt** is a creative professional with a 20-plus year career in Kansas City as a contemporary arts curator, educator, art historian and freelance writer. Transitioning into nonprofit community development work in 2020, she is currently grants manager at Reconciliation Services.



**Randy Mason** is best known for his work in public television, but he's also covered Kansas City arts and artists in print and on the radio for over three decades.



**Brian McTavish** is a freelance writer specializing in the arts and pop culture. He was an arts and entertainment writer for more than 20 years at The Kansas City Star. He regularly shared his "Weekend To-Do List" at KCUR-FM (89.3)/kcur.org.



**Heidi Nast** is co-founder of KC Studio and executive director of Arts Engagement Foundation of Kansas City.



**Steve Paul** is the author of "Literary Alchemist: The Writing Life of Evan S. Connell" and other books. President of Biographers international Org. (BIO), he has been a writer and editor in Kansas City since the 1970s.



**Harold Smith** is an educator and multimedia artist who lives and works in the Kansas City area. Most of his work is focused on his experience within the American Black experience. He can be reached at <https://www.haroldsmithstudios.com>.



**Rebecca Smith** is an impassioned supporter of local performances of all types, who welcomes the opportunity to promote them to KC Studio readers.



**Robert Stewart** is editor emeritus of New Letters magazine, BkMk Press, and New Letters on the Air. He also is a founding board member and former president of The Writers Place. His latest book of poems is "Higher" (2023), winner of Prize Americana from Press Americana. He was founding director of Midwest Poets Series at Rockhurst University for 36 years.



**Robert Trussell** is a veteran journalist who has covered news, arts and theater in Kansas City for almost four decades.

## A rare and powerful artwork puts on a new face at UMKC



BY STEVE PAUL

**A**t a time when a reckless, small-minded assault spreads like a virus over the arts and humanities, threatening the existence of much-cherished endeavors and institutions, we must remain grateful for small pleasures and achievements.

Steve Paul

That's how I was feeling anyway the last time I walked down from the second-

floor landing at UMKC's Haag Hall. I had just paid a second visit to two Spanish art conservators as they were completing a project to restore the frescoes that have lined the walls of that space for nearly 85 years.

Once again, Iñaki Gárate Llombart was at floor level attending to details in the lower regions of the extraordinary artwork, and Beatriz del Ordi stood and squatted on a scaffolding to work on the upper sections.

"We have to finish today," Gárate told me, "because we're going back to Spain tomorrow."

They had it well in hand.

I've long maintained that this campus-bound artwork is one of the most interesting hidden gems of Kansas City's cultural landscape.



Quintanilla paid tribute to his friend who was assassinated while the artist was in Kansas City. The honoree's namesake grandson is director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

The work, sprawling over six individual, narrative panels is titled "The Don Quixote Frescoes" and familiarly known as "Don Quixote in the Modern World." It was made by Luis Quintanilla (1893-1978), a Spanish artist in exile in the U.S. in the period following his country's civil war. The war shattered his nation from 1936 to 1939, presaged World War II, and led to the ascension of the decades-long, dictatorial rule of Gen. Francisco Franco.

Quintanilla made his only other known fresco for the Spanish pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939, but it wasn't put on display (global politics, of course). The multi-sectioned mural was lost for the next half century until being rediscovered (in the back room of a Manhattan porn theater, as the fascinating story goes) and sent to post-Franco Spain, where it eventually was restored and installed at the University of Cantabria. So the frescoes here have unique status in the U.S.

Although the official documentation is said to be lost, Quintanilla was invited to spend the academic year 1940-1941 at what was then known as the University of Kansas City, under a Rockefeller Foundation program aiding displaced scholars



Iñaki Gárate Llombart and Beatriz del Ordi at work on the Luis Quintanilla frescoes at UMKC.

PHOTO BY STEVE PAUL





PHOTO BY STEVE PAUL

Two of the panels from Quintanilla's "Don Quixote Frescoes" feature modern settings for Quixote, left, and Sancho Panza.

and artists. He spent weeks devising his scheme and making realist sketches of students, faculty members and locals (even a Missouri mule), whose figures and faces he used to populate the six scenes presenting Don Quixote and sidekick Sancho Panza in humorous, allegorical and clearly anti-fascist scenes. The university's arts-conscious chancellor, Clarence R. Decker, had suggested the Don Quixote theme. As Quintanilla proceeded, he transferred the sketches into paintings layered onto the meticulous, wet-plaster foundation of the traditional fresco process.

Although I was a UMKC student many moons ago, I never really took proper interest in the Haag Hall murals, which I must have walked by innumerable times. It was only much later, when I learned of Quintanilla's longtime friendship with Ernest Hemingway, that my interest accelerated. Hemingway and his new bride Martha Gellhorn even passed through the city in November 1940 and spent a rollicking evening with Quintanilla and his wife.

Another astounding coincidence arose several years ago after Julián Zugazagoitia, CEO of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, took a look at the frescoes and was astounded to find that Quintanilla had visibly dedicated the work to the museum director's grandfather.

Also named Julián Zugazagoitia, his grandfather had been Spain's minister of information and a friend of Quintanilla, and after the fascist victory that ended the civil war, he was assassinated.

More than five years ago, on the eve of the COVID shutdown, I sat alongside the Nelson's Zugazagoitia during a presentation about the murals by a Spanish art historian, Esther Lopez Sobrado, and Iñaki Gárate, the conservator. Gárate had gained Quintanilla experience in 2007 when he worked to conserve the other frescoes in Spain. Those have received cultural-heritage status and are familiarly known as the "other Guernicas," a reference to Pablo Picasso's indelible canvas, "Guernica," commemorating the horrors of the Spanish Civil War.

In 2020, the Spaniards inspected the UMKC murals and recommended a project to clean and repair them. Of course, the pandemic got in the way, and funding was not forthcoming. Viviana Grieco, a UMKC professor of history, worked with others for years to find a solution. She eventually found a way to include restoration of the murals in a grant application involving numerous cultural projects, under an umbrella initiative known as the Kansas City Monuments Coalition, to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

**Steve Paul, continued >**

## SEE HEAR: STEVE PAUL ON RAMBLING AROUND THE ARTS (Continued)

It worked. The Mellon Foundation funds — an undisclosed fraction of the overall grant of \$4 million — made it possible for Gárate and del Ordi to spend a month over the summer in Haag Hall.

The frescoes were in quite good condition, Gárate said, showing little in the way of structural decay or damage. The murals had actually been conserved in the 1990s, though accepted processes have changed since then and prompted the team to tweak and remove some of the earlier over-painting. And they also had to treat some gaps they found above and below some places in the plaster foundation.

Gárate and del Ordi began by cleaning all the surfaces, using distilled water and thin Japanese paper to remove accumulated grime and making the colorful works appear fresh and ready

to pop off the wall. More days of touching up scrapes with fine-pointed brushes and fresh watercolor pigments followed.

Over time, Grieco has helped guide students to corral the history of the murals, even identifying and tracking down Kansas Citians who served as Quintanilla's models and were still alive to share their stories. A website devoted to the project was in the process of being updated, Grieco told me, and the university reintroduced its polished treasures with a public program on Oct. 13.

Small steps, but a mighty fine art story in our midst. □

**For more, see our previous column about the murals, [kcstudio.org/eight-decades-later-the-haag-hall-frescoes-have-many-stories-to-tell/](https://kcstudio.org/eight-decades-later-the-haag-hall-frescoes-have-many-stories-to-tell/).**

## TWO THINGS

The Belgian art and engineering team proposing a large-scale installation around the rebuilt **Barney Allis Plaza** came up with a brilliant plan. Of seven appealing finalists for the \$2.18 million public art project, the firm of **Gijs Van Vaerenbergh** was the only one to incorporate a sense of Kansas City history, a key factor that led to its selection and summertime approval by the Municipal Art Commission.

Pieterjan Gijs and Arnout Van Vaerenbergh, who presented their concept, process and renderings to the commission in an online meeting, said the team was impressed by the site's connection to an important historical moment. This is where the city's original major Convention Hall was built in 1899, burned in 1900, and was rebuilt in 90 days, in time for the Democratic National Convention, giving birth to the idea of the "Kansas City spirit."

The firm's design echoes the original two-story building's arched façade in a series of skeletal fragments along the perimeter of the block-long, four-acre site. The arches provide welcoming entry points, which put me in mind of the dramatic classical arch that fronts the central entry of Washington Square Park in New York City. The planned arrays of tubular steel, like three-dimensional sketches in the air, are intended to offer ever-changing visual views of the surrounding cityscape and to blend with the landscaping and activated spaces designed for the park by a team including HOK Architecture and McCownGordon Construction. Nighttime lighting will increase the dramatic effect.

Optional elements, such as a climbing vine envisioned for one corner section of the fragments and a second-story viewing platform on another, will depend on budget questions and potential fundraising beyond the proposed bottom line.



Allis Plaza project rendering by Gijs Van Vaerenbergh

The park, art project, and the reconstructed parking garage below ground are expected to be completed toward the end of 2026. (For more background on the One Percent for Art project, visit [kcstudio.org/public-art-project-has-a-chance-of-giving-real-life-to-a-prime-downtown-site/](https://kcstudio.org/public-art-project-has-a-chance-of-giving-real-life-to-a-prime-downtown-site/).)

**"Soundings: Making Culture at Sea"** at the University of Kansas Spencer Museum of Art is a small but thoughtful exhibit that carries an intriguing premise — to explore how various artists and global cultures have found creative invention under the influence of the ocean deep. Objects and artworks range from a ship's mermaid ornament to an Inuit painting of seaweed to photographer Terry Evans' powerfully stunning images of Greenland glaciers. I'd been collecting some proverbial pebbles in encounters with sea-inspired literature and art, so the chance to dwell on the Spencer's two paintings by Winslow Homer (one from the Caribbean, the other from his perch at Prouts Neck, in Scarborough, Maine) was of particular interest. But beyond that, the exhibit presents often surprising material that speaks across cultures, genres and academic themes. The exhibit closes Dec. 14. — **Steve Paul**



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# This is the stuff dreams are made of



BY JOSÉ FAUS

José Faus

I recall few moments from the first futbol (soccer) game I saw in person. In retrospect the oddest would start with my grandmother. She was the one who took my brother and me to our first live match, a

barnstorming tour of Latin America by the almighty Brazil team. Played by World Cup winners, and led by a young Pele, the match was memorable. The spectacle included a ribald performance by the great Cantinflas, the sidekick in the wondrous movie “Around the World in 80 Days,” and probably the reason our grandmother took us.

Years later I confess the only thing I remember vividly and with no hesitation was a burlesque skit where Cantinflas, trying to remove a flower from the barely there gown of a robust model, pulled the dress to reveal nothing. The darn lights went out right as the gown began to fall off her shoulders. I remember my grandmother laughing hard. I didn’t catch the joke. I wished the lights had stayed on.

I remember shouting Pele’s name. That’s why my brother and I were there. Pele was something like God to us kids, when futbol was everything. The pecking order was set by the game. I could defend like crazy though I was not as good a dribbler as a few others that kicked the ball at Simon Bolivar Park up the street. They were the captains. Not always the best choice.

We fantasized about the World Cup. South America has every right to be soccer mad. A true world game. Of 22 FIFA World Cups played, South American teams have won 10. That is democratic in feel. And it puts me in an odd place when I think of my immigrant journey.

Futbol was not played here in any organized way familiar to me. The closest thing was kickball, which really was baseball masquerading. Dodgeball was the next game taught to us. Both were fun but they were not futbol. I found the substitute for futbol in a similar sounding game. A brutal game my brother and I were introduced to when our mother sent us off to a boys’ school.

I remember our orientation being a straightforward affair. The orientation leader said, “There are boys here that are pretty tough. The one way you can make a name for yourself and ensure you don’t get picked on is to play sports. Now a lot of boys join the boxing club, others play football or wrestle.” Without hesitation I asked, “Tell me more about football and wrestling.”

My first game was a trip. I knew the rules of the game and had gone to Municipal Stadium and seen the Chiefs play. But apart from throwing the ball, I had never really played the game, not even tackled anyone. Ever. The coach, a wise man, put me on defense and told me go after the ball carrier. I was good at it and my passion for the game ensured I was an eager student. I picked it up quickly. I confess I was a baseball fan first, but I could not hit the ball with any consistency. But hitting people, I was good at that.

---

## The language of football broke down the impediments that made me feel a stranger in an even stranger land.

---

The move to the boys’ school coincided with my hometown team taking on the Minnesota Vikings in the Super Bowl. Nobody believed Kansas City would beat Minnesota. Minnesota was invincible. They were going to teach Kansas City how to play the game. Kansas City won handily and ignited a fealty that lasts to this day. I wandered that 50-year walk in the wilderness until the Chiefs returned to glory in 2019.

The language of football broke down the impediments that made me feel a stranger in an even stranger land. Though my allegiance is unwavering and my interest uncompromised, I confess that the game does not come close to the excitement, desire and longing that burns in my heart to see Colombia





Rendering of GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium included in Kansas City's bid to the FIFA World Cup committee.

win the World Cup. It was my first team. We all played for Colombia in the imagined World Cups we improvised in Bucaramanga.

The introduction of cable TV and its dedicated channels broadcasting the beautiful game around the world kindled my desire. I remember vividly Maradona's "Hand of God" goal against England. I still see a friend, Nigel, an Englishman if ever there was one, losing it, the spirit drained out of his body. All life compromised.

I will never forget the debacle of 1994 when Colombia lost to the U.S., and yes, I cheered for Colombia and was crushed when they lost. Nigel's spirit visited me, and I understood his pain so deeply. I felt worse when Andrés Escobar, the one responsible for the goal that gave the U.S. a tight grip on the outcome, returned to Colombia only to be killed by a gangster upset about the goal.

I was fortunate enough to have the right channels when the prodigy Lionel Messi began playing his club futbol at Barcelona, the club I follow. Year in and year out I watched slavishly as many games as I could find even if it meant going to some bar, "a complete unknown" just because they had a TV playing a match. Every time the World Cup comes around, I fantasize. I dream. I long for Colombia to make a dash for glory. To atone for the pain of 1994.

Imagine the lunacy if Colombia makes it to the quarterfinals and their game is played here at GEHA field. The symmetry of that moment is an arc, serendipitous and tantalizing. To see the futbol game in the home of football would be a fitting gift. An ironic twist of fate.

And the fanatic in me will let his hair down and run through the streets, berserker style. Please forgive me if you see me in that state. I don't know this firsthand, but you will feel the same when the USA wins one. I'm still waiting for mine. □



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THE ARTS ASYLUM

9th District Senator Barbara Anne Washington with Dora Kearney's "The Goat"

## WORK BY KC ARTISTS ON DISPLAY AT MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

During the 2025 Legislative Session, a new gallery space featuring Kansas City artists opened in the Missouri State Capitol. Annex Gallery is located in the third floor offices of 9th District Senator Barbara Anne Washington. The exhibition is a collaboration between Senator Washington, The Arts Asylum and Zhou B Art Center.

"Our partnership with Senator Washington is an exciting growth for our organization and we invite all art lovers and patrons to come enjoy a showcase of some of Kansas City's talented local visual

artists when visiting our State Capitol," said Evie Craig, executive director of The Arts Asylum. "Each artist brings a unique perspective, reflecting the stories, histories and creativity that define our city. We are honored to see these works displayed in Senator Washington's office, where they can spark dialogue and inspire meaningful connections."

The featured artists during the 2025 Legislative Session were Daniel Montoute, Anita Easterwood, Remy Wharry and Dora Kearney. For more information visit [www.theartsasylum.org](http://www.theartsasylum.org).

— Libby Hanssen



COURTESY INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Glass "Nativity" by Hasna Sal

## MODERN NATIVITY BY HASNA SAL INSTALLED AT INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Installed at Independence Boulevard Christian Church on the historically significant date of September 11, Hasna Sal's interpretation of the Nativity introduces a modern sensibility to an age-old story. "This installation speaks to inclusion, tolerance and the greater good of humankind," said Sal.

The triptych's central figures depict Mother Mary, Saint Joseph and Christ holding a dove. Sal used varying techniques to create her work, including glassmaking, fritography, etching, pate de verre, stenciling and stained glass. Glass aligns with the traditional use of the material in ecclesiastical art. "Glass is an ancient material. Its very presence originated in recorded history through Egyptian funerary art in the sarcophagi of royalty," said Sal.

Sal's installation at the church, where congregations have worshipped for more than 118 years, establishes

an artistic dialogue with two notable glassworks on site. R.A. Long commissioned two signed original stained-glass windows from the Louis Tiffany Studios in New York City. Created in 1905, the Long Memorial window, which illustrates Jesus' appearance to Mary in the garden on Resurrection morning, and the Rumble Memorial Window are original to the building.

Sal's glass Nativity is a "nonconformist and inclusive" iteration to ponder in the same space where Tiffany's "windows of allegory" present a more conventional reading. Displayed together in the same structure, "I would even dare to say that the church metamorphoses into a museum in this aspect and becomes a state treasure to behold," said Sal. For more information, <https://www.ibcckc.org/ourhistory>. — Pete Dulin



## NEW GALLERY SPACE IN STUDIOS INC BUILDING

Founded by artists Amy and Misha Kligman in September 2025, a new gallery space called Special Effects has opened in the Studios Inc building at 1708 Campbell St. The name was inspired by the “smalltown independent video store . . . owned and operated by Amy’s parents . . . in the 1980s,” stated the announcement.

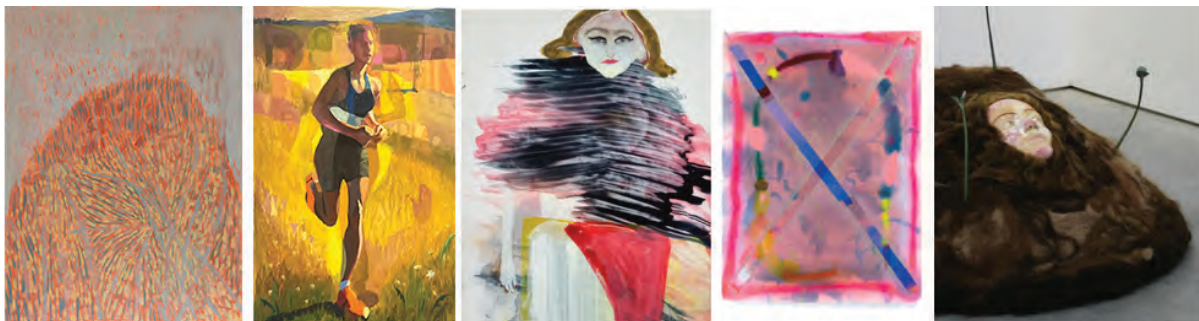
“In the spirit of that portal from banal reality to an endless expanse of imagined experiences, founded by a couple in an earnest DIY spirit, Special Effects acts as a platform for art that connects, evokes, and surprises,” stated the release.

The gallery’s inaugural show was “Mixed Feelings,” featuring work by Kansas City-based artists Jonah

Criswell, Erin Dodson, Shelby Keierleber, Hailey Slaughter, and Mikey Yates, as well as regional and national artists Zina Al-Shukri (Little Rock, Arkansas), Rachel Collier (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Dan Devening (Chicago, Illinois), Madeline Gallucci (Chicago, Illinois), Julie Schenkelberg (Cleveland, Ohio), Edra Soto (Chicago, Illinois), and Kevin Umaña (New York, New York).

Coming in November, “Special Effects” hosts a solo exhibition of work by Rashawn Griffin. In December, the gallery showcases work the work of Kansas City artists at their booth for NADA Miami (New Art Dealers Alliance). For more information, [www.specialfxgallery.com/](http://www.specialfxgallery.com/).

— Libby Hansen



SPECIAL EFFECTS GALLERY

The recent “Mixed Feelings” show included works by (left to right) Erin Dodson and Mikey Yates from Kansas City, Zina Al-Shukri from Little Rock, Madeline Gallucci from Chicago and Hailey Slaughter from Kansas City.



Photo by: Brooke Alexander

## NEW CHORAL ORGANIZATION LAUNCHES IN KANSAS CITY

Re:Sound Ensembles is the latest choral music organization to join Kansas City's rich vocal landscape. The group was founded by Dr. Joshua Oppenheim, who serves as artistic director and is also director of choral studies at Kansas State University. The professional ensemble brings in artists from around the region and across the country, many of whom are graduates of K-State.

Stacy Davis serves as the budding organization's executive director. "Joshua's vision for this organization is really unique; he doesn't just want another group that sings pretty music," said Davis. "He truly wants to engage in the KC community, and he envisions multiple ensembles under the Re:Sound umbrella such as a children's choir for underprivileged youth, a choir for the unhoused or those experiencing homelessness, and a choir for those currently in the criminal justice system."

As the organization grows, anticipated ensembles also include Re:Sound Echo, an alumni and community chorus group; Re:Sound Unbound, a choral initiative for the justice-impacted; Re:Sound Amplify, an a cappella and vocal jazz ensemble; Re:Sound Signal, a resident choir based in Oklahoma City; and Re:Sound Signal, an instrumental ensemble.

Re:Sound's inaugural concert was in October. The ensemble's upcoming holiday concert features Broadway performer Kaitlyn Davidson, a graduate of Blue Valley High School. For more information visit [www.resoundensembles.org](http://www.resoundensembles.org). — **Libby Hanssen**



Kaitlyn Davidson

COURTESY OF RE:SOUND ENSEMBLES

## BLACK REPERTORY THEATRE OF KANSAS CITY APPOINTS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COURTESY OF BLACK REPERTORY THEATRE OF KANSAS CITY



Christopher J. Peacock

Black Repertory Theatre of Kansas City (BRTKC) announced the appointment of Christopher J. Peacock as its first executive director. Peacock brings more than 20 years of experience in education, nonprofit leadership and community engagement to the role.

Prior leadership includes work as the director of academic programming at Tomorrow's Promise Today, director of arts education at Kansas City Young Audiences, fine arts coordinator at Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, and director of the Young Entrepreneurial Spirit Program at Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy.

"His vision, experience, commitment to equity and community will help ensure the Theatre thrives as a cultural anchor now and in our

future home at the historic Boone Theatre in the 18th & Vine District," said BRTKC Board Chair Tracy E. Jamerson in a statement.

In addition to overseeing the theater's daily operations and strategic planning, Peacock will focus on strengthening the arts organization's financial sustainability and expanding educational and outreach initiatives. Peacock's appointment builds on the theater's plans to move to permanent quarters at the renovated Boone Theater in the 18th and Vine District, announced in spring 2025.

Part of its 10th season, BTRKC's next production, "Five Guys Named Moe," a tribute to music pioneer and alto saxophonist Louis Jordan, runs Feb. 6-22. For more information, <https://www.brtkc.org/>. — **Pete Dulin**



## NELSON-ATKINS ACQUIRES WORK BY HANK WILLIS THOMAS

*"In the retroflective works, I am trying to illuminate stories and parts of history that often get overlooked."* – Hank Willis Thomas

The words of the Brooklyn, New York-based conceptual artist elaborate on the intent behind his "Ex parte Endo (Part 1)," a work acquired by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art as a gift from Kansas City community leaders (see below).



THE NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART © HANK WILLIS THOMAS.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF NELSON-ATKINS DIGITAL PRODUCTION &  
PRESERVATION, GABE HOPKINS

Hank Willis Thomas, "Until Ex parte Endo (Part 1)" (2024), inkjet print and applied media on retroflective vinyl mounted on Dibond and decommissioned U.S. flag, 79 x 61 3/4 x 7 1/2"

"Ex parte Endo (Part 1)" draws attention to the injustice of mass incarceration of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II after Japan attacked U.S. naval base Pearl Harbor. Positioned upside-down, a decommissioned U.S. flag drapes unceremoniously over the detail of a Dorothea Lange photograph. When a viewer flashes light on the work, the photograph on retroflective vinyl reveals students reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in 1942. The draped flag obscures their faces,

removing a visual indication of identity that suggests erasure. Out of sight, out of mind, out of collective memory. Thomas' composition of flag and imagery, and his use of retroflective vinyl, reinforce the idea of who is not seen. Those students of Japanese descent and their families were forced into incarceration sites after Lange shot the photograph.

The artwork's title refers to the 1944 Supreme Court decision on behalf of Mitsuye Endo, ruling it unlawful to detain citizens who were loyal to the United States. Thomas reminds us of our nation's ignoble history from more than 80 years ago. His artwork also projects light on the events of today.

*The purchase was acquired through the generosity of Ann Baum, Carol Hudson, Jackie Reses, Maurice Watson, Sandra and Willie Lawrence, Ward and Donna Katz, Gary and Debby Ballard, Irvin and Pamela Bishop, Devin W. Blackburn, Esq., Valerie Chow and Jon Gray, Mark and Gaye Cohen, Thomas Cohen and Lena Price, Bunni and Paul Copaken, Erica and Lorin Crenshaw, Stephen Figge, Daniel and Kristen Fromm, Bill and Christy Gautreaux, Jeffrey Goldstein and Kim Klein, Laura Greenbaum, John and Sharon Hoffman, Damian Lair, Eleanor and David Lisbon, Stephen and Mary Anne McDowell, Sheryll Myers, Kim and Nikki Newton, Barbara Nicely, Walter and Jon Porter, Rob and Doris Rogers, Heather and Clint Slusher, Matthew and Mandi Strange, Oscar and Ratana Tshibanda, Michael and Jamila Weaver, Jerry and Debbie Williams, Andy and Toma Wolff, Lynn Hoffman Carlton and Matt Hoffman, and an anonymous donor. — Pete Dulin*

## MULVANE ART MUSEUM ACQUIRES HAROLD SMITH PAINTING



COURTESY OF MULVANE ART MUSEUM

Harold Smith, "Blacktacularized American Gothic" (2024–2025), acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48"

Kansas City artist Harold Smith's painting "Blacktacularized American Gothic" has found a permanent home at the Mulvane Art Museum in Topeka. The painting was featured in the museum's 2025 solo show of Smith's work "Around the Way Folk: Saints in Uncommon Places."

Smith's recent paintings wrestle iconic works from their perch in art history and reimagine them through a Black lens. Stylistic reinterpretations and commercial appropriations of Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and Vincent van Gogh's "Self-Portrait" (1889), for example, are commonplace. Here, Smith sparks a different conversation about presence, identity and representation (or lack of). "Blacktacularized American Gothic" recasts dour white protagonists from Grant Wood's "American Gothic" with Black figures. He describes these people from his life's story as "around the way folk."

Smith eschews Wood's palette and realistic style. Instead, he asserts a fresh sense of undeniable presence through abstraction and disrupts a quick read of a well-known painting. His palette and bold, expressive brushstrokes suggest a story not easily told. Viewers cannot help but notice vivid colors on the faces and clothing of the Black protagonists in the foreground.

With the acquisition, "Blacktacularized American Gothic" occupies a museum in the capital city of a former territory where bloodshed and battles secured a free state for all. For more information, [www.mulvaneartmuseum.org/](http://www.mulvaneartmuseum.org/). — Pete Dulin

## NERMAN MUSEUM ACQUIRES TAPESTRY BY DIEDRICK BRACKENS



COLLECTION NERMAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE; IMAGE COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

Diedrick Brackens, "shadows spell my name" (2024), cotton and acrylic yarn, 102 x 134"

The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art has acquired "shadows spell my name" by Los Angeles artist Diedrick Brackens. The richly layered work of visual storytelling is now on view in the museum's permanent collection galleries. Brackens used hand-dyed cotton and acrylic yarn to create four silhouetted and interconnected figures holding lanterns in a multicolored watery landscape. Cotton's brutal history is symbolically and literally woven into the narrative, alluding to labor, migration and identity.

Employing techniques from West African weaving, European tapestry-making, and quilting from the American South, his large-scale weavings incorporate myth and storytelling to highlight Black and Queer histories and bodies. Born in

Mexia, Texas, Brackens draws inspiration from African and African American literature, poetry, folklore and autobiography. As a child, Brackens heard stories about ancestors who picked cotton.

Brackens utilizes both commercial dyes and atypical pigments, such as wine, tea and bleach. With this work, his palette complements murky subjects in storytelling that "investigates historical gaps" in the context of the present through his "unique magical realist worldview."

The acquisition of Brackens' work was made possible due to the generosity of Sue and Lewis Nerman. His work is also featured in the permanent collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. — **Pete Dulin**

## CHARLOTTE STREET APPOINTS A NEW CO-DIRECTOR

Charlotte Street, which switched to a co-leadership model following the 2024 departure of executive/artistic director Amy Kligman, has named Elizabeth Spavento as co-executive director with Amanda Middaugh. "Spavento will lead artistic direction and programming initiatives and will work with current co-executive director Amanda Middaugh to advance fundraising, strategic planning, and operational and financial support functions," according to the release.

Spavento, raised in Buffalo, New York, is an artist, curator and arts administrator. She has led curatorial projects and grant programs in Los Angeles and Portland, Maine, and served as the executive director for the Arts Council of Kern, in Bakersfield, California, from 2021-22. From 2016-25, she served as co-director of the renowned curatorial collective, Border Patrol, which she co-founded.

"I am delighted to be joining Charlotte Street's leadership team at this important juncture in its history," Spavento said in the release. "I hope to build on the momentum set forth by Amy Kligman and create meaningful partnerships with artists and arts organizations locally, regionally, and nationally." — **Alice Thorson**



Elizabeth Spavento

COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE STREET





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# NEW BILLBOARD PROJECT CONNECTS KC ARTISTS WITH COMMUNITY NONPROFITS



KANBE'S MARKETS

Debut billboard for Kanbe's Markets by Lynn Hopkins, a 2025 illustration graduate of KCAI

Spanning a billboard in mid-July, an illustrated scene depicted curious children peering over the edge of a table filled with fresh produce. The colorful billboard rose above the corner of 63rd Street and Holmes near Billie's Juicery in Brookside. Kansas City Art Institute student Lynn Hopkins ('25 Illustration) produced the inaugural artwork for a billboard series dubbed WELLUSTRATIONS.

WELLUSTRATIONS project leader Mary Kemper Wolf envisioned the series as a way to highlight "collaboration and civic creativity among Kansas City's institutions, innovators, and artists."

"The goal of WELLUSTRATIONS is to shed light on the many organizations doing inspiring, community-centered work across the city," said Wolf.

Hopkins was one of the students who participated in the Art Institute's MICRO Agency Program. The immersive professional development course in the school's illustration department connected students with clients to develop a purpose-driven campaign.

Kanbe's Markets, the initial nonprofit client featured in the billboard series, focuses on addressing food insecurity for underserved Kansas City communities. In 2025, Kanbe's will rescue more than 1.25 million pounds of fresh produce to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for more than 250,000 residents through a unique network of 100 fresh food access points and hunger relief organizations across the Kansas City metro area.

Hopkins created an illustration that conveyed themes of collective wellness, access to fresh food, inclusive food systems and community connection.

"I filled the children's faces with curiosity to encourage viewers to seek out fresh produce for themselves and their loved ones. I infused every brushstroke with color and expression to reflect the vibrancy of community life," said Hopkins.

"What's exciting about the WELLUSTRATIONS project is that it's a collaborative process. Each project emerges from a conversation with a chosen nonprofit," said Wolf. "Looking ahead, we'd love to continue collaborating with KCAI and also provide a platform for a variety of partners and artists to be able to share their vision of what community wellbeing means to them."

The artist and nonprofit client will rotate with each edition of the billboard series. Another potential theme explores the connection between music and mental health.

"We felt that Art as Mentorship would be a fitting partner for this theme because this connection is central to their work in giving young people resources to express themselves in healthy ways while also building the skills and experience they need to thrive. This is exactly the kind of message that we're looking to promote in this series," said Wolf.

The current WELLUSTRATION installation will be on view for six months. Since the property is for sale, discussions for an ongoing presence would need to involve potential new ownership. If access to the 63rd Street and Holmes billboard remains, then the collaboration will continue with the KCAI Micro Agency program. Meanwhile, other WELLUSTRATION sites are planned.

"For example, we are currently developing a joyful installation with Simple Mischief Studio to debut next year on two large-format digital billboards downtown," said Wolf. — **Pete Dulin**





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Mona Cliff (Aaniiih/Nakota), from the *Post/Presence/Future Series*, Gasmask, Canotype fabric, seedbeads, horsehair, brass, faux feathers  
Taiomah Rutledge (Djibwe, Meskwaki, and Dakota), *Warpoint*, serigraph on 1870's ledger document, 2024

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View of Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art with Tom Otterness' "Crying Giant"

## KEMPER MUSEUM UNVEILS NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

It hardly seems possible, but eight years have passed since Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art closed its Kemper at the Crossroads location.

In the meantime (except for a short pause during the pandemic), the museum has continued to mount what it calls "bold, inclusive and contemporary" exhibitions in the strikingly modern space on Warwick Boulevard that opened in 1994.

With middle age approaching, Missouri's first contemporary art museum recently unveiled a new strategic plan and some key additions to its leadership team. Executive Director Jessica May and Chief Curator Jessica Hong both arrived in 2024. They've since been joined by William Gautreaux as board chair and Erica McGeachy Crenshaw as vice chair. Mary Kemper Wolf has been named Lifetime Chair Emerita.

And Jennifer Wampler, who's led several major funding drives for local arts institutions, joined the staff as chief development officer in June.

"This is an exciting moment for the museum to deliver more impact, both regionally and nationally," Gautreaux says.

The strategic plan emerged from a yearlong process. It centers around four pillars — programming, public engagement, philanthropy, and governance and management.

The first reaffirms the Kemper's commitment to showcasing a broad spectrum of voices and championing great artists at different stages of their careers. It also mandates building "an innovative curatorial culture."

Jessica May points to the current exhibition, "Andrea Carlson: Shimmer on Horizons," as a perfect fit for that description.

"She's an artist who is emerging on the national stage," May says. "Her paintings and sculptures put environmental care and Indigenous land rights front and center. So we were able to connect with the scholarly community at Haskell Indian Nations University to develop



PHOTO BY JORDAN DURKEE, 2025

SoulPatrol (left) and Paula Saunders (right) performing at "Juneteenth Performance" at the Kemper in 2025.



a series of talks and conversations about the connections between art and land conservation.”

The second pillar, public engagement, calls for expanding the museum’s “reach and relevance” by building strategic partnerships and crafting ways to improve the audience experience.

It also commits to doubling the museum’s attendance in just five years.

May doesn’t blink. “We know it is ambitious but very achievable,” she maintains. “We are on track to increase our attendance by just over 15% in the first year of the plan.”

“One of the great things about our museum is that it’s free and it is intimately scaled. Some people love that — they want to slip in, enjoy the galleries for a few minutes and get on with their day. Other people might want to be welcomed, offered an orientation. We are going to work to meet both needs equally.”

May adds that the The Arterie, a proposed “connector” which would eventually link different Midtown/Plaza art destinations, is the kind of “indoor-outdoor” experience that excites her.

The other two pillars — philanthropy and governance — focus on modernizing the practices used in each, increasing board involvement, staff training and building a “culture of entrepreneurship, accountability and inclusivity at all levels” of the organization.

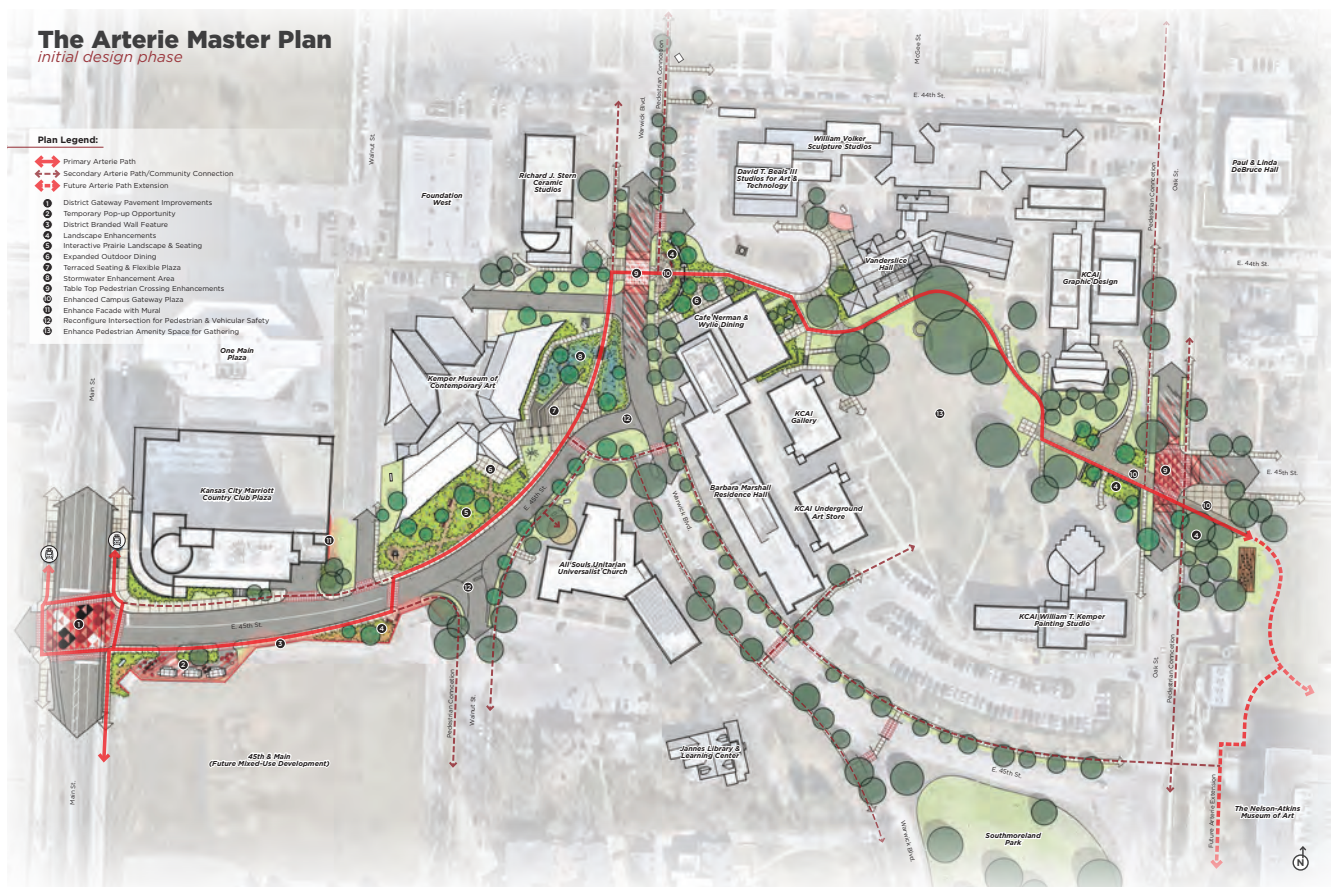
Though there may not be a specific pillar for it, May says the in-house cafe now known as Oil and Linen is “an absolute beacon for people” and one that’s bound to play a significant role going forward.

“The partnership with (chef) Ted Habiger and his team has been an amazing opportunity. We are seeing visitors who come to the museum for many different reasons. As many people come for a coffee and stay for the art as the other way around. We are here for that!” — **Randy Mason**



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# STREETCAR ARRIVAL ENERGIZES PLAN FOR THE ARTERIE PATHWAY CONNECTING KC'S CULTURAL DISTRICT



The Arterie Master Plan

With a planned launch Nov. 2, The Arterie is a newly established winding pathway through an envisioned “cultural district” in Kansas City. Midtown KC Now, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and Kansas City Art Institute formed a partnership to establish The Arterie.

“The Arterie winds through the heart of the city to connect institutions, installations, and creatively fueled sights along the way. It is a connective, ever-evolving journey that weaves together art, people and places,” said Kathleen Leighton, manager of media relations and production at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

The idea for such a cultural district originated more than four decades ago. Recent developments in the city’s transportation infrastructure brought The Arterie to the forefront for local arts leadership.

“When I started my role at the Kemper, I learned about a series of plans for a unified cultural district that date back to the 1980s,” said Jessica May, executive director of Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. “Each one revealed a vision for connecting this entire part of the city — including museums and educational institutions, the Plaza, these amazing parks — for pedestrians as well as for vehicular

traffic. I think that with the arrival of the streetcar this year, the time has come for us to move from plan to reality.”

The art museums and KCAT have operated in close proximity for years. Yet, their operations have co-existed in a somewhat siloed state while each serves an overlapping arts-centric audience. The Arterie integrates the partners via a pathway and shared purpose that benefits their collective audience — the public.

The short-term goal for The Arterie is to “create a real magnet for the whole neighborhood so that visitors and residents can navigate from site to site easily and safely,” explained May.

DRAWING PRODUCED BY BURNS & MCDONNELL



The purpose and plans for the pathway won't remain static after its launch.

"Over time we hope this will develop: This needs to become a parklike environment where being outdoors is wonderful for all people, where there are special events and a feeling of connectedness throughout this part of the city. This goal is within reach, and it is so exciting," said May.

As a designed way making approach that interconnects art, nature and places, adoption of The Arterie by people remains paramount.

"The big question that we ask ourselves here every day is how to best serve artists and our community," said May. "I think that what we are learning is how much more effective we can be in our mission if we create a broad space of possibility for our visitors, our audiences and our artists. Some people call this model 'the third space.' Where do people want to spend time that isn't their home, isn't their office? Where can we go and feel comfortable, welcome, and connected to beauty both indoors and out? I want the The Arterie to be that place."

The partnership enlisted Burns & McDonnell as the landscape and architecture team with the brand design team headed by Carpenter Collective. — **Pete Dulin**

**A Grand Opening Celebration for The Arterie will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. Nov. 2, with opening remarks and other festivities at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 4420 Warwick Blvd., a Fantastic Hat Parade at Kansas City Art Institute, 4415 Warwick Blvd., and a Día de los Muertos Festival at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 4525 Oak St.**

*Places to Ponder (oil, 28 x 24 in)*



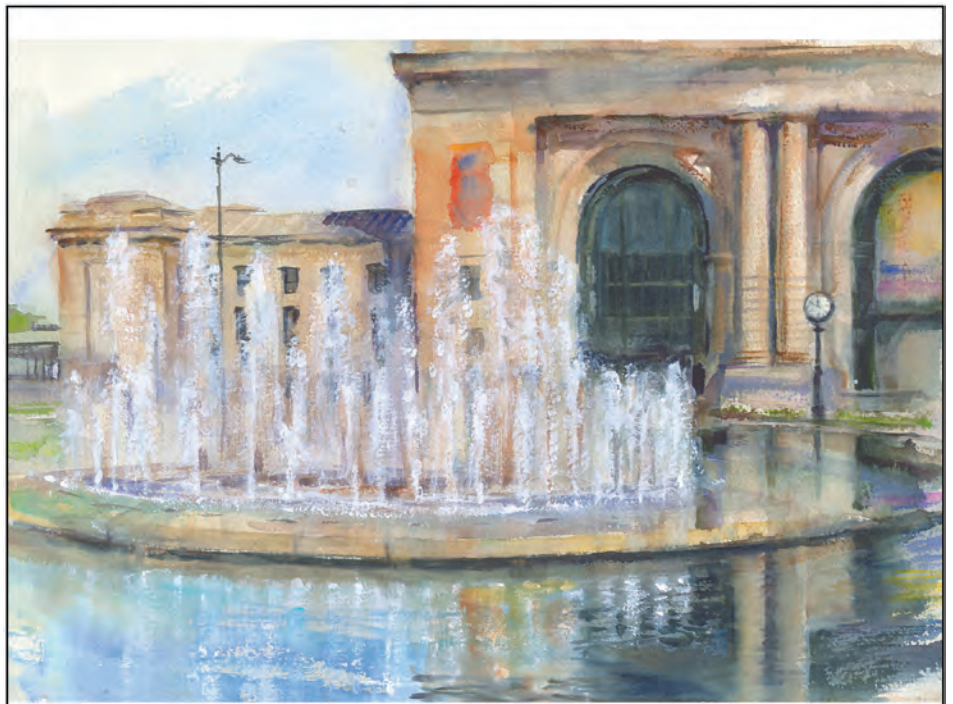
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# David Field Oliver (1952-2025)

THE LAWYER AND CIVIC LEADER EMBODIED GRACE, ETHICS, PUBLIC SERVICE, FRIENDSHIP AND KINDNESS THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE



David Field Oliver

“He had a great voice. He could really sing.”

That’s one of the little things Allan Stark remembers about his longtime friend, David Oliver. The two met as first graders at Bryant School and went on to graduate from Pembroke Country Day School (now Pembroke Hill) in 1970.

Along the way, Oliver served as student body president, and fittingly, snagged the lead role in the school’s production of “Carnival.”

“David wasn’t an athlete,” Stark says. “But he was the best teammate in the world. He went to all our football and basketball games. He had a wide range of friends.”

It was also at Pembroke that Oliver first encountered Mary Elizabeth Gresham – the woman who became his wife and shared a lifetime of adventures on horseback and ski slopes.

After graduation, Oliver headed to Haverford College, then to Boston University to earn a law degree. His professional path was never really in doubt, as his obituary explained nicely:

“With a U.S. federal judge — John W. Oliver, for a father, and a top trial lawyer — Lyman Field, for an uncle, it was inevitable that dedication to the law was in his blood.”

The young attorney returned to town with a focus on commercial securities, product liability and medical malpractice cases. Later, he handled complex litigation involving major corporations as a partner at Berkowitz Oliver.

But his high-profile legal career was only one chapter in a much richer story. Like his mother, Gertrude Field Oliver, had done before, David took a deep dive into Kansas City’s civic side and never looked back. Nor did he want to.

“If he committed to something, he was all the way in,” Stark confirms. The list of boards that David Oliver served on during his 73 years is long and impressive: William Jewell College, DeLaSalle Charter High School, Children’s Mercy Hospital, MRIGlobal, the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, UMKC, Teach For America, the Francis Family Foundation, the Kansas City Beacon, the Cross Foundation and the Murphy Charitable Fund were just some of them.

COURTESY OLIVER FAMILY



He also formed PLX CORP (Plan, Lead, Execute) to help companies diversify and strengthen their boards. He was a founding member of Aligned, a non-partisan, nonprofit coalition of business leaders aimed at improving education in Kansas and Missouri. And for decades he served as a Senior Fellow at the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership.

That last one might sound like an honorary title, but Tom Vansaghi, the center's managing director, says Oliver spoke "countless times" to students in his nonprofit classes at William Jewell and UMKC.

"He mentored them with extraordinary generosity, lifting their aspirations and helping them see what the leadership in what he called the 'for purpose' sector could look like."

Outside the classroom, Vansaghi paints an equally passionate portrait of the man he called the "dean of the nonprofit community."

"I would run into him at coffee shops and restaurants all over Kansas City," Vansaghi said. "Each time, he would wave me over with that familiar spark in his eyes and say, 'You have to meet this person.' His introductions were never casual. He always brought such genuine enthusiasm that they turned into meaningful and often long-lasting connections."

Stark agrees that his old friend was the epitome of a "connector," a "right now kind of person" who knew the power of a smile.

Similar sentiments were echoed by classmates who gathered for a Pembroke reunion just weeks after Oliver died from kidney cancer.

"David was always 'the source' on what was right and wrong in Kansas City," Rick Melcher wrote. "He never shied away from doing the right thing, however challenging it may have been."

Armand Eisen called him "the most mature and gracious member of our class. He continued to embody grace, ethics, public service, friendship and kindness throughout his entire life."

"David was never about David," Fred Kahn added. "If he invited you to coffee, it was to talk about you. David was selfless."

All agreed that Oliver cared intensely about the city that nurtured him and rewarded his aspirations. In fact, his final advice to those who might mourn him was simply, "When you think of me, DO something for Kansas City."

On Nov. 24, the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership's annual conference plans to bestow its first Oliver Award. It will, Vansaghi believes, honor its namesake's "extraordinary legacy" and ensure that "his love for nonprofit leaders continues to inspire generations to come." — **Randy Mason**



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Images (left to right): Bryce Holt, *Waiting for the Phone to Ring*, 2024; acrylic on canvas; 48 x 36 in. Courtesy of the artist. Lindsey Dunnagan, *Responding Call*, 2022; watercolor, graphite, and silver leaf on paper; 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 in. Courtesy of the artist.

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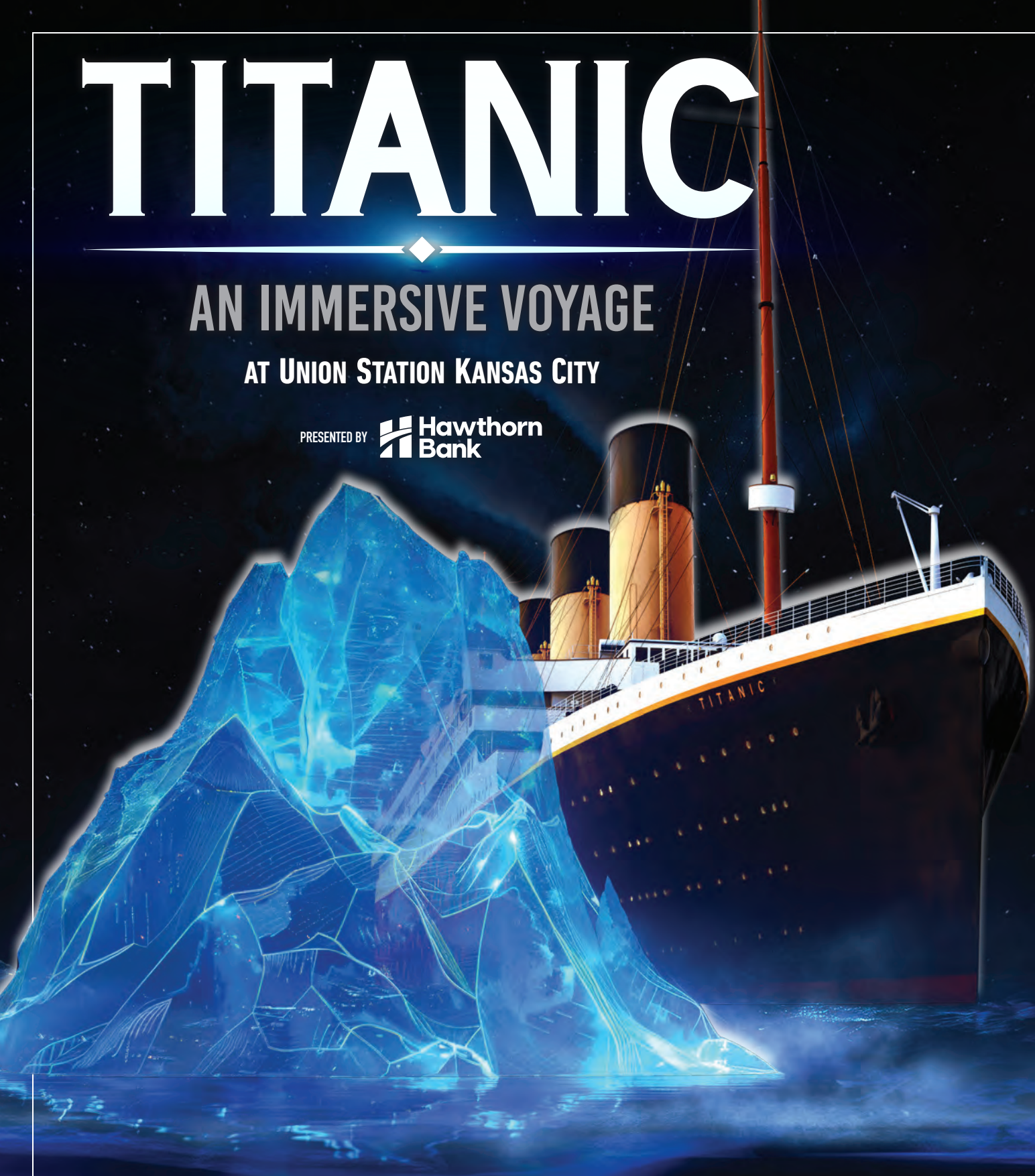


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# Sam McReynolds

NOW A RESIDENT ARTIST AT CHARLOTTE STREET, THE TALENTED DANCER IS AWASH  
IN OPPORTUNITIES IN KANSAS CITY AND BEYOND

BY REBECCA SMITH

He's danced in St. Louis, Tel Aviv, Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and now Sam McReynolds is finding Kansas City a goldmine of opportunities.

Local audiences have had the good fortune to see McReynolds' formidable talent in several productions by Owen/Cox Dance Group and Charlotte Street, where he is now a resident artist. "Sam was a top pick for the jurors based off his submitted solo pieces," said Patrick Alexander, programming and studio residence manager of Charlotte Street. "I can't wait for KC to experience what he does next in the community."

It's McReynolds' fluidity that so impresses. His seemingly endless ability to flow, bend, twist and soar is magnetic.

McReynolds first danced with Owen/Cox in 2021 and has continued to perform with the company following his move to KC in 2024 for his residency with Charlotte Street, where he explores movement and improvisation with dancers and dance followers in his pop-up "GREYaRea" sessions.

In April he was one of the dancers in "Collective: Our Stories of Cancer" with Owen/Cox. Creating and performing "Don," which honors a lung cancer survivor still living after a life sentence many years ago, was particularly meaningful, he said. He also danced with the company at the annual Spring to Dance event in St. Louis over Memorial Day weekend.

It was a busy summer. In May/June, McReynolds and LA-based dancer Raymond Ejiofor were featured in the film "We," which won awards in Berlin, was aired at festivals in Portland and Norway and played on a digital billboard in downtown L.A.

Also in May, McReynolds performed at Heritage Days in "Stories of the 1st Ward" in the West Bottoms. His choreographed piece "Affirmed, Harness" was performed by Emara Neymour-Jackson at the Folly Theater, City in Motion

Dance Theater and the Jewish Community Center. He was one of the dancers at the annual summer dance "Moving Arts" at the Folly Theater, and in September, he performed with Owen/Cox at the yearly "New Dance Partners" at Midwest Trust Center.

"To be given the opportunity to perform and share in the arts — especially with everything going on in the world right now, including the current administration's efforts to defund, discourage and silence the arts — is an incredible privilege that I do not take lightly, and I intend to cherish and celebrate these moments as best I can," McReynolds said. "The arts are essential. Don't let anybody tell you different."

---

His seemingly endless ability  
to flow, bend, twist and soar  
is magnetic.

---

McReynold's life as a dancer began with competitive Irish dancing at age 4. He soon added ballet, tap and jazz, and at 14 began studying hip-hop with Anthony "REDD" Williams. At Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, he focused on modern and contemporary dance and moved into choreography. He performed in many hip-hop shows in the area and made it into the top 50 in Season 11 of "So You Think You Can Dance." His dance works were chosen for the National Dance Week Festival in St. Louis in 2012, the American College Dance Association Gala in 2013 and the American Dance Festival in North Carolina in 2014.





In the summer of 2016, McReynolds was accepted into the Batsheva Dance Company Summer Intensive course in Tel Aviv. There he dove into the Gaga dance movement developed by choreographer Ohad Naharin. Gaga stresses “listening to the body, improvising, and exploring a wide range of movement qualities, including both delicacy and explosive power.” Mirrors are avoided to heighten an internal and sensorial approach.

McReynolds then moved to Los Angeles, where he worked with renowned choreographers and companies for nearly two years. He was hired for “A Mob Story” at the Plaza Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, returning to LA at the end of the contract.

He spent most of the next eight years with Arrogant Elbow, working with artistic director/choreographer Sarah Elgart, with whom he developed a close working relationship — the two discuss collaboration opportunities to this day.

McReynolds danced with Sidra Bell, LA Contemporary Dance, The TL Collective and others. He won Best New Filmmaker Award for his film “Proclamation” at the Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival in 2021. In a column about Owen/Cox

Dance Group’s summer 2022 production of “Skin,” Steve Paul singled out McReynolds’ “gut-wrenching lead” in a performance of the Helen Gillet song, “Shepherd’s Lung.”

McReynolds’ live works were presented at numerous venues, such as L.A. Dance Festival: International Exchange 2023. He taught and choreographed an original work for 10-to-13-year-olds at the Joffrey West LA Summer Intensive in 2022 and returned in 2023 to train teens and pre-professionals. He also taught at Joffrey West San Francisco Summer Intensive in 2024 and 2025. Locally, he joined the faculty of the Kansas City Ballet Academy in September 2024.

Upcoming McReynolds’ events include two performances at Greenwood Social Hall, 1750 Belleview Ave. From Nov. 28-30 he will present “Kurve Ball Dancer’s Showcase,” featuring new works and improv jam, and on Valentine’s Day weekend 2026 he will team up there with Óscar Trujillo, co-choreographing and performing an evening-length performance exploring the depth and complexities within queer relationships. □

For more information about upcoming performances, visit <https://greenwoodsocialhall.com/events>.



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Jackson Daughety outside the old Holsum Food Products building in the West Bottoms, where he has his studio

PHOTO BY JIM BARCUS



# Jackson Daughety

THE AWARD-WINNING KANSAS CITY ARTIST PROBES DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN FANTASY AND REALITY IN A CULTURE DRIVEN BY POWER AND MONEY

BY JACKIE BATISTA-MARTINEZ

With pop culture as his touchstone, visual artist and musician Jackson Daughety investigates capitalist iconography and its impact on our view of the world.

Like New York artists Julia Wachtel and Dan Colen, Daughety contextually reorients recognizable images from American culture to highlight their position in a society controlled by monied interests.

The 84 x 60" "Forced Perspective" (2025), for instance, done in ink and acrylic paint on stitched canvas, combines the iconic image of Disney's Cinderella Castle with military references. Fireworks creep toward the castle in threatening tendrils. It seems more like an archival photograph of a martial fortress than a celebration at a resort complex.

According to Daughety, the piece draws on cultural philosopher Jean Baudrillard's idea of the hyperreal, which contends that ad fantasies and other corporate constructions — Disneyland, for instance — have come to replace our perceptions of what is real.

Other thinkers who have influenced Daughety include Michel Foucault, "who kind of helped explain how the functioning of society illustrates a system of values which we are tacitly agreeing with by not disagreeing," he said. "Also Kafka, who I think was able to articulate really emotionally how frustrating and dehumanizing it feels to interface with bureaucracy and technology in the place of something more natural."

Daughety has made deep dives into the internet subcultures living on the many iterations of 4chan as well as a gun forum on Reddit. (But that doesn't mean he likes guns — he finds them fascinating as an outside observer. "I am from Texas, so I've seen it, been around it my whole life," he says.)

In the 12 x 16" painting "Moist Critical Theory" (2025), a wall hanging of a bionic, militaristic toy, which served as the backdrop for the video game streamer MoistCr1TiKaL, looms forward. The male posturing of the image is "preposterous," Daughety says, "there's so much performance."

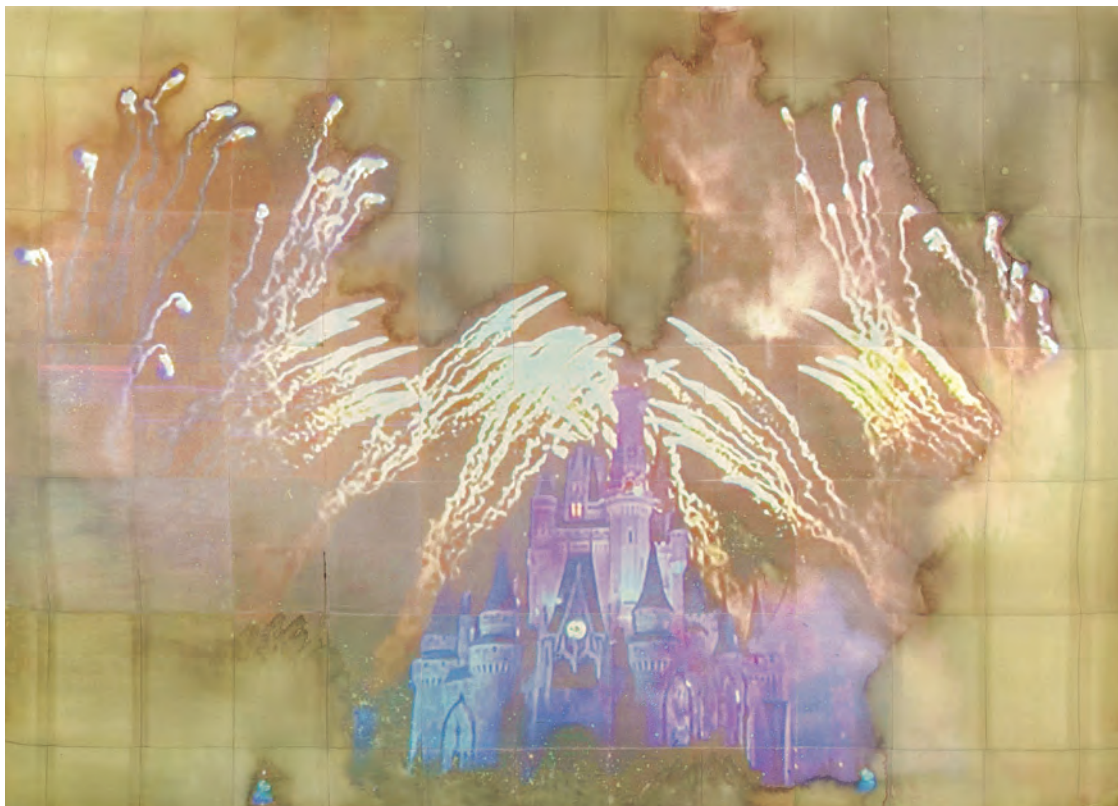
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Daughety contextually reorients recognizable images from American culture to highlight their position in a society controlled by monied interests.

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"Camel" (2025), a 96 x 60" work in ink and acrylic on linen that's been printed, painted and stitched together, features hundreds of figurines of Jesus Christ in a shop window in Padova, Italy, based on a photo taken by Daughety's sister. He recently posted an image of the piece on his Instagram with a caption including "Does the church take Apple Pay?? Can I vape in here??" The abundance of "Camel" is oppressive, but not without moments of relief and intentional places for the eye to rest away from the almost unintelligible onslaught of visual information.

Daughety's more recent work is "a hybrid of inkjet printmaking and painting," he says. "The fabric gets printed and painted before sewing; then it all gets sewn together after. Some are just painted too, where there is usually an image or video reference."



FROM THE ARTIST

**"Forced Perspective" (2025), ink, acrylic on stitched canvas, 84 x 60"**



FROM THE ARTIST

**"Moist Critical Theory" (2025), acrylic on board, 12 x 16"**

Born in 1998, Daughety grew up in Dallas, Texas, before attending the Kansas City Art Institute, where he received a BFA in sculpture. His work has been exhibited in group and individual shows across the country and abroad. A 2021-2023 Block Fellow at the H&R Block Artspace, a 2018 Young Arts Merit award recipient, and the recipient of the 2017 Excellence in Art Award from the Dallas Art Dealers Association, Daughety has been featured in New American Paintings, Newcity Art, The Dallas Morning News, The Pitch KC, KC Studio, and recently in the May issue of Subart, an international magazine for emerging artists.

His most recent solo show, "Large Margin," at In Other News Gallery was almost entirely painting and inkjet printmaking, save for a piano in the corner of the room that seemed to play itself. He is currently part of three music projects: Sorry to Hear That, Jackson & Olivia, and Spade No. 9. Daughety has an exhibit scheduled at R&D Madison in Madison, Wisconsin. □

**For more information, <https://jacksondaughety.com/>.**



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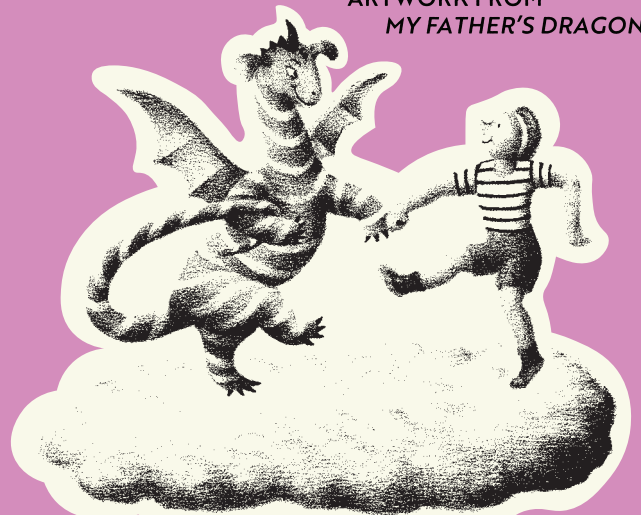
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# Bach Aria Soloists join forces with Missouri Choral Artists

GET READY FOR AN “EXPANSIVE CELEBRATION OF BEAUTIFUL CHORAL WORKS AND MAGNIFICENT ARIAS” AT ST. PAUL’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BY LIBBY HANSSEN

In a fine example of collaborative music making, the established Bach Aria Soloists bring forward Missouri Choral Artists in an exciting mixed concert of choral and chamber works.

Bach Aria Soloists, now in their 26th season, have often played host to musicians from diverse genres, finding ties from around the world and across the centuries to their namesake inspiration from the Baroque era, Johann Sebastian Bach.

This season, Missouri Choral Artists joins them in an exploration of eras and styles for a concert at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, what Bach Aria Soloists founder and violinist Elizabeth Suh Lane called an “expansive celebration of beautiful choral works and magnificent arias.” Suh Lane is also BAS’ artistic director.

Vocalists have been a part of the BAS experience since it was founded. And collaborating with choirs is not a new venture for BAS, either, having performed in previous seasons with groups such as the Kansas City Chorale and Te Deum.

And many of the artists in the choir were in those same ensembles. Founded in 2016, Missouri Choral Artists is an invitation-based ensemble, with exceptional vocalists from across the region who have Missouri ties. Some grew up here, some studied at a Missouri-based music school. Some live in Missouri currently, as professional musicians and educators.



COURTESY MISSOURI CHORAL ARTISTS

Missouri Choral Artists

Missouri Choral Artists is a project-based group, which means instead of regular rehearsals, the individual members prepare on their own, then come together for a week (or weekend) of rehearsals and performances. The roster changes concert to concert, giving each performance a unique sound. Though the group is based in centrally located Springfield, Missouri, each season they present concerts in the Kansas City area.

“What began as a gathering of former college friends has since grown into a professional ensemble working with some of the nation’s finest artists and guest conductors,” said Kelly Garrison,

co-founder and artistic director of Missouri Choral Artists.

These two groups are connected by soprano Sarah Tannehill Anderson, who has performed with BAS since 2014. She is also one of the founding members of Missouri Choral Artists and currently serves as board president. Anderson is a familiar voice in Kansas City, having performed with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, the Grammy Award-winning Kansas City Chorale, William Baker Festival Singers and more.

“Missouri Choral Artists is unique because we’re there to retreat from our





Bach Aria Soloists: Elisa Bickers, Elizabeth Suh Lane and Sarah Tannehill Anderson

lives and enjoy singing together,” said Anderson. “We are there to connect with each other and enjoy the process of making beautiful music.”

With her experience in both ensembles, she knew that together they would sound exceptional. The partnership was, agreed Garrison, “a natural fit.”

“This is our first collaboration with an instrumental group of this scope. We’re excited to present a program that blends MCA’s choral artistry with the instrumental brilliance of BAS, offering audiences a unique perspective on both traditional and collaborative repertoire,” said Garrison.

These collaborations not only open up new avenues for audiences but set an artistic challenge for the musicians. “The concept of broadening our own horizons, challenging everyone involved and introducing possible new music to our

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**“Bach Aria Soloists are a cornerstone of the Kansas City arts community, and we are honored to collaborate with them.”**

— Kelly Garrison, co-founder and artistic director of Missouri Choral Artists

---

audiences with something new and fresh, is exhilarating,” said Anderson.

“I think we’ve all become really good at staying open-minded and flexible, because we know the end product will shine if we do.”

In keeping with BAS’ vision, “Bach is at the heart of the program,” said Garrison, though the concert draws from works across the centuries. Bach, of course,

wrote for a wide variety of ensembles, and this concert, too, will showcase “a rich mix of instrumental, choral and collaborative works,” Garrison said.

From Bach’s massive oeuvre they’ll present a range of textures, including “Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren,” BWV 231, for chorus and organ, and the Chorale from “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,” BWV 140, for choir and continuo, as well as “Gott fähret auf mit Jauchzen,”

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## Missouri Choral Artists is an invitation-based ensemble, with exceptional vocalists from across the region who have Missouri ties.

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featuring Anderson as soprano soloist, and the Domine Deus from Bach's B minor Mass, for tenor, soprano and instruments.

Many pieces feature the versatile Bach Aria Soloist mainstay Elisa Bickers on keyboards, playing pieces on harpsichord and organ, such as James MacMillan's "A New Song," which pulls together many influences of church and folk music into a beautiful reflection, and an excerpt from Heinrich Schütz's "Musikalische Exequien," Op. 7.

Suh Lane performs with the chorus on James Pearson's searing "Introit-Somnium."

There will also be a few choir-only features, with Renaissance-era works by Luca Marenzio and Felice Anerio, as well as Cecilia MacDowall's haunting lament "Standing as I do before God," written in 2013.

And for chamber music fans, BAS will have a few highlight moments, familiar to their dedicated audience, adding a change of texture to the concert. Suh Lane and Bickers perform the "Allegro" from Bach's Sonata in G minor, an opener Suh Lane called "pure joy." As an interlude in the middle of the concert

(and to give Bickers and the choir a break), Suh Lane solos on the brilliant "Danse des Ombres" from Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonata No. 2.

They've also arranged a new chamber music treatment for Ottorino Respighi's "Deità Silvana" specifically for this partnership, creating a piece Suh Lane called "exquisite," for chorus, organ and violin, and showcasing many of the individual voices from MCA.

The finale brings all the forces together for Benjamin Britten's exuberant "Jubilate Deo."

"Bach Aria Soloists are a cornerstone of the Kansas City arts community," said Garrison, "and we are honored to collaborate with them." With this powerhouse of a connection, the performance promises to be a thrilling evening of music. □

**Bach Aria Soloists and Missouri Choral Artists perform at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 15. For more information visit [www.bachariasoloists.com](http://www.bachariasoloists.com).**



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PHOTO BY DON IPOCK

From left: Alexis J. Roston as Nina Simone; Matthew Harris as Sam (at the piano) and Brittney Mack as Sweet Thing in KCRep's 2024 production of "Nina Simone: Four Women"



# A climate of intimidation

IN KC, GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS ARE COMMITTED TO,  
BUT RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS DEI

BY ROBERT TRUSSELL

The Trump Administration's war on diversity, equity and inclusion extends all the way to local arts organizations, many of whom are now having to do their work with less money after draconian cuts to federal arts funding.

Boiled down to its essence, DEI is all about giving historically disadvantaged and under-represented ethnic and cultural groups — including African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, women, immigrants, gays and trans citizens — a fair shake when it comes to career opportunities.

President Joe Biden, on his first day in office, signed Executive Order 13985 with an explicit goal: “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.” The order “established that affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our government.”

Biden's plan recognized that the federal government was the country's largest employer and “must be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, where all employees are treated with dignity and respect.”

Flash forward four years. Trump and his team quickly signaled early in his second administration that the concepts of diversity and equal opportunity had been consigned to the dustbin. Throughout the federal government, including the military, the message was pretty clear — Trump wanted a government led and represented primarily by white males.

And although much of the rhetoric coming out of Washington has characterized DEI as a cultural threat undermining America's so-called Anglo-Saxon heritage, the concept is hardly new.

Writing for Forbes in late 2024, Julie Katz broke down DEI's history, beginning with the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, which “made discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin illegal in employment . . .”

“(M)ost DEI supporters cite the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 as the first step leading to the modern DEI industry.”

Katz pointed out that in the '60s, efforts to create a level playing field for minorities were “primarily focused on race.” But in the 1970s, after the rise of the feminist movement, the vision was expanded to encompass gender. In the following decade the focus expanded yet again “to embrace a broader spectrum of diversity” encompassing more groups, including ethnic, religious and LGBTQ communities. Eventually the concept was represented by groups such as the MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter.

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You have to look to organizations that receive no NEA money to find leaders willing to speak on the record.

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But here's the thing — the arts, like professional sports, had embraced DEI for decades before Trump hit his panic button and began appealing directly to the most intolerant segments of society.

Kansas City's performing arts organizations have played a central role in the push for greater diversity and inclusion. Following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis in 2020, statements began appearing on the website of some area arts organizations.

“Since mid-2020, KCRep has engaged in a deliberate, strategic and heart-expanding process of educating and involving our board and staff in the important work of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (IDEA),” read a message on KC Rep's website. The posting concluded with this: “We are committed to being part of the solution that advances equity and creates a more inclusive KCRep and American Theatre, and we invite you all to join us in this on-going evolution.”



Ernie Nolan, artistic director



Khalia Davis, artistic director

“The Lyric Opera of Kansas City is a Company that celebrates diversity to foster a positive, flexible, engaging work environment, a place where building relationships and empowering colleagues is encouraged,” read a message on the opera company’s website.

And the Kansas City Ballet offered this: “Kansas City Ballet believes in the right for all to experience full equity and inclusion, regardless of race. Our hearts are deeply saddened by the losses across our country and the pain we have all witnessed. We stand united with hope for better, more just and equitable days ahead.”

Yet, when interview requests were submitted for this article, the leadership of those performing arts companies declined comment. So did Khalia Davis, the new artistic director of the Coterie, even though she is among six leaders who formed an advisory board within New York-based TYA/USA, a national nonprofit founded in 1965 committed to denouncing violence and racism toward communities of color.



Chiomu Anyanwu in the Unicorn Theatre’s 2024 production of “Backwards Forwards Back”

PHOTO BY CYNTHIA LEVIN/UNICORN THEATRE

You have to look to organizations that receive no NEA money to find leaders willing to speak on the record.

To date Kansas City has two respected theaters of color: The Black Repertory Theater of Kansas City, founded by actor/director Damron Armstrong, and the Melting Pot Theatre, co-founded by Harvey and Linda Williams after Harvey decided that forming a theater company was the only way to get his plays produced. Other theaters can point to histories of hiring artists of color and producing ethnic material.

Kansas City Actors Theatre made history in 2020 when it chose to redefine itself. In a public mea culpa that was updated the following year, the respected theater company declared itself in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and committing to bringing in artists of color to join the organization.

KCAT has done what it promised to do, adding diverse members to the board of directors, the artistic ensemble and committees that collectively chart the company’s path forward.

“We do four shows a year and make a point of having one of those shows written by someone of color,” said John Rensenhouse, KCAT’s artistic chair. “We don’t receive any sort of national grants so we have no reason to be pulling back from our DEI commitment.”

Rensenhouse is up-front about how KCAT’s leadership wanted to change its profile — shifting from a virtually all-white theater catering to a white audience to a company dedicated to diversity. For years, the only African American actor KCAT audiences saw was Walter Coppage, one of the company’s founders. Coppage is still part of the theater, but now the artistic ensemble also includes actor Chioma Anyanwu, actor/directors Teisha Bankston and Nedra Dixon and director/stage manager Ari Hernandez and actor/projections designer Jerry Manan.

Ernie Nolan, now in his first full season as the Unicorn Theatre’s artistic director, said the company no longer applies directly for National Endowment for the Arts grants.

“Theater has always been a home for outsiders,” Nolan said. “And the stories that theaters have gravitated to are stories about outsiders. Back to the Greeks, theater has always been a place for various voices to arise.”

According to Nolan, the Unicorn has a commitment to and a history of commitment to diversity.

“Inclusivity is in the DNA of our organization,” he said. “People come to the Unicorn for new work, the diverse programming and the diverse people on stage.”

Theatre for Young America, founded in 1974 by Gene and Sheryl Mackey, is based in Union Station after a rather





PHOTO BY JIM BARCUS

Damron Russel Armstrong (center), director of Black Repertory Theatre of Kansas City, with Pamela Baskin-Watson (left) and Nedra Dixon (right), writers of “A God\*Sib’s Tale,” which the company presented in January 2024

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“Theater has always been a home for outsiders . . . Back to the Greeks, theater has always been a place for various voices to arise.” — *Ernie Nolan, artistic director, Unicorn Theatre*

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nomadic existence through the decades. Virtually from the beginning, the company has been dedicated to diversity and color-blind casting.

“Theater has a little more freedom in ideas about casting and how a play might be done,” Gene Mackey said.

Artistic director Valerie Mackey, the founders’ daughter, said complaints about color-blind casting have been part of the company’s reality for years. She said the company caught flak when Angela Wildflower, an African American artist, played Goldilocks.

“It’s been around since I was a kid,” Valerie said. “It was not something I had to think about because it was part of what

we did. It didn’t matter what skin color they had. What I love is what I see in young people. They accept (color-blind) casting so readily. They don’t even think about it. They just accept it.”

Gene Mackey said, “Young people have grown with the times and are comfortable in inclusion.”

Inclusion is the lens through which the Mackeys view some politicians’ intolerance of diversity.

“I think the arts are one of the most powerful weapons we have and that is why Trump is diving into it so much,” Valerie Mackey said. “He has a healthy fear of what the arts can do. We’re all drawn to great storytellers that shine a light on our humanity, and he sees that. I think it’s all fear-based.” □

# Dean Mitchell: 'Changing humanity for the better'

TWO EXHIBITIONS AT THE MUSEUM OF ART + LIGHT SHOWCASE THE CONSUMMATE AMERICAN ARTIST'S MASTERY OF PORTRAITURE AND DISTINCTIVE PORTRAYALS OF THE AMERICAN SCENE







Installation view of "The Erosion of Time: A Digital Compilation of Works by Des Lucrèce and Dean Mitchell"

BY BRIAN HEARN

Dean Mitchell is an American artist of the first order. The Florida native touched Kansas City's art scene for more than two decades while employed by Hallmark as an illustrator from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. Now we have the privilege to survey Mitchell's highly accomplished oeuvre in his return to the Midwest, with two engaging new exhibitions at the innovative Museum of Art + Light in Manhattan, Kansas.

The third-floor exhibition, "Heritage & the Human Condition," assembles the full range of Mitchell's 2D practice in more than 50 oils on panel and on canvas, paintings in egg tempera, acrylics, watercolors, graphite drawings, pastels and etchings. Across media, Mitchell presents a sensitive, studied approach to the human form that shines through in several family portraits, at times profoundly intimate and sometimes uncomfortably honest. Many works in this exhibition were sourced from the artist's own family collection, spanning some 40 years. It explains the sense that we're meeting a gallery of the artist's cherished family, friends and colleagues.

"Boundary," a 1995 oil on panel portrait, introduces the retrospective with frank naturalism. In the 40 x 30-inch vertical painting, a seated elderly black man leans halfway into the narrow center column of the work, his white hair backlit against a flat, buttery background. The man's figure



Dean Mitchell, "Boundary" (1995), oil on panel, 40 x 30"

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

is stark and sturdy in his seat. The chair supports zig and zag beneath him suggesting a journey — perhaps near its end. He meets our gaze squarely with mouth parted slightly, "Shall you pass?" he seems to say. In this aperture his worn features are subtly illuminated, enclosed by a brooding doorway. It's that uncertain moment of checking on an aged loved one, not knowing what one might find. Nevertheless, we respect the sitter's boundary because the artist does.

Consider the reverent portrait of "Miss Highbaugh" (1993), oil on panel, with her pensive expression shielded by a spectacular blue hat. Delicately lit, all the painting action centers on the topography of the elder's memorable features. The faces and limbs of Mitchell's sitters, especially loved ones, carry extraordinary lived experience in their individual wrinkles and expressions. The monochrome backgrounds in Mitchell's portraits focus our attention on the quiet narrative quality of their faces. Mitchell doesn't shy away from unguarded emotion; he shows us one-of-a-kind helpings of love and loss, grief and endurance. His paintings allow us time for a vibe check. It's not just one feeling; it's complicated, isn't it?

Mitchell leans into the frailty of aging, bodies and brains subjected to natural cycles, trauma, inevitable erosion. The artist invites these painful realities into his pictorial space and transforms them into recognizable, acceptable, satisfying forms. It's the tender way that the artist views his subjects that settles in while viewing the work. One notices his sitters are placed at oblique angles,

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Mitchell doesn't shy away from unguarded emotion; he shows us one-of-a-kind helpings of love and loss, grief and endurance.

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COLLECTION KEMPER MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART,  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI © DEAN MITCHELL

Dean Mitchell, "Release Me" (1991), oil on masonite, 30 x 44"

from just behind, often looking slightly away, or simply in straight profile. It's the closely observed way one stares at people in church, mixed with the weird POVs one experiences waiting around with strangers at the DMV. Ecce homo!

Mitchell grew up in church and says he "likes to probe people" that he is painting. The artist's empathy toward his subjects is palpable. In "Release Me" (1991), the artist welcomed the relentless, dehumanizing dying process into his visual repertoire, recording the bodily awkwardness of suffering into a careful, dignified rendering of a man resting on a quilted bed. It's an uncomfortable scene to be present with,

and somehow there is beauty in the bent human form. We can take courage in looking. Several of these treasured family portraits are relatives near the end of life, bodies vulnerable, enduring, waiting for one's maker for the best possible ending. The artist invites us in these pictures to participate in the empathic imaginary. We are in the presence of a humanist.

Mitchell's minimalist compositions display a distinct abstract quality, with skillfully modeled forms against flat planes of low-key color. His more recent portrait style of the 2020s tilts toward painterly cubism, constructing

faces and bodies from broad multidirectional planes of pigment. He pays close attention to light and effectively creates soft, indirect and raking lighting effects throughout his works. Mitchell's work echoes the haunting loneliness of Edward Hopper, the obsessive draftsmanship of Andrew Wyeth, and the earlier glow-y mysticism of Henry Ossawa Tanner.

After all, Mitchell is a realist painter and illustrator of the American scene, with a foot in two centuries, concentrating on portraits and people, rural and urban architecture from the South, the West and Midwest. Beyond



Dean Mitchell, "Miss Highbaugh" (1993), oil on panel

COURTESY OF THE ROBERT AND TRACEY DEBRUYN COLLECTION



figuration, his work spans landscape, still life, Black history paintings and even some nonobjective abstraction. It's a surprise to the artist that he's made money at his painting. It speaks to his humble roots, one who started as a kid with a paint-by-numbers set, or later, worked as a young man in the tobacco industry of northern Florida.

### THE PATH TO SUCCESS

Mitchell showed talent and dedication for visual art from an early age. His younger self, motivated by the realist impulse, "wanted to make it look like something." An early art teacher told Mitchell that "he suffered technically but had the ability to see abstractly," which was much harder to teach. Perhaps the compliment stung at the time, but he cultivated his gift of sight by going to museums, learning from curators and directors along the way, while finding ways to perfect his technique. After years of academic study in Columbus, Ohio, and a ton of awards, Mitchell distinguished himself in the medium of watercolor but expanded broadly over his career as a commercial and studio artist.

Mitchell mentions as inspirations Norman Rockwell's narrative illustration style in the same breath as 20th-century postwar artists like Robert Motherwell and Joan Mitchell (no relation). This Mitchell finds abstract beauty in the isolated Native American reservations of Arizona as much as the distinctive doorways of New Orleans, the hulking tobacco barns of his Florida youth, or the faded glory of the decaying urban rust belt. Mitchell is a consummate American artist with an authentic vision of Black, Indigenous experience

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Mitchell finds abstract beauty in the isolated Native American reservations of Arizona as much as the distinctive doorways of New Orleans, the hulking tobacco barns of his Florida youth, or the faded glory of the decaying urban rust belt.

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in the South, the Midwest and the West. His career has ticked practically all the art boxes. At this stage, approaching late career, clear-eyed and openhearted, Mitchell says matter of factly, "It's more about doing the work, and changing humanity for the better."

On the ground floor, Mitchell's companion exhibition, "The Erosion of Time: A Digital Compilation of Works by Des Lucrèce and Dean Mitchell," marks the artist's foray into the digital immersive medium. Created in collaboration with the design team of Museum of Art + Light, the atmospheric production was built from 400 to 500 of Mitchell's art images over six months. Beginning with scenes of the artist's youth, swampy Florida cypress trees and tobacco fields, the immersive work transitions to the sweaty streetscapes of New Orleans, which the artist perceives "just like an abstract painting."

On a larger-than-life scale, Mitchell's subtly animated musicians and street people, kith and kin, lead us on a

journey through rural Southern and Western America, laced with poetic texts and a delicious jazz soundtrack. "The Erosion of Time" cleverly pairs Mitchell's immersive with a stark contrast in Des Lucrèce, an emerging digital GIF artist whose "Monsters" are graphically grown out of video game culture, digital painting and street art.

Is Dean Mitchell "old school"? Yes, in the best way possible. Does Dean Mitchell make American art? Black art? Southern art? Western art? Jazz art? Human art? Thankfully, yes. Best of all, the artist has remained human. □

**"Heritage & the Human Condition" continues at the Museum of Art + Light, 316 Pierre St., Manhattan, Kansas, through March 9, 2026.**

**"The Erosion of Time: A Digital Compilation of Works by Des Lucrèce and Dean Mitchell" runs through April 30, 2026. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday and Wednesday-Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Tuesday. Admission charges vary. For more information, 785.775.5444 or <https://artlightmuseum.org/>.**



# STILL THEY RISE

Black women painters ascendant in Kansas City





BY HAROLD SMITH

*I rise*

*Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.*

*I rise*

*I rise*

*I rise.* — From “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou

**A**gainst the odds, Black women painters in Kansas City are forging a historic path and creating artistic communities through love, resilience and courage. After years in the shadows, they are also enjoying enhanced exposure at venues around the city.

This path runs from the vibrant new abstract paintings of seasoned quilter and painter Sonie Joi Thompson-Ruffin, through warm and endearing portraits by mid-career painter and educator Adrienne Clayton and into the explosively vibrant paintings joyously exploring Black life by talents such as Yvette Wilkins, Clariece Kirkwood and Feliz Kehinde.

Displayed at venues including The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Leedy-Voulikos Art Center, as well as the Zhou B Art Center, InterUrban ArtHouse, Charlotte Street and Englewood Arts, spaces where many of them also have studios, the works of these gifted painters span a vibrant range of stylistic conventions and subject matter.

“Looking Toward Grace” by Lolita Looney, a painting veteran of more than 50 years, presents a tender exploration of the human experience. In “The Rose of Sharon,” Denita Robinson, known online as Denita Necole Art, uses blues and soft tones to shed a gentle light on Black femininity. In “Golden Boy,” Clariece Kirkwood bathes her masculine subject in deep, rich hues, topped with gold, that emanate from the canvas itself. Daisha Maria-Breona’s “War Room” masterfully uses a limited palette to explore Black womanhood and faith.

This exposure occurs against a challenging backdrop.

Museums of American art have historically, and continue, to underrepresent the work of Black women artists, including painters, in their collections.

Black women comprise 7.8% of the total U.S. population and 15.5% percent of the female population. However,

researchers have found that only 1.2% of work in major American museums was created by Black or African American women. Women of color are 20% of the population but make up only 1% of the artists in major museum collections. Even more disturbing is the fact that art by Black American women comprises 0.1% of art auction sales.

To put it more bluntly, most American museums should replace the tagline “of American Art” with “of white male American Art” to present a more accurate portrayal of what patrons can expect to see.

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## The Black women painting community of Kansas City is a rich stew of diverse narratives and experiences.

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The challenges to Black women artists don't just come from without, they also come from within. The postmodern Black American painter and printmaker Emma Amos was the only woman invited to join the legendary Romare Bearden's Spiral group. Amos was only asked to join after the members inspected her work, while the male members were not required to have such inspection.

Amos herself expressed that the group “weren’t comfortable with women artists as colleagues.”

Faith Ringgold, after observing the marginalization of Black women in the famed Black Arts Movement, turned her focus to feminist politics and co-founded Black women's groups including “Where We At,” Black Women Artists, Inc., Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation.

Stars of hope have begun to shine in this darkness, however. According to Dr. Stephanie Fox Knappe, Sanders Sosland Senior Curator at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and organizer of the museum's seminal 2021-22 exhibit,

Opposite: More than two dozen of Kansas City's Black women painters gathered at the Museum of Kansas City earlier this fall for a group shot. Pictured bottom row, left to right: Florencia Marie, Yvette Wilkins, Feliz Kehinde, Janine Carter, Michelle Beasley; second row, left to right: Remy Wharry, Arlon Jackson. Vivian Bluett, Anita Easterwood, Rockie Phillips; third row, left to right: Tia Thomas, Maria North; fourth row, left to right: Alea Lovely Jones, Amber Reynolds, Lolita Looney, Mia Ailyse, Denita Robinson, Aisha Imani Sanaa; back row, left to right: Crystal Major, Daynie Gardner, Day Adams, Malissa Hinton, Sandra Fielder, Antoinette Drone, Toni Gates, Adrienne D. Clayton, Maria Riley.



COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

A family of painters: Lolita Looney has taught all three of her daughters, Crissi Rice, Alea Lovely and Kat Looney, how to paint and is now teaching her four adopted children. From left, Crissi Rice, Lolita Looney, Alea Lovely and Kat Looney

“Testimony: African American Artists Collective,” “Many museums and survey-text authors are catching up and catching on to the brilliance that has always been there as they commit to present a more inclusive, and therefore more truthful, art history where Black women painters’ visions and voices are celebrated and amplified. There is always more work to be done.”

Locally, an important turning point occurred with “Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today,” a 2017 traveling exhibition launched at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. Co-curated by Erin Dziedzic and Melissa Messina, it was the first U.S. exhibition dedicated exclusively to the presentation of abstraction by an intergenerational group of Black women artists.

“The 2017 exhibition and catalogue ‘Magnetic Fields,’ which I co-curated at Kemper Museum, stands as a pivotal moment in my career. The network of extraordinary women artists and scholars who contributed to the project enriched every stage of its development, infusing the show with a resonance and vitality that endures,” states Dziedzic, now an independent curator in New York.

## The power of the collective

The Black women painting community of Kansas City is a rich stew of diverse narratives and experiences. Each one brings a unique voice to the canon of art in America and provides a network of support for her peers, through organizations such as the African American Artists Collective of Kansas City, Black Space Black Art, The International African American Art Museum of Kansas City, and other smaller groups of artists.

Individual efforts also play a significant role.



FROM THE ARTIST

Lolita Looney, “Looking Toward Grace” (2018), acrylic, 16 x 20"

Sixty-eight-year-old Lolita Looney passed down her painting skills to her daughters Crissi Rice, Alea Lovely and Katherine Looney by teaching them to paint, beginning in early childhood. While their styles and subjects differ, one can easily tell that they were mentored by a painter who has clearly mastered technique and form. “I always had art materials out for the kids at any time to put together things they wanted to create and would assist in facilitating what they wanted to do,” says Looney. Tireless in her commitment, she is now passing her skills on to her adopted younger daughters, Alexis and AnaLi Looney.



Historically speaking, painters and writers share a unique bond of support, especially in the history of Black art. Several of these painters were first exhibited under the curation of Natasha Ria El-Scari, director of the Women's Center at UMKC. "Centering African American women visual artists is so powerful because as a collective, our voices are rarely heard," El-Scari said. "Often it feels like we are fighting in our own boxes, although the challenges are similar."

They share the same inner struggles of all creatives. "The biggest challenge I've faced as an artist is the 'inner critic,'" says Nicole Oliver-Diggs, painter and wife of painter Lynell Diggs. "Once you overcome that, I believe the criticism of others can be taken with a grain of salt. Also, making time to create and maintain the other things life holds is a challenge in itself. The key is finding 'your' balance."

Black women artists, bound by gender and race, bring a unique energy to Kansas City's art scene. The voices of African ancestors can be heard in their work as well as the voice of today's Black Americans.

Still they rise. □



FROM THE ARTIST

Denita Robinson, "The Rose of Sharon" (2025), acrylic paint, 30 x 40"

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# ‘Everybody do your best’

SPINNING TREE THEATRE CELEBRATES 15 YEARS WITH A GROUNDBREAKING COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

BY VIVIAN KANE

**D**o you know that feeling when you’re listening to someone talk about something with such intense, infectious passion that you can’t help but get excited about the subject as well? That’s what it’s like talking to Andrew and Michael Grayman-Parkhurst about accessibility in theater.

The Grayman-Parkhursts are the founders of Spinning Tree Theatre, which marks its 15th anniversary this year. The company has made a name for itself producing quality works featuring young artists of all abilities. But that wasn’t always their focus.

Michael and Andrew got the idea to form their own company when living in New York, working on Broadway and in touring theater. But they didn’t take the leap until they moved to Andrew’s hometown of Kansas City.

For their first production, they wanted to choose a work that would introduce them to the arts scene honestly and authentically, that would represent their aesthetics and their values. They landed on the Off-Broadway revue “Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn,” honoring the Broadway lyricist and composer who celebrated queer and Jewish identities.

In Spinning Tree’s first year, they produced just that one show. In their second year, they did two productions and in their third year, three. The focus was mounting Kansas City premieres of smaller contemporary musicals and scaled-down versions of classic musicals. They bounced around various homes, doing shows at what was then the Off Center Theatre in Crown Center (now Music Theatre Heritage’s permanent space) and the Just Off Broadway Theatre (home to KC Melting Pot Theatre), before landing in their permanent space at the Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center.

Then 2020 happened.

Like every other theater company, when COVID-19 hit the U.S., Spinning Tree had to go dark, canceling what was to be its 10th season. During that time, the Grayman-Parkhursts ended up reimagining their entire mission.

The previous year, in the summer of 2019, Michael and Andrew had partnered with Variety Children’s Charity of Greater Kansas City, a nonprofit that works to provide children with disabilities medical and therapeutic equipment and therapies, as well as empowering, inclusive enrichment programs. The Grayman-

Parkhursts led a summer theater camp for young artists both with and without perceivable disabilities. For their production, they chose “Starlight Express.”

The Andrew Lloyd Webber musical about a children’s train set come to life is, at its core, an exploration of how bodies move through the world. The experience shifted the way the Grayman-Parkhursts viewed theater.

“During the project, Michael and I fell in love with doing theater in this way,” Andrew tells me. “It felt really exciting to us to meet each of the young artists where they were. So we had young artists in wheelchairs, we had young artists with autism, with ADHD, anxiety, with all sorts of different diagnoses, and some maybe without diagnoses.

“And then we had young artists who had done Broadway National Tours that were in the show, and kids without perceptible disabilities. And we just fell in love with the vibe in the room, of ‘everybody do your best,’ and it felt like it brought out the highest version of all of us.”

Michael and Andrew brought that experience back and made it foundational to the new Spinning Tree. They now produce multiple works every year, including commissioning new works from local playwrights, featuring young artists of all abilities onstage and behind the scenes. They host an annual Teen Writers Fest, pairing young writers with professional mentors to develop original scripts that are then performed by a cast of young actors. They’re kicking off their 15th season with the musical “Carrie” (Nov. 1-9) — a show about a young girl expressing herself and overcoming bullying that they said the young artists auditioning made it clear they really relate to.

They’re also in something of a growth phase. They’re passionate about raising the standard of accessibility in theater. They’re currently getting involved in neuroarts, how the arts can measurably change a person’s brain and body. (The shows at Spinning Tree always seemed to me to be transformative for the young artists — it seems that might literally be true.)

This summer, the Grayman-Parkhursts pushed themselves with a new large-scale undertaking, mounting a production of “Annie” in partnership with Variety KC. The musical ran at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and featured



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“I think there’s probably some people in theater that have been maybe scared to have people with disabilities in their shows because they don’t know what’s going to happen. Whereas we now find that very exciting.” — *Michael Grayman-Parkhurst*

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Spinning Tree Theatre co-founders (front left to right) Michael Grayman-Parkhurst and Andrew Grayman-Parkhurst (shown in multiple) inside The Black Box Theater at the Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center



PHOTO BY NICOLE SCHEIER/SPINNING TREE

Aubrey May as Constance Blackwood (with ensemble) in "Ride the Cyclone" (2023)

a cast of about 60 young artists and adults of all abilities. It was, according to Variety KC, "the city's first fully inclusive professional musical theater production."

"This isn't a one-time feel-good story — it's a new standard," Marc Harrell, executive producer of the Variety Show and executive director of Variety KC, said in a statement. "We're not just adding a few kids with disabilities into minor roles. We're building a stage where belonging is the default, not the exception."

That sort of authentic inclusion is the driving mission for the Grayman-Parkhursts. Key to all of it is their enthusiasm for listening, learning and progress. It's also essential, as Michael puts it, to "embrace the unpredictability of it."

"I think there's probably some people in theater that have been maybe scared to have people with disabilities in their shows because they don't know what's going to happen. Whereas we now find that very exciting," says Michael.

"If there is one night where someone does not want to come onstage, OK, we adapt. If this person needs a buddy to help them get off and onstage, we do that every single night. There's someone waiting off in the wings to greet them, we do that and we love it. And part of the creative process is making it work for that person.

"Those experiences are about their opportunities," Michael says of the young artists. "And it's a really fun way to approach theater because you don't have to be afraid anymore that it's not going to be perfect, that the audience is going to understand. I think audiences come to our shows with the understanding that that can happen, but maybe they're also looking for that." □

For more information and tickets, [spinningtreetheatre.com/](https://spinningtreetheatre.com/).



PHOTO BY MICAH THOMPSON/SPINNING TREE

Rhaelin Green in Spinning Tree's June 2024 production of "Working: KC Edition"





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Andrea Carlson "The Surveyor's Obstacle" (2024), mixed woods (tupelo, poplar, maple, and basswood) 10 carved columns, 3 carved balls and 1 carved bird, dimensions variable: (3 eight-foot columns, 3 six-foot columns, 4 four-foot columns. All 7" diameter)



# Epic landscapes with stories to tell

KEMPER MUSEUM'S 'ANDREA CARLSON: SHIMMER ON HORIZONS' EXHIBIT ADDRESSES COLONIZATION, DISPOSSESSION AND THE INTERWOVEN FATES OF PEOPLE AND THE LAND

BY AMY KLIGMAN

The landscape as catalyst for artistic impulse is long acknowledged. Expansive imagery of the midwestern horizon line is part of a canon most would recognize, including many an endless field, cloudless sky or ripple-free body of water. Andrea Carlson's horizons are, in contrast, not empty expanses, but dense vistas teeming with life and color. Based in northern Minnesota and Chicago, Carlson (Grand Portage Ojibwe/European descent) presents work spanning painting, drawing, sculpture and video. She employs a full spectrum of media, including oil, acrylic, gouache, colored pencil and graphite. Meticulously rendered, her paper landscapes are full, entangled, spaces of purpose. Tiled terrain stretches across the room, offering mirrored, symmetrical refractions lulling one into hypnotic reflection on the densely embedded symbolism in the works.

In addition to pattern, animal imagery, plants, tools and toys, the works employ very specific references. For example, in the piece "Unearthed Cannibal," there is a depiction of Christo's "Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida" (1980-1983), a land art installation that was arguably not so respectful of the land it occupied. The reference activates a dialogue about the impact of art/artists on the environment and acts as one of many metaphors for colonization and dispossession.

Regarding her use of symbolism, Carlson says, "What an audience is familiar with,

their cultural context and what they bring to an image can't be fully anticipated. I typically assume that most people would stumble into my work without much access to what inspired the work's creation, but I'm more often than not surprised and delighted to hear the connections that viewers make.

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Carlson's narratives are fractured stories, interrupted and intersected, but they speak clearly and unapologetically of the interwoven fates of the people and the land.

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"I'm happy to learn (that) the artist Christo, whose 'Surrounded Islands' are referred to in my piece 'Unearthed Cannibal,' has a connection to Kansas City. This work references things that are both less obvious and hyper accessible. Someone might not know the patterns I'm referencing, but I'd be surprised if someone hadn't seen a blue jay and admired their freedom as they move

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © ANDREA CARLSON. IMAGE COURTESY OF MCA CHICAGO; PHOTO BY ROBERT CHASE HEISHMAN



Andrea Carlson, "Cast a Shadow" (2021), oil, acrylic, gouache, ink, color pencil, and graphite on paper, 46 x 182" (overall), 11 1/2 x 30" (each of 24 elements)



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Andrea Carlson "Exit" (2019), screen print, 33 1/2 x 47 3/4"

through the air. In that way, there is a feeling of empathy that one might have with a figure or a tiny aspect of the work that makes them feel like an insider to the work."

There is an intentional reverence in these epic depictions. The series of works on paper in the exhibition concerns itself with effigy mounds, found across North America. Effigy mounds had many purposes, some ceremonial and spiritual, some as gathering points for community. While there were probably more than

15,000 effigy mounds in Wisconsin prior to European colonization, fewer than 4,000 remain today, lost to development, agriculture and looting.

Echoing this disruption, Carlson's narratives are fractured stories, interrupted and intersected, but they speak clearly and unapologetically of the interwoven fates of the people and the land. Disruption is a theme throughout, even in the layout of the exhibition. A large wooden sculpture of columns titled "The Surveyor's Obstacle"

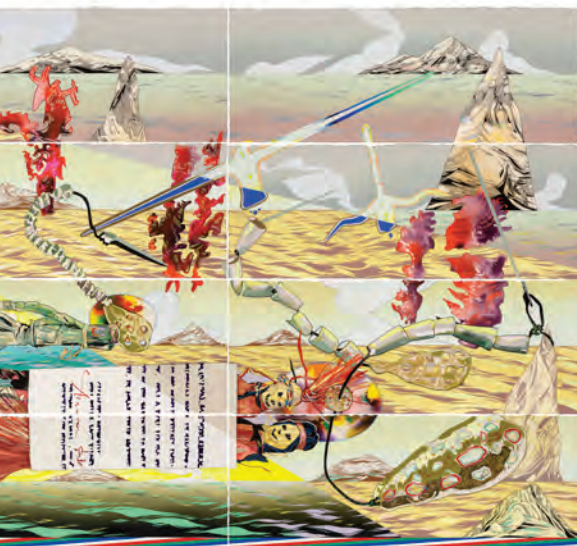
acts as a barrier in the space, remixing and reframing other works in the exhibition as you encounter it.

About these acts of interference Carlson says, "I wanted to make landscapes as a space that is hard to access. In a sense, I want you to see it, wander the space, but not fully emerge into it. These are spaces where you get a glimpse, but you remain aware of the materials of the art. You can see the paper segments, you can see the use of the various mediums, but you can also hallucinate or project past the physical materials into a kind of mindscape, hopefully an imagined space where colonization is not so ever-present."

This exhibition originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and was curated by Iris Colburn, curatorial associate. In mounting a presentation of this work in Kansas City, Chief Curator at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Jessica Hong, saw a relationship to Kansas City's history and communities.

"Andrea Carlson's incisive work draws attention to what is often overlooked in the lands we move through and inhabit,





FORGE COLLECTION, HUDSON VALLEY, NY. © ANDREA CARLSON

making it deeply relevant to our context, particularly as we are in Mound country. She reminds us that while each place holds its own histories, communities, and lived experiences, we are always in relation to one another. At a time when broader forces increasingly dictate how narratives are shared, Carlson's work is a powerful reminder of our interconnectedness, something central to both our local context and the museum's mission."

"Shimmer on Horizons" offers the reminder that forces of creation and destruction are part of the same fabric, our histories and fantasies have power and impact (both negative and positive), and that humanity isn't separate from nature but interdependent. This exhibition presents complicated and needed space to sit with all of this truth — and consequence. □

"Andrea Carlson: Shimmer on Horizons" continues at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 4420 Warwick Blvd., through Feb. 15, 2026. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday. Admission is free. For more information, 815.753.5784 or [www.kemperart.org](http://www.kemperart.org).

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# Open wide, ye doubters

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM TROWBRIDGE



PHOTO BY HANK YOUNG

William Trowbridge

BY ROBERT STEWART

Former Poet Laureate of Missouri and Lee's Summit resident, William Trowbridge, is publishing his 11th full-length book of poems, "Maintenance" (Spartan Press, 2025), which displays the wit, style, historical perspective and humor readers have come to know and admire. He is one of the most widely read poets in the country. In the following interview, we asked him to share his path to poetry.

**Robert Stewart:** The title of this book, "Maintenance," belies in one word the notion that poetry is disconnected from ordinary life. The title poem mentions plumbers, dentists, then leaps to your role as editor and writing teacher. Can I say that mundane maintenance shifts to the topic you consider more significant?

**William Trowbridge:** Yes, the title includes the mundane meaning, but it also refers to the metaphorical sense, which involves maintenance of one's life and that of others in the face of a world that seems tilted toward physical and spiritual disintegration. We must do our best to keep ourselves and, in our small way, the world in decent working order. I certainly wanted to keep this collection relevant to ordinary life, which can often seem extraordinary. I hope it reflects what William Carlos Williams called "the ground sense necessary."

**RS:** Your poem "Moon" is also a maintenance poem — "Moon, moon, moon," you say to defend language from the deconstructionists. Do I have that right? What is behind that choice of the moon as your vehicle?

**WT:** In "Moon" I side with Eudora Welty, that the word moon has a physical reality connected to the object itself. Yes, postmodernists, words have solid meanings that are not arbitrary. That's not strictly a matter of faith: You can hold words in your mouth. Open wide, ye doubters.

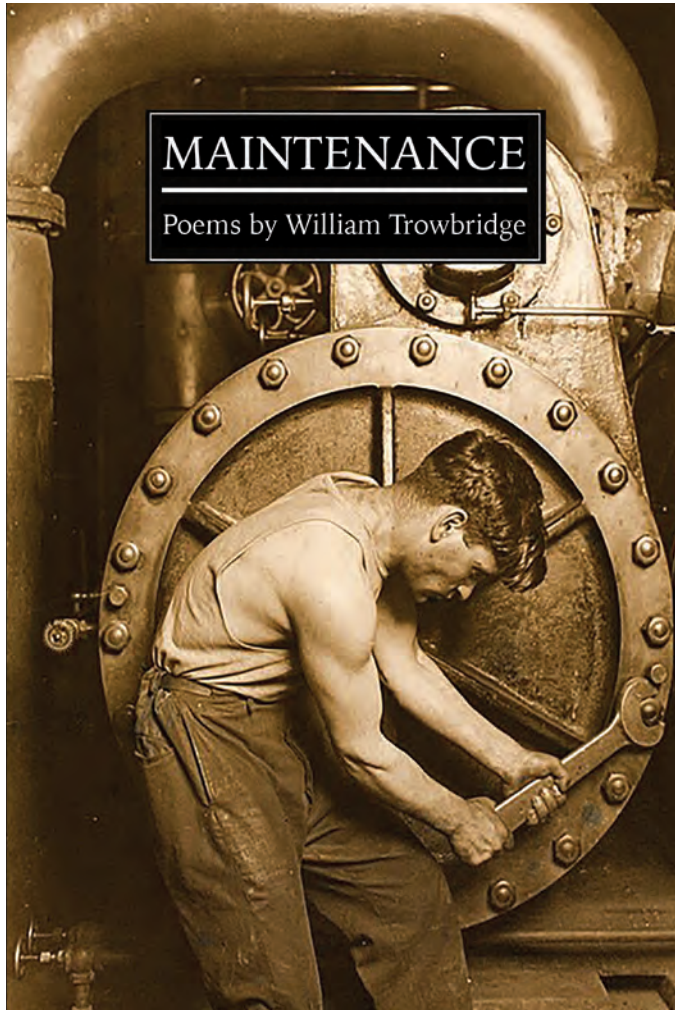
**RS:** In your early years, you worked in a slaughterhouse and in a can factory; then, you became a Faulkner scholar. What made you think you could be a poet?

**WT:** An undergrad degree in philosophy and a doctoral specialty in Faulkner involved quite a jump from slaughterhouse and can company. And writing poetry seemed an even longer one. That didn't happen till I was bitten by a Howard Nemerov poem, "Mousemeal," while studying for my PhD comps in American lit. I liked the poem so much I tried to write a few of my own. And, with a sense of delight and some encouragement from a trusted professor, I wrote some more. Even after I started getting published, I wasn't sure I could actually be a poet. That, as I recall Frost once observed, is a title others must confer on you. So I guess I'll have to ask around some day. At any rate, after teaching a few years, I decided to switch from Faulkner to poetry. And I got a number of poems from my work at the can company and a chapbook from working in the slaughterhouse.

**RS:** I've read that there are no prodigies in literature. Do you agree? You were one of those artists whose initial spark came later in life — unlike Picasso, who made his first drawing at age 9. Is literature different from other arts in that way?

**WT:** That may well be. I haven't heard of any 6-year-olds giving poetry readings at Carnegie Hall. I certainly got a late start, partially because I grew up in a family with no interest in the arts. The only books in my father's library were his ledger and a copy of Harold Robbins' "The Carpetbaggers." He did buy me a set of The Harvard Classics, though neither of us ever read any. Has anybody read even one of them? I had a collection of Classics comic books, which I did read.





"Maintenance" will be released Nov. 14.

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"I'd say it's time to circle the wagons, or perhaps the metaphors. Trouble may be clomping up our street any day, wearing combat fatigues, masks and ICE badges."

— William Trowbridge

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My first real exposure to art in our home was watching film classics shown on our TV. This was before Turner Classic Movies, but our two channels in Omaha offered late-night shows (including the ones on Creature Double Feature). I especially loved Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy. Their comedy seemed to have a more serious undertone. Chaplin's Little Tramp always seemed a little syrupy and derivative to me.

My senior year in high school I was assigned Book I of "Paradise Lost." I had only about three quarters comprehension, but the power of the blank verse, whopper periodic sentences gripped me. Later, I wasn't surprised to learn that some suspected Milton was a closet Satanist. But in college, my literary interests shifted to fiction, especially that of Hemingway, Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor, though I ended up majoring in philosophy. It didn't help my job opportunities when I switched to English in grad school.

**RS:** Your previous books include some mythic, archetypal characters — the character Fool, a trickster; King Kong, himself; and many people's favorite, Old Guy, Superhero. Were those characters actually you in hiding? Come clean.

**WT:** I'll try to come clean. All of those characters are seriocomic. Most of my favorite writers work in that territory. My Kong derives partly from turning Delmore Schwartz's bear in "The Heavy Bear Who Goes with Me" into the comic fumbler of my "Book of Kong." Kong also comes from the seriocomic misfits one encounters in silent comedy, who partly serve as vehicles to satirize "respectable" society. Fool is cut from the same cloth, though I suppose the satire there moves into the cosmic and surreal realm as well.

OK, Kong is pretty surreal. In Fool I see the schlemiel and schlimazel characters from Yiddish comedy. Old guy is related to both, as well as myself getting older. They do say there's no fool like an old fool. But he's also a bit Jewish. Influences here, of course, are Jack Benny, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen and Lenny Bruce. Pryor and Carlin are there too, though not officially Jewish. OK, yes, there's a bit of all three characters in me. Like Plath, "I may be a bit of a Jew." Of course, the fool archetype includes us all.

**RS:** You use a lot of formal structures in "Maintenance," everything from lists and syntactic repetition to the sonnet, even rhyme. You never were considered a "new formalist," as some poets once were known, but identifiable forms show up all through this book. What prompted this use of traditional forms?

**WT:** I've always admired the "old" formalists Auden, Frost, Wilbur, and Larkin. And I've become more drawn to form in my later poems. I find it creeping into poems I started as free verse — as the great Paul Fussell put it, "free, sort of." An unintentional rhyme will persuade me to turn a free-verse poem into a sonnet. I agree with Wilbur that, rather than being a restriction, form, especially rhymed form, can free one from choosing the easy word, inviting the fresher one to come along.

Anti-formalists have argued that form inhibits power in poetry by squeezing content into a box and, as Pound insists, using the rhythm "of the metronome" instead of "the musical phase" (which wrongly assumes a good iambic line's rhythm is actually metronomic). I don't think anyone's ever thought that Dylan Thomas' poems, for example, lack power. Part of that power comes from his use of form. If you just put gunpowder in a pile, for example, all you get is a fizzle, but pack it tightly in a container and you get something a good deal more powerful. Of course, you have to use good powder. Nevertheless, I still write mainly in free verse — sort of.

**RS:** "Maintenance" starts by evoking an earlier era — the 1950s, the Eisenhower years — and other eras. How does one use the past in art so it has meaning to our current lives?

**WT:** One has to select elements of the past that can be shown to have a nearly timeless relevance. King Kong has outlived any number of movie monsters. One of my grad students, who worked in a Planned Parenthood clinic, brought me a pack of King Kong condoms. Kong lives, thanks to his relevance to our inner selves. Or, in Eisenhower's case, seeing a hero change into someone all-too-human. Unfortunately, my poems about the Holocaust seem more relevant with each new headline.

**RS:** You often cite World War II and your veteran father's PTSD, which also was a topic in your 2024 book, "Father and Son." In "Maintenance," you say you woke once to "pigs screaming" to realize it was your father, "pinned down by his dreams." Can we say that such PTSD carries through generations, too?

**WT:** Speaking for myself and others I've shared memories with about living with a PTSD sufferer, I'd say it certainly carries through generations. It affects more than combat veterans. Cops, firefighters, accident victims, abused spouses, and their families have to suffer from its effects. It's the main cause of suicide by veterans. There are coping mechanisms, but it doesn't seem to go away. I still remember my father's cries in the bedroom next to mine.

**RS:** Later in "Maintenance," you offer two poems about works by the artist Bruegel the Elder, including his "Massacre of the Innocents," one end-rhymed and one slant-rhymed. Both take us through time, Bethlehem to Flanders to My Lai — the war of our generation — and others. Is humanity failing its maintenance? Given current massacres, what is an artist to do?

**WT:** Well, I'd say it's time to circle the wagons, or perhaps the metaphors. Trouble may be clomping up our street any day, wearing combat fatigues, masks and ICE badges. We are close to facing an army of thugs at the beck and call of someone with great admiration for tyrants past and present. That someone reminds me of the final lines of Auden's "Epitaph on a Tyrant."

*When he laughed, respectable senators burst  
with laughter,  
And when he cried the little children died in  
the streets.*

All artists can do in the face of this menace is to witness through their art what's going on, to try to keep it from becoming merely part of what Walker Percy called "everydayness." On the other hand, there's Howard Nemerov's Vietnam-era satire "On Being Asked for a Peace Poem."

*Here is Joe Blow the poet  
Sitting before the console of the giant instrument  
That mediates his spirit to the world.  
... Applying the immense leverage of art,  
He is about to stop this senseless war.  
So Homer stopped that dreadful thing at Troy  
By giving the troops the Iliad to read instead;  
So Wordsworth stopped the Revolution when  
he felt Robespierre had gone too far;  
So Yevtushenko was invited by the Times  
to keep Arabs out of Israel  
By smiting once his mighty lyre.*

Despite those doubts, artists should, like Joe Blow, do what they can, even if it goes, to cite T.S. Eliot, "Jug Jug to dirty ears." □



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# Dick Daniels: Making it fun

FROM POSTS AT THE KANSAS CITY STAR TO HALLMARK'S SHOEBOX AND KCAI, THE KANSAS CITY ARTIST HAS SPENT A LIFETIME MINING COMICS AND CARTOONS, EVEN WHILE BATTLING CANCER

BY ROBERT TRUSSELL

People showed up in droves.

The intimate gallery space at HJ's Community Center near Meyer Blvd. and Wornall was packed before the official start time of 6 p.m. on Aug. 29. Dick Daniels, a visual artist with a deadpan sense of humor and a devoted following, was giving away as much of his art as possible. The virtual flyers Daniels blasted out to old friends, former colleagues and fans summed up the offerings succinctly: T-shirts, ceramics, letterpress images, cartoon wood plaques, faux beer ads, beer glasses decorated with fictional slogans and cartoon characters and framed prints would be available.

His life's work was free to anyone who walked through the door.

"Don't be shy," he messaged via his mailing list. "Please take as much as you want . . . Bring your own bags and boxes to cart away your precious treasures."

Daniels and his wife, Renee Daniels, were seated just inside the door, greeting visitors as they filed in. At one point I threaded through the throng to ask Dick a simple question: How many people did you invite?

"Too many!" he answered.

Dick Daniels has done what a lot of people would like to do: He's made a living making art. Ceramics, drawings, retro advertising images and paintings on scrap lumber — for years he sold his work at art fairs. But the unsold work stacked up.

So back in August, after months of cancer treatments, Dick decided to give a lot of it away for free at an invitation-only event.

I met Dick back in the days when we both worked for The Kansas City Star. He was an artist/illustrator. I was a reporter/second string movie critic. At the time, the artists and page designers occupied a space on the third floor of the old Star building just around the corner from the boxy dead end that housed the arts-and-entertainment writers. Eventually, the artists were all moved to the second floor, just off the newsroom — almost as if management was concerned that too many people with anarchic sensibilities (writers and artists) might contaminate each other with their subversive thinking.

When you've known someone since you were both in your 20s, you blithely assume that all the chaos, laughter, stress and occasional blowups will simply go on and on. You never picture yourself being old and tired. But nobody can slow time. Yet, for most of 2025, Daniels looked for ways to slow things down, at least in his head. In July he turned 74.

For most of 2025, Dick has been fighting a double cancer diagnosis — bladder and pancreas. He kept his Facebook followers up to date with hand-drawn cartoons and text after each medical procedure.

His work, much of it influenced by animated and print cartoons of the 1930s and '40s, was and remains delightful and surprising. As one who had tried his hand at amateur cartoons, I always loved his caricatures and his ability to convey humor and feeling with only a few deft lines. His was a unique skill set.

After five years at the Star, Dick moved into a job at Hallmark's new Shoebox division, which produced greeting cards with an edgy sense of humor. That's what Dick was doing when 25 years ago he was diagnosed with colon cancer. After facing the daunting challenges of treatment, he became a cancer survivor.

At Hallmark he met Renee, an award-winning writer for the company. Her stats are impressive: She produced more than 11,000 pieces of writing used in Hallmark greeting cards and other products. Dick, for his part, produced about 2,000 images.

He eventually left the iconic greeting-card company and set up his own business selling his artwork, which eventually included ceramics in addition to prints of his hand-drawn work, much of it referencing vintage cartoon characters. Some of his creations were painted on scrap lumber panels, made to look like old, discarded advertising signs.

"I've studied it deeply," he said. "You look up all the mouse cartoons and there were dozens and dozens of them. To this day I've got thousands of prints of old 1930s cartoon characters. I reference them all the time."

**Opposite: Dick Daniels with a selection of his cartoon-inspired artworks**  
Courtesy of the artist







Some of the images would be considered nostalgic if not for Dick's subtle but subversive sense of humor.

"I'll go back to when I was producing a lot of art," he said. "I would take innocent looking characters and use two or three words that you wouldn't associate with anything so naive. A lot of it is just smart-assery."

At the time of two interviews in August, he was dealing with the double cancer diagnosis, which occupied his mind, body and spirit.

"The outlook is not good," he said. "I'm not expecting a cure. What I picked up from the doctors is, 'We'll keep treating you.' But they're not going to save me. I've come to terms with it."



Journal page

## FROM "NUTTY CARTOON STUFF" TO NOW

In his basement studio is a "sprawling mass of artifacts from his past, present and future," including "carnival punks, Rat Fink model kits, wooden processed cheese boxes, half-finished robots, MadBalls, Smurf collectibles, stacks of Roi-Tan cigar boxes, millions of old plastic and hard rubber toys, boxes of parts and weathered wood."

"I was heavy into comic books," he said. "The superhero stuff didn't really appeal to me much. But I liked the daily cartoon page in the paper. I was really drawn to the Nancy cartoons. And Richie Rich. I eventually got into Mad Magazine. In the fifth grade I came up with a character named Pudgy Mash. And all the kids came around and they all wanted me to draw Pudgy Mash."

Pudgy Mash was a blob-like human head with a tiny sprout of hair growing from an otherwise bald head. And he wore a bowtie.



Daniels has employed many mediums over the course of his career, including ceramics, as seen in "Clay Man."

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

"I was doing nutty cartoon stuff," he said. "Pretty crude. When I look at it now I think, 'how did you get from that to what you're doing now?'"

More recently, he began creating convincing images of imaginary vintage tin toys by feeding hand-drawn cartoons into an artificial intelligence platform.

The results appear to be photographs of actual objects, so realistic that people have asked him if they can buy one. Others ask simply, "Is that real?"

Dick grew up in old Leawood. His father was a housebuilder. His mom freelanced doing alterations on women's clothes.

"She was a hard worker," he said. "I got a lot of my work ethic from watching her."

Leawood had the feel of a small town in the 1950s and '60s. Dick said his life there was a "very sheltered existence." After high school he enrolled at the Kansas City Art Institute and has lived on the Missouri side ever since.

"I was signed up to go to KU, and a friend of mine told me about the (Kansas City) art institute," he said. "So we went, and I looked around and said, 'Yeah, this looks pretty good.' I would have bombed out at KU, that's for sure."

The institute was all about creating art. He took academic classes, including English and art history, but most of his time was spent making art. His art history instructor told him at the end of a semester, "You can take a test or just turn in a piece of art."

Dick also taught himself the basics of animation.

"They didn't have an animation department, but they let me do one on my own," he said. "I had a single-frame 16-millimeter camera so I duct-taped it to a table . . . I had done all the drawings so I just clicked them off one at a time. There were no parameters. They said just go ahead and do it."

As a result, Dick was able to create two or three short films with music. After he graduated, he spent eight years doing training films, which bored him. His next stop was the Star, where he created cover art and illustrations for five years. Then he landed at Hallmark.

"I was always looking for extra money," he said. "So I just dropped off my portfolio and they called back."

Dick stayed at Hallmark's Shoebox for 25 years. Then he went solo, buying a tent and selling his work at art fairs.



Dick talked his doctors into letting him take a break from chemo and radiation in August. He started feeling better and had more energy.

"I told him I could see a big difference in him," Renee said.

Through Renee's influence, Dick learned a bit about Zen Buddhism. He was able to apply some of the principles to his daily life as a cancer patient

"She sent me stuff I've found really interesting. Mainly, it's stay in the here and now," he said. "I don't meditate per se but I keep in the here and now. Living in the moment — that's my philosophy and it serves me well with what I'm going through right now. Renee is a fantastic caregiver. Without her I'd be totally lost."

Renee said she began attending Zen classes several years ago and has made it part of her daily life.

"I think it sustains me," she said. "I meditate almost every morning . . . It helps to quiet my mind and it helps me to stay focused on the present. One night shortly after Dick had been diagnosed, I couldn't stop the tears. And then I had to pull back and remind myself that Dick is right here. He's holding your hand. He's right here. And I have found immense comfort

in staying present like that . . . It's like you have this big clock and you can just hear it tick, tick, tick, and that makes you very aware of every moment."

One thing seemed clear in August: Dick had not lost his sense of humor.

"Yesterday I had to go to the DMV and renew my license," he said. "I made the funniest face I could for my driver's license photo. Anytime I can get out and be around people, it's good. But it wears me out."

Still, old friendships endure. Former colleagues from the Star have come to see him. So have many of his Hallmark coworkers.

"Hallmark artists have kept in touch, mostly through my Facebook page," he said. "I had 10 people come over and help with the yard work. I found that Hallmarkers really stick together."

Dick said he, like all of us and especially people facing cancer, wants more time.

"A lot of stuff I wanted to get done, I just won't be able to, unfortunately," he said. "I'll tell you what, it gets your attention. Every day you think of things like that." □

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# 'And to Think We Started as a Book Club...'

NOTED CARTOONIST AND FORMER KC STUDIO CONTRIBUTOR TOM TORO RELEASES A NEW BOOK

BY BRIAN MCTAVISH

Ambition is a funny thing to Tom Toro, whose 15-year career as a single-panel gag cartoonist for *The New Yorker* magazine — and for a few years at KC Studio — gets its overdue due in his infectiously quirky and entirely accessible new cartoon collection, “And to Think We Started as a Book Club...”

The title comes from the caption of Toro's improbably inspirational front-cover cartoon, showing a gang of masked yet somehow unthreatening bank robbers successfully speeding off in their getaway car. One crook proudly gestures with his crowbar in one hand and a big bag of cash in the other, while giving the panel's thought-provoking punchline. Ambition, indeed.

But that's the kind of self-actualized get-up-and-go (minus the lawbreaking) that's fueled Toro's personal and professional life since growing up in the San Francisco Bay area as the son of a Bronze Medal winner for canoeing at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games.

“From him I definitely got not only my stubbornness, but setting your sights very high in terms of the goal you want to achieve,” says Toro, 43, who lives in Portland, Oregon. “Setting your sights on winning an Olympic medal and setting your sights on being a cartoonist in *The New Yorker* are somewhat equivalent, I would say, in giving yourself a challenge. I sort of have this nasty tendency to aim straight for the top.”

To name but a few, *The New Yorker's* firmament of single-panel stars over the decades has included Charles Addams, James Thurber, Gahan Wilson, William Steig and Roz Chast, who declares Toro “a master of the art” in a blurb for his new collection. Translation: Welcome to the firmament, Tom.

“That's very high praise from a master herself,” Toro says. “I don't quite believe it happened. It's mind-blowing. It's almost as important as the first time that I sold a cartoon to *The New Yorker*.”



PHOTO BY CHESHIRE ISAACS

Tom Toro

Before breaking through at *The New Yorker*, Toro — a graduate of Yale University, where he was cartoon editor at the *Yale Herald* — embraced but didn't focus entirely on cartooning. He wanted to do different things and see where they might lead.

“When you're a young person and you're trying to be an artist, you try a bunch of mediums where your voice fits or doesn't fit,” Toro says. “It's a time for exploration.”

“The cartooning is something that has stuck with me throughout my life, no matter what else I was pursuing. So even when I was writing screenplays and books, I'd always be cartooning. When I was (national-champion lightweight) rowing, I'd also be cartooning for the college paper. When I was writing novel manuscripts — none of which got published, unfortunately — I'd always have time as part of my day for cartooning. And it migrated from being a consistent hobby to



something like the centerpiece of my creative and professional life, because, over time, it was the thing that kind of hit."

The hits keep coming in "And to Think We Started as a Book Club..." with chapters devoted to "life, love, family, work, beasts, tech" and "weird." Still, whether Toro's cartoons muse on the cinematic preferences of cats, the inescapable silliness of sex or the creative leanings of cavemen, they tend to share a decidedly peculiar bent, not unlike Gary Larson's legendarily bizarre single-panel newspaper cartoon, "The Far Side."

"Larson is a huge influence," Toro says. "There's a darkness and mischievousness to Larson that I really strive for in my own sense of humor. And there's also the Charles Addams ("The Addams Family") influence of having something a little bit twisted, something a little bit macabre."

"What I try to do in my drawings is catch the reader a little bit off guard, because I sort of have a very gentle style. I have a gentle kind of wash to the inking and my characters are sort of very normal looking folks. So when there is something slightly twisted about the humor, I think it hits you even harder, because you don't expect it."

Twisted? How about Toro's post-apocalyptic cartoon of a now-bedraggled corporate type sitting around a campfire with three expressionless children, to whom he explains with a tragically misplaced sense of wonder: "Yes, the planet got destroyed. But for a beautiful moment in time we created a lot of value for shareholders."

"That one," Toro says of his most famous cartoon, "has been latched onto by the climate movement as a kind of iconic cartoon that resurfaces every now and then. It's funny, when it was first published in 2012, I was not on social media, so I was kind of blind to the impact that it was having in that space. Only much later did I realize that it had been meme-shared by celebrities and people in that movement."

"As an artist, finding your audience is the thing that's really key. And it's never been easier in a way to have your stuff out there and see who's gravitating toward it. But you try and also follow your own star and not be too swayed by what seems to be getting clicks and comments and attention online, because then you start to enter this self-referential kind of doom loop, where you're just feeding the beast."

Toro, who still enjoys what he calls the "old-school" experience of drawing by hand, views the impact of the internet and the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence both warily and ambitiously.

"Hilarious, whip-smart, and riveting." —SETH MACFARLANE

## And to Think We Started as a Book Club...



cartoons by *The New Yorker's* **TOM TORO**

ANDREWS MCMEEL PUBLISHING

"I am worried about AI," Toro says. "I do think that AI is going to be really problematic. The genie's out of the bottle a little bit on that one. I feel like the artists who come out the other side are going to be the ones who learn how to harness AI for their own purposes. Instead of completely rebelling against it, they'll be using it to make their own work flow more efficiently or use it as a way to kind of experiment in their craft."

"But I actually think cartoons are somewhat perfectly suited to the digital era. There's a reason why my most famous cartoon has become an enduring meme in social media. Because what is social media other than image and then caption, right? That's what Instagram is. That's what Facebook is. I almost think that it's kind of the form that fits this new age in a curious way. So cartoons might be in a little bit of a renaissance. I'm hoping that's the case."

Toro's previous publications include a series of illustrated children's books and the provocative "Tiny Hands," a collection of Trump cartoons published in 2017 by Dock Street Press, during his time in Kansas City.

Toro looks forward to making it back to KC, where he lived from 2015 to 2018, moving here from Berkeley, California, with his first wife when she took a job with Kansas City Repertory Theatre.

"I miss it," he says. "I miss the people. I miss the trees. I miss the autumn air, the change of seasons. I miss the kale salad at Westside Local. That is a great kale salad." □

# ‘Trying to Catch Lightning in a Jar’

A BOOK OF HONEST AND HEARTRENDING LETTERS FROM PRISON BY PATTY PREWITT, WHOSE SENTENCE WAS RECENTLY COMMUTED AFTER NEARLY 40 YEARS IN PRISON

BY RANDY MASON



FROM THE AUTHOR

Patty Prewitt

Imagine spending nearly 40 years in prison for a crime you've steadfastly denied committing. It's a nightmare scenario.

But that's exactly what happened to Patricia "Patty" Prewitt. The Holden, Missouri, mother of five was convicted in 1985 for the murder of her husband and sentenced to 50 years with no parole.

Prewitt was offered plea bargain deals but refused them on the grounds that she wasn't guilty.

In December 2024, the 68-year-old made headlines when Governor Mike Parson commuted her sentence. Six months later, "Trying to Catch Lightning in a Jar: Letters from Prison," a collection of letters she'd written during her first 18 years of incarceration, was released.

The book is neither a true crime recap nor a long-winded polemic about injustice — though both topics are explored at various times in various ways.

Some letters reflect on news of the day, and its impact on her time behind bars — like the floods of 1993 and the plane crash that killed Governor Mel Carnahan.

But ultimately, what makes her correspondence so compelling is its unquashed optimism.

Whether she's writing to old friends or public officials, her children, her parents or a new romantic interest, Prewitt's voice is consistently even-keeled, mildly acerbic and peppered with an occasional punch line.

It's all the more remarkable considering how quickly she'd gone from PTA meetings to random strip searches. And more than once, into solitary confinement.

She landed in "the hole" after refusing a guard's sexual advances, and wrote of the experience this way . . .

*Don't worry about me. The hole is not too bad. I get "three hots and a cot." You'd think that solitary would be quieter, but a couple of the patrons up the hall like to voice their dissension loudly. Their stamina is astounding.*

Prewitt has a reporter's eye for details, describing the oppressive gray cellblocks and the smells that cling to them. She muses about the effects of replacing the term "inmate" with "offender" and the constantly contradictory procedures and protocols that make already long, hot days feel even longer.



*Rumor has it we will soon have to send out all our red or blue clothing because they are gang-related colors. I'm sitting here in a red cotton turtleneck pullover. You know the kind. All middle-aged women have one . . . but if the scuttlebutt is true, I will be forced to get rid of this and pay for a new one in a less dangerous color — like green. But is Greenpeace considered a gang? If you wear pink or baby blue, could it mean you've pledged a gang, but aren't a full member yet?*

She's especially good at describing (and humanizing) the ladies with whom she shares so many unpleasant spaces. There are “biker chicks,” professional women dragged down by substance abuse, and a quiet figure named Em reputed to have carried her father's severed head in a bowling ball bag.

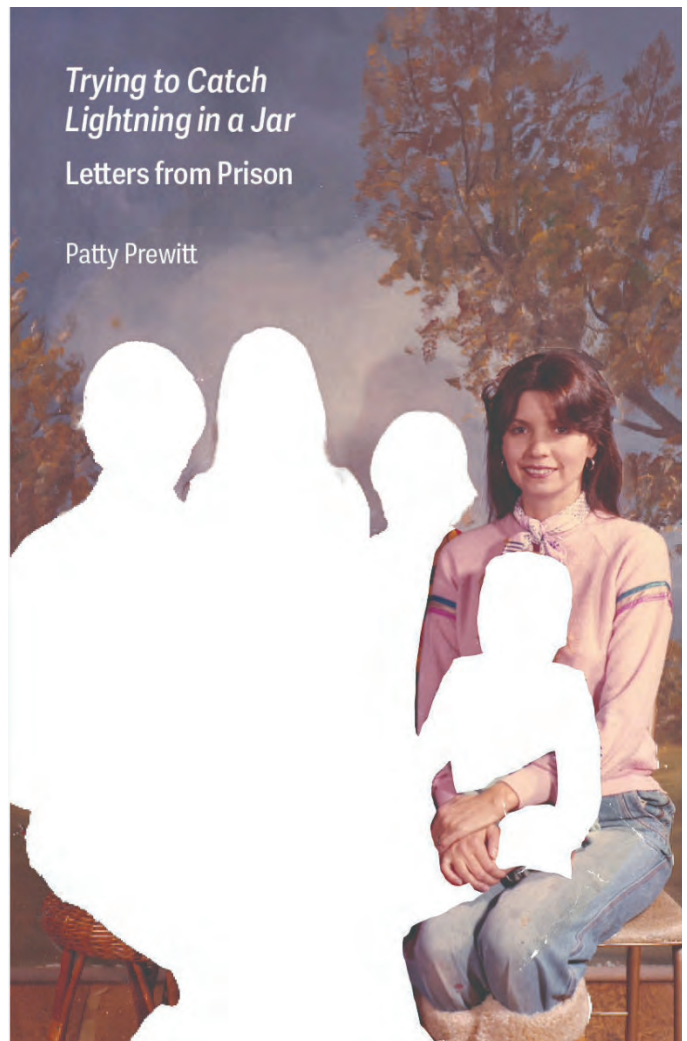
Over the years, Prewitt worked at a number of jobs inside prison walls, in both paid and volunteer positions. She took literature and theater classes and even taught aerobics. Those endeavors, she writes, gave her a sense of purpose, and a reason to keep plugging away.

As one of the older “life-servin' bitches,” (her words) she was generally treated well by her peers. But she learned quickly that small acts of violence could pop up at any time.

*The girl who lives on the top bunk above me remarked to no one in particular, “Wow, I think Sam just poured Kool-Aid on Bobby.” I turned to see what she was talking about. Inmates aren't prone to pouring Kool-Aid on officers. Through the back window I could see Sam standing in front of Mr. A. The blood stain on the back of his uniform shirt was growing larger. Oh my God, Sam had stabbed him!*

Of course, there's plenty of soul searching in these letters too.

Gut-wrenching ruminations on the weight that's been borne by her family. Clear-eyed descriptions of how she could only spend time with her children (and later, their children) in short, closely monitored, contact-free settings.



SOME PEOPLE PRESS

She doesn't pull punches. She revels in the joy of their visits and reels from the pain when they leave. The book's title comes from a phrase used by one of Prewitt's attorneys to describe the slow, grueling process of getting out of prison when innocence is your only defense.

“Trying to Catch Lightning in a Jar” moves briskly and effectively thanks to the work of Barbara Baumgartner and Elizabeth Charlebois, a pair of professors who helped prepare Prewitt's letters for publication. They've crafted something “whole” from pieces and parts that weren't made for this purpose.

And they're not finished yet. As Prewitt continues to seek a full pardon, Some People Press has announced that a second book — 20 more years of her letters from prison — is already in the works. □

# 'Sharing the Love of Gardening'

A NEW BOOK CHRONICLES THE HISTORY OF THE WESTPORT GARDEN CLUB



PHOTO BY STUART WOLFERMAN

"Sharing the Love of Gardening: The History of The Westport Garden Club"

Kristie C. Wolferman

BY NAN CHISHOLM

It is astonishing to learn just how many local landscapes bear the fingerprints of The Westport Garden Club, which celebrates its 75th birthday this year.

The celebration includes the release of a new book, "Sharing the Love of Gardening: The History of The Westport Garden Club," by club member Kristie C. Wolferman, whose numerous books include the recent "The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: A History."

Against the backdrop of Kansas City history, Wolferman deftly guides the reader through the club's conception and birth and the myriad projects its garden-obsessed, hardworking and dedicated members have conceived and executed.

The book's glorious photography, much of it by another club member, Marianne Kilroy, reinforces the fact that Kansas City has benefited immensely from the many efforts of The Westport Garden Club.

The idea to launch the club was proposed by Elizabeth Abernathy Hull, a devoted gardener who lived in Ridgefield, Connecticut, but had grown up in Kansas City. During a visit from her childhood friend Mason Thompson and his wife, Helen Hayes Thompson, Hull expressed her disappointment that her former hometown lacked a Garden Club of America-affiliated organization for garden lovers.

Hull encouraged Helen Thompson to create a garden club in Kansas City like the one in Ridgefield that Hull had joined. The Ridgefield Garden Club enjoyed the distinction of membership in the national Garden Club of America, which meant that the Connecticut group did not focus strictly on gardening or flower arranging — conservation, horticulture and civic involvement were equally important.

Founded in 1913, The (national) Garden Club of America's stated mission was "to restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement." Their focus





WGC ARCHIVES

The Westport Garden Club's first project, re-landscaping the Westport Triangle

on preservation was especially evident in the 1930s, when they purchased thousands of acres in northern California to save the largest contiguous old-growth redwood forest there.

In 1950, the greater Kansas City area was already home to 42 garden groups; an alliance with The Garden Club of America would not only distinguish The Westport Garden Club from the multitudes but would enormously enhance their outreach and impact. As Wolferman recounts, Hull advised Thompson that before the Kansas City group could apply, Thompson would have to organize 50 women “to work together for five years for civic projects and to improve their own gardens, too.”

Wolferman chronicles the early days of the club: Some of their inaugural projects included creating flower arrangements for The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, as well as renovating and landscaping the Westport Triangle and Quality Hill. After the major damage from the 1951 flood, WGC members noticed how many trees were suffering and protested that the city was employing unlicensed crews to treat

“Being a member of The Westport Garden Club has made me realize that one person as a member of a dedicated group of gardeners and environmentalists can do something to improve the world.” — *Kristie C. Wolferman*

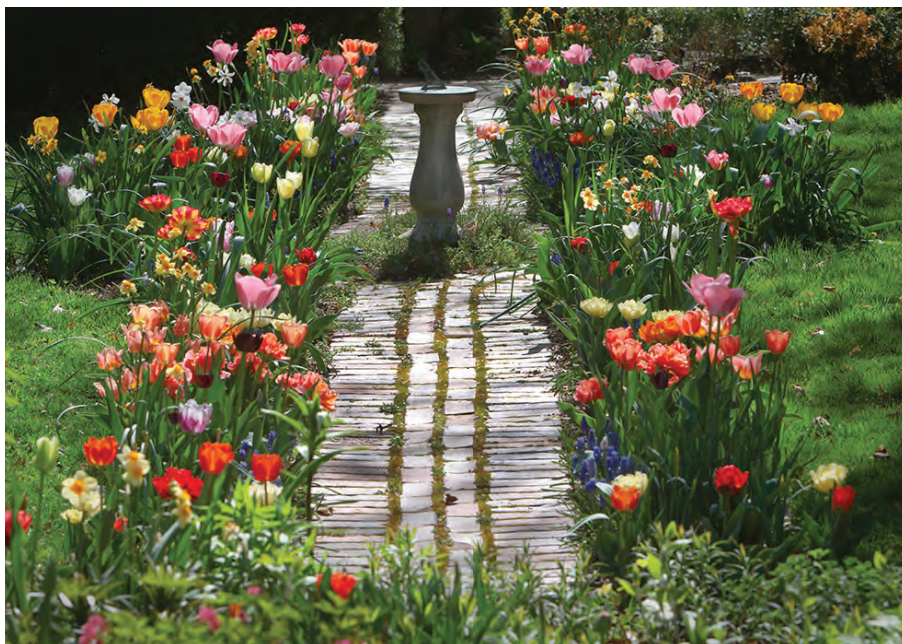


PHOTO BY MARIANNE KILROY

View of Margaret Weatherley Hall's garden





PHOTO BY MARIANNE KILROY

View of Carolyn Steele Kroh's garden

and trim them. Their objections inspired legislation to be passed requiring that tree men employed by the city be properly trained.

One rather ambitious project began after some of the members learned about the horticultural therapy offered at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, utilizing plants and plant-related activities to help promote physical and mental well-being. The WGC was able to create a similar program for Saint Luke's Hospital's Crittenden Children's Center.

Wolferman's account of the club's more recent history includes its creation in 2016 of a garden within Loose Park to help conserve monarch butterflies and other pollinators. The area highlights native plants, essential to the insects' support. Azaleas, the focus of another Loose Park garden, established in 1965, is currently being renovated by the WGC with help from a local Boy Scout troop. "We just planted 130 new azaleas, and it's going to be glorious this coming spring," Wolferman said.

Inspired by a lecture by Doug Ladd, the WGC introduced the Native Plant Initiative in 2014 (now known as Deep Roots), which has been an enormously popular project. Learning about, planting and conserving local plants, which are more resilient and require less water, is a particularly relevant topic these days. The club's modus operandi has been to initiate projects and to turn them over to community partners for maintenance once they are up and running. Deep Roots currently has 70 partners working with them to increase native plant landscapes.

The Beanstalk Children's Garden in Swope Park's Kansas City Community Garden is a favorite of Wolferman's. The Beanstalk offers children a chance to smell, touch and taste live plants; their involvement can even help them earn Scout badges. The Beanstalk Garden is divided into sections featuring vegetables, seeds, herbs, fruits and a curiosity garden, as well as a water garden.

"Being a member of The Westport Garden Club has made me realize that one person as a member of a dedicated group of



PHOTO BY MARIANNE KILROY

View of Helen Lea's garden

gardeners and environmentalists can do something to improve the world." Wolferman said. "Sharing the Love of Gardening' is not just about gardening and enjoying nature but about learning how to take care of the earth and to be personally responsible for doing one's part to make the world a better place." □

For more information,  
<https://thewestportgardenclub.org/>.





## Yo-Yo Ma returns to Kansas City with the Series!

This season, experience the incomparable cellist Yo-Yo Ma, in solo recital at Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

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# Four poems by Gustavo Adolfo Aybar

## Fetching Water

The house in Los Jardines where my birth-father lived with his third wife  
and my half-brother and sister, had a patio, the patio a tile floor,

the floor a cedar rocker and a window, the rocker by the window,  
Keiter in plain sight. My eyes, lost ships at sea. I was ten.

Raindrops thrashed metal roofs and unpaved roads. When it clears,  
Keiter's fingers wrap around empty gallons of water

her tiny feet slated for the watering hole.  
On her return, I see the load, practically an anchor

against her frame; I see drops of sweat slide down her face:  
from forehead, to nose, to cheek, then lips.

She rests a moment, as if conscious of her distant future:  
a husband, two kids, and many more bone-tired days like these.

## And He Will Play Baseball

bat lefty like Big Papi—  
the bat: an extension of his arm,  
a coming together of white ash,

rubber, fabric, and stitched cowhide.  
I know this because he grips the ball tight,  
searches for ground, breath meeting my gaze

then lets it drop from his fingers  
like the dull roar of a first I love you.  
I lower him headfirst; back slightly hollowing

arms extending forward—as if diving—  
while he retrieves the ball. Barehanded.  
Returning him to my shoulders,

hand supporting his bottom, the other his waist,  
the ball, the raised corners of his mouth,  
the squinting of the eyes, show me

this too is fatherhood;  
this too will teach him  
how to love a man.

## Tia Licha's House

What I remember? At four years of age  
Tía Licha told me to stop—  
white sheets, yellow stains.

At twelve, opening iron gates, hand in hand  
Tía, rubbing index finger on my palm  
saying, "This is how you get a girl to sleep with you."

Tía's house invokes memories of cherry scents,  
of extreme heat, mosquito nets, outdoor latrines,  
nighttime bed pans, and of containers filled with cutting water.

Who says that something dirty can't be beautiful?  
Who says dirty thoughts can't be innocent?

The pipes run water. Electricity lasts  
twenty hours or more. She has a kitten now,  
and most days there's food. Enough for two.

## Homerun Plate a la Joshua

*In praise of Joshua Gibson*

When Mami prepares this meal for you,  
these simmered red kidney beans  
with white rice y con concón and places  
the crusty, tasty film from the bottom del caldero

onto your plate; when she dips and redips  
the spoon into the thick creamy liquid to color  
and flavor each bite, the nutty caramel  
richness and your lips, still islands apart;

when she pierces the stuffed turkey thigh with her fork  
and the juices run clear, not pink and she holds  
the thickest portion of meat steady with her hands,  
cuts through the joints, pulls legs from the carcass,

and says, "Uncle Josh was a mule of a man—  
dark meat and intense," she means eat  
your veggies too, before you can go out  
and play baseball with your friends.





BELGER CRANE YARD

# HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE: CERAMICS

Among the best buy-local options for unique gifts are the annual holiday sales put on by Kansas City's premier ceramics organizations: Belger Crane Yard in the East Crossroads and KC Clay Guild in Waldo.

Go once, and you'll make it a holiday tradition.

From cups, bowls, vases and platters to earrings, ornaments and tabletop sculptures, both sales offer a festive atmosphere and an eye-boggling selection of items by Kansas City ceramic artists at prices generally in the \$25 to \$100 range.

In early October, KC Studio was treated to a sneak preview of items to be offered in this year's holiday sales and in Belger Crane Yard's annual holiday exhibit, as seen in the following pages of artful groupings designed by Heidi Nast and captured in striking photographs by Jim Barcus.

Nature is a recurrent touchstone, others opt for holiday themes, while still others explore texture to striking effect. Aesthetics range from fun and funky to elegant and refined. Sale details below.

## AN OUTING FOR DO-IT-YOURSELFERS

Make your own holiday ornament at Belger Arts' Ornament Extravaganza. . Ceramic ornament sessions are offered Nov. 15 from noon to 2 p.m., 3 to 5 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. for \$50 at Belger Crane Yard, 2011 Tracy Ave. Glass ornaments sessions are offered Dec. 13 from 9 to 11:30 a.m., noon to 2:30 p.m. and 3 to 5:30 p.m. for \$75 at the Belger Glass Annex, 1219 E. 19th St. To sign up, visit <https://belgerarts.org/upcoming-events-1/#ornaments>. — **Alice Thorson**

## BELGER CRANE YARD

Works by Belger Crane Yard studio members and resident artists will be featured in the Belger Crane Yard Holiday Sale & Open House, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Nov. 21 and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Nov. 22, at Belger Crane Yard, 2011 Tracy Ave.

Featuring works for sale by artists across the country in a range of mediums, the "Holidays at the Belger Crane Yard Gallery" exhibition opens Nov. 7, 2025, and runs through Jan. 3, 2026, at Belger Crane Yard, 2011 Tracy Ave. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. First Fridays.

## KC CLAY GUILD

The 2025 KC Clay Guild Holiday Sale will be held from 5 to 9 p.m. Dec. 5, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 6 and noon to 4 p.m. Dec. 7 at South-Broadland Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 7850 Holmes Rd. For more information, <https://kcclayguild.org/holiday-sale>.



Karen Wintergalen

KC CLAY GUILD



The Belger Crane Yard Holiday Sale and the “Holidays at the Belger Crane Yard Gallery” exhibit will feature works for sale (clockwise from bottom left): “Bluebird Jar,” “Bluebird Tiny Cup,” “Chickadee Mug” and “Red Winged Blackbird Platter” by Bri Larson; “Blue House,” “Watermelon House” and “Holiday House” by Sarah Beth Elkins; “Christmas Tree” by Erica Schroeder; “Cardinal Mug” and “Cardinal Tiny Cup” by Bri Larson; “Large Grid - Yunomi Cups” by Sara Alfieri; mug, trinkets and “Party Duck” by Steph Becker





Clockwise from bottom left: "Pickle Mug" and "Pickle Tray" by Bri Larson; "Orange Baby Jar," "Teal Jar" and "Yellow Speckle Cup" by Chris Alveshere; "Christmas Tree" by Erica Schroeder; "Orange Lidded Vessel" by Paul Mallory; "Doodle Tray," "Green Bottom Tumbler," "Orange Bottom Tumbler" and "Mini Buddy Bud Vase" by Jacqueline Kaplan; "Lip Bud Vase," "Expression Tea Bowl" and "Expression Bowl" by Lindsey Pankratz



The KC Clay Guild sale will feature works by the following artists, clockwise beginning with large vessel at center: Luke Reichle, Naomi Peterson, Tyler Quintin, Amy Troester, Tyler Quintin, Desiree Warren.





Clockwise beginning with large pitcher at center: Louis Reilly, Melynda Steward, Tyler Quintin, Sam Sequeira, Amy Troester, Alex Watson

## MICHAEL TOOMBS

## A plea for spiritual restoration

*As far back as I can remember, we were told that choice was part of life; the choices you make dictate the life you live. But what I've observed is that we are slowly being forced to give up our abilities to choose, one of the things that is most important to nurturing the soul. — Michael Toombs*

Kansas City artist Michael Toombs evokes an ominous and searing conflation of existential crisis, spiritual reckoning and celestial transformation in his breakthrough series of new paintings, titled “RTTIN.” Through this work, Toombs urges us to reclaim our inherent abilities of discernment and truth amidst imbalance and havoc to save our souls.

“We are giving up access to our souls much too early,” Toombs said recently at his home studio, summarizing the essence of “RTTIN” as “unlocking truth” and “revealing some of the attributes we’ve forgotten: the spiritual side, the soulful side, things we know to be true.”

Toombs is known for his prolific murals and public art projects, including “Non Nobis Solum,” a four-panel painting commissioned in 2023 by Washburn University School of Law in Topeka to commemorate Brown v. Board of Education. He identifies the project as a turning point, leading him back into full-time painting for the first time in 20 years and opening him to the “RTTIN” series. He said he isn’t ready to divulge what RTTIN stands for, other than it’s a “spiritual acronym.”

With five paintings completed and several in progress, “RTTIN” conveys an apocalyptic, connective vision Toombs describes as being “in the moment and inspired by what’s happening now.” He employs an allegorical fusion of realism and mystical surrealism with luminous layers of acrylic on wood panel or canvas to achieve exquisite and distinct compositions infused with a fervent panoply of scriptural, symbolic and contemporary references.

Marcia Pomeroy, Toombs’ wife and longtime collaborator, contributed interpretive narratives that help contextualize works in “RTTIN,” along with the foundational precursors, “C-19,” “Broken Promises,” “Uncle Sam I am,” “Thoughts and Prayers” and “The Word: Truth and Consequences.”

Toombs launched “RTTIN” with the “The Faithful” in March 2025, a brutal work articulating street-level mob violence, guttural rage and anguish, religious persecution and sanctimony in a frenetic montage of historical figures within a public square. The composition includes Jesus, rising in the foreground from a falling cross, William Tyndale, executed as a heretic in 1536, and the small, chortling figures of Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito observing the bedlam.

“Harbingers 1260” references The Book of Revelation (11:3) in a portentous, darkly alluring portrayal of two spectral harbingers in flowing sackcloth. The figures emerge from a dimensional, textured foreground with two olive trees beneath a deep, turbulent sky, “warning of what is to come, thereby giving humanity an opportunity to change their ways,” Pomeroy notes.

Radiant light and fierce purpose emanate from “Qavah/ Archangel,” capturing the electrifying gaze and formidable restraint of an unnamed celestial warrior in flowing white and gleaming armor, wielding a red-tipped sword. Pomeroy’s text indicates “Qavah” means “wait” in Hebrew, or in other translations, “waiting very actively.”

“Transform – Psychopomp” conveys a magnificent, cosmic crescendo of planetary turmoil, transience, doom and sublime transcendence. Intricate, iridescent depictions of a dragonfly’s three-part metamorphosis symbolize transformation to another plane, reflecting the elegant, balanced transition of body, soul and spirit into a cerulean, celestial dimension.

The latest work in “RTTIN,” “AI/Singularity/What’s Going On?” envisions a tragic, Orwellian unfolding of conflicted despondency and the peril of AI, as robots become the thinkers while humanity acquiesces mind and spirit to an enflamed, omnipotent Eye.

— Heather Lustfeldt

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST





"Harbingers 1260" (2025), acrylic and mixed media on wood panel, 5 x 5'





"The Faithful" (2025), acrylic on canvas, 3 x 5'









"Qavah/Archangel" (2025), acrylic on wood panel, 5 x 2'





"Transform – Psychopomp" (2025), acrylic on canvas, 5 x 5'





"AI/Singularity/What's Going On?" (2025), acrylic on wood panel, 30 x 30"



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COVERING KANSAS CITY'S PERFORMING, VISUAL, CINEMATIC AND LITERARY ARTS

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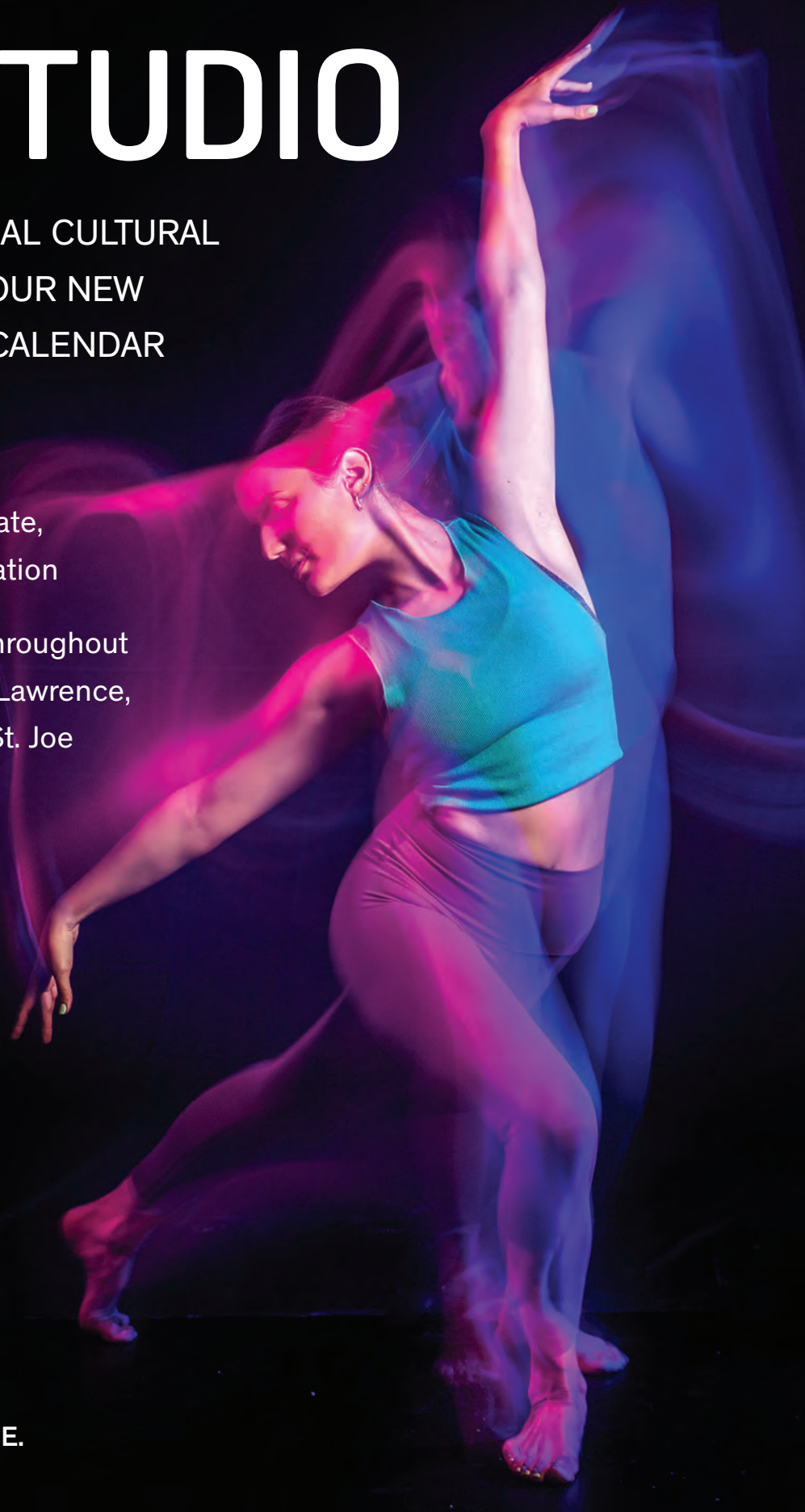
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# THOMAS GIESEKE BRINGS HIS FANTASTICAL CREATIONS TO AN EXHIBITION AT THE ALBRECHT-KEMPER MUSEUM

Thomas Gieseke's detailed, surreal paintings will be featured in the exhibition *The Monsters' Merry-Go-Round* at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art in St. Joseph, Missouri, beginning Nov. 15. After spending four decades as a successful illustrator, the Johnson County-based artist pivoted to focus on gallery work beginning in 2011. His work combines a love of nature with pop culture, politics and humor through the lens of 1960s anti-establishment artistic influences from his youth.

Gieseke spent his youth in Overland Park when the suburb was on the very edge of the metro. He explored the nearby undeveloped woods and creeks. Bugs, plants and other wildlife quickly became a favorite subject for the budding artist. He spent three years in the army during the Vietnam War, then briefly studied commercial art before embarking on a career as an illustrator. His work on album covers, greeting cards, stationery products and advertising drew on his interest in nature, love of comic books, and the influence of outsider art movements.

The rise of the hot rod scene and California counterculture around artists and designers like Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, Ed Newton and Robert Williams, who coined the terms "lowbrow art" and "pop surrealism," was hugely influential on Gieseke's career. Pop culture references and inspiration from cartoons, comics and car design are combined with dreams and exploration of the unconscious. Magazines like Williams' *Juxtapoz* helped to popularize the work of these humorous and subversive artists.

Many of Gieseke's paintings begin in a state of "twilight dreaming." When an image appears to him while just on the edge of sleep, he will quickly jot the idea down to be turned into a painting later. His experience as an illustrator means that his work prioritizes the drawing process and focuses on details before the painting process begins. In his paintings, creatures both whimsical and terrifying seem to simultaneously live in their own imaginary worlds and reflect the harsher truths of modern interactions between humanity and nature. Familiar pop culture and historical figures twist and move through strange landscapes and mundane locations like diners and suburban backyards as if caught in the middle of their adventures.

*The Monsters' Merry-Go-Round* will be on exhibit from Nov. 15, 2025, to Feb. 22, 2026. More information about this exhibition and related programming can be found at [albrecht-kemper.org](http://albrecht-kemper.org).

Financial assistance provided by the St. Joseph, Missouri Visitors Bureau and the Missouri Arts Council.



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

*The Monsters' Merry-Go-Round*, 2023; Acrylic on canvas; 40 x 30 inches



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

*Badlands*, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 inches



# A PERFORMER OF CHARISMA AND BRILLIANCE

## Superstar Cellist to Perform at Helzberg Hall

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PHOTO CREDIT: AUSTIN MANN

Yo-Yo Ma

Yo-Yo Ma is one of those artists who was born to perform. The cellist has been engaging with audiences since his first public performance at the age of five. He played for presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy when he was only seven. His charisma made him a natural for TV. He appeared with his sister on the *Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* in 1964 and would become one of Carson's favorite regular guests.

Ma has also been a Kansas City favorite since his first appearance on the Harriman-Jewell Series in 1984. He'll make his 11th appearance in a solo recital Dec. 12 at Helzberg Hall.

"When you're in the room with him, you feel connected to him," Clark Morris, artistic director of the Harriman-Jewell Series said. "You feel like suddenly that the world's a better place when you're hearing him play music with emotion and passion and understanding. You think it can't be better than this."

Morris recalled the first time Ma appeared on the Series.

"That was 41 years ago," Morris said. "It was a recital with pianist Emanuel Ax. It's crazy to realize the Series has had this long relationship with Yo-Yo. I believe this will be the first time that he

has ever done an unaccompanied solo show concert for us. It'll just be Yo-Yo and his cello."

Ma will perform three of Bach's solo cello suites, music he has loved and explored since the beginning of his career. He's recorded the suites three times over the years, in 1983, 1997 and 2017.

Ma is also known for championing world music composers as part of his collaboration with the Silk Road Ensemble. For his Helzberg Hall recital, he'll play works by the Chinese composer Zhao Jiping and the Turkish composer A.A. Saygun.

He'll also perform a piece by the American avant-garde composer George Crumb.

"The concert is right after Thanksgiving," Morris said. "It's a time of year when we like to celebrate with family and with food and with music, and this feels like a holiday treat. Tickets are selling like hotcakes, so if you want to come, you need to get your ticket soon because it will sell out quickly."

Yo-Yo Ma. 7 p.m. Dec. 2. Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts.

For more information, [hjseries.org](http://hjseries.org).

# CANDICE MILLARD TO SPEAK AT NOVEMBER WRITERS FOR READERS EVENT

By Anne Kniggendorf



Bestselling author Candice Millard lives in Kansas City and is working on her fifth book.

**K**ansas Citian Candice Millard has written bestselling books about two presidents, a prime minister, and a wild search for the source of the Nile River. In each one, the clarity of her prose is striking.

For instance, President James Garfield died in 1881. But her description of mourners lining the railroad track for a glimpse of the black-swathed train returning his body to Washington, D.C., makes his death feel recent.

In November, Millard takes the stage at the annual Writers for Readers fundraiser, a conversation and banquet co-hosted by the Kansas City Public Library and the University of Missouri-Kansas City to raise money for the Writers for Readers initiative, a program that employs UMKC creative writing graduate students to teach the art of writing in free classes at the library.

“I think that even the most naturally gifted writer needs some experienced, knowledgeable advice,” she says.

The author of four New York Times’ bestsellers, Millard sees a lot of value both in the act of teaching writing and being taught.

Millard says, “Many a great story has become lost to chaos because the writer didn’t understand character development, or how to outline, or the importance of sign posting — making sure your reader knows where the characters are, when the action is taking place, etc.”

But, she adds, those skills can be taught.

During the 2024-2025 school year, three interns from the UMKC Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing program taught a total of 72 classes to nearly 500 patrons at the Kansas City Public Library.

Student Eva Schneider returned to teach in fall 2025.

She says that over the summer, she felt excited to see the regulars who sign up for her classes. “I’ve always believed that the heart of my classes comes from the people who attend, so I was ready to dive back into conversation with the community.”

Beyond classroom instruction, the fundraiser supports a broader conversation involving both the library and UMKC.

The two organizations administer the Maya Angelou Book Award, a national yearly prize that celebrates contemporary writers whose work demonstrates a commitment to social justice.

Each year, one intern assists with the facilitation of the award while also teaching three classes. For more information about the award, visit [KCLibrary.org/MABA](https://KCLibrary.org/MABA).

To register for the free classes, visit [KCLibrary.org/WFR](https://KCLibrary.org/WFR).

To attend the Writers for Readers fundraiser featuring Millard, purchase your tickets and support the program by visiting [KCLibrary.org/donate/wfr](https://KCLibrary.org/donate/wfr).



PHOTO BY ANNE KNIGGENDORF

From left: Alex Tretbar, Dayton Little, Eva Schneider, and Brandon Allen teach writing classes at the Kansas City Public Library funded by Writers for Readers.



# GIVE THE GIFT OF THEATER WITH KAUFFMAN CENTER'S PERFORMING ARTS SAMPLER



PHOTO BY BRETT PRUITT

Four Kansas City Ballet dancers perform "Swan Lake," a performance that is featured in the Performing Arts Sampler package.



PHOTO BY ANNA PETROW

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts lights up in celebration of the winter holidays each year.

By Caroline Wood

With the holiday season quickly approaching, the search for that memorable gift has begun. The Kauffman Center has you covered with their Performing Arts Sampler! Experience all kinds of live artistry in the beautiful Muriel Kauffman Theatre and Helzberg Hall performance spaces. The Performing Arts Sampler is a unique opportunity for guests to attend four distinct shows in the 2025-2026 season.

This à la carte option is perfect for those who are interested in the performing arts but are unsure where to start or arts aficionados who simply cannot choose between the myriad of options. Patrons can browse the Kauffman Center's offerings and choose one performance from each of their three resident companies — Kansas City Ballet, Kansas City Symphony and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City — as well as a *Kauffman Center Presents* Trailblazing Talks presentation to attend.

Whether you're searching for a creative gift or are looking to schedule your own exciting outings in the new year, this package is an amazing deal. The four-show package costs a total of \$116 with fees included.

Visit [kauffmancenter.org/performing-arts-sampler](https://kauffmancenter.org/performing-arts-sampler) to learn more and secure your seats today.

## Kansas City Ballet:

- "Stars and Stripes"
- "Swan Lake"\*
- "The Great Gatsby"

## Kansas City Symphony Classical Series:

- Matthias Conducts Mahler: Symphony No. 7
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- Pines of Rome and Bruch's Second Violin Concerto
- Beethoven and Beyond
- Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony
- Saint-Saëns' First Cello Concerto and Strauss
- "A Midsummer Night's Dream"
- Farrenc, Schumann and Dvořák
- Grieg's Piano Concerto
- Gil Shaham Plays Brahms
- Rachmaninoff Celebration, Part 2: Piano Concerto No. 3
- Rhapsody in Blue and Dvořák's "New World" Symphony

## Lyric Opera of Kansas City:

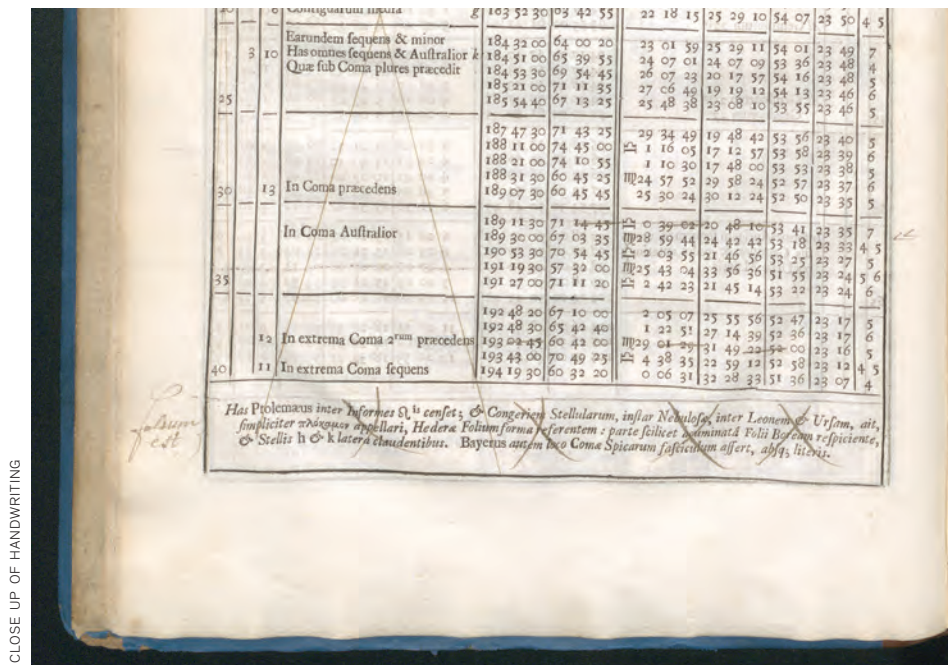
- "Madame Butterfly"\*
- "Porgy and Bess"\*
- "Of Mice and Men"\*

## Trailblazing Talks:

- Digging for Humanity's Origins with Paleoanthropologist Louise Leakey
- Leave Only Footprints with CBS Sunday Morning Correspondent Conor Knighton
- In Search of Lost Cities with Explorer Albert Lin
- The Planet in Our Hands with Photographer Mattias Klum
- Bay of Life: From Wind to Whales with Photographer Frans Lanting and Science Writer Christine Eckstrom

\*Select performances

# NEW ACQUISITIONS EXHIBITION: A LOOK AT THE LINDA HALL LIBRARY'S GROWING COLLECTION



John Flamsteed  
*Historiae coelestis libro duo*  
London: John Matthews  
1712

John Flamsteed was so angered by the printing of this book against his wishes that he burned huge portions of the print run. The Linda Hall Library copy is one of only four such copies known and is the only known copy with annotations and corrections in Flamsteed's handwriting.

Step into six centuries of scientific and historical discovery at Linda Hall Library's 2025 New Acquisitions exhibition. This show offers visitors a rare opportunity to see extraordinary, never-before-exhibited rare books from the Library's world-renowned collection.

## A Rare Glimpse into History

The Linda Hall Library's distinguished History of Science collection contains over 50,000 volumes, documenting the history of science and of early modern intellectual thought. It is home to treasures like Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610), Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543), and the 1472 printing of Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, our oldest title.

To honor its commitment to preserving science's expansive and rich history, the Linda Hall Library continues to grow its collection. You are invited to explore these new additions and consider their distinctive value to our lives and the world around us.

This year's New Acquisitions exhibition features an exclusive glimpse into new additions to this extraordinary collection, including the only known copy of John Flamsteed's *Historiae coelestis libri duo* featuring his handwritten annotations. This

volume not only fueled a bitter dispute with Isaac Newton and Edmond Halley but famously survived a bonfire set by Flamsteed himself.

Explore other treasures, from a 1547 pamphlet on a devastating locust plague to Galileo's *il Saggiatore* (1623). Uncover the science, stories, and artistry within these pages, and gain exclusive insights into the meticulous process of how these invaluable historical artifacts are discovered and acquired.

## The Art of the Acquisition

Curious how a rare book finds its way into the Linda Hall Library's special collections? It's a thoughtful and deliberate process guided by a dedication to preservation and scholarship.

1. **Discovery** – The Library's curatorial team learns about available books through a combination of research, inquiries, and relationships with trusted dealers, who often share previews of materials before they are publicly listed.





Radha Pandey, *Flora of Mughal India*, Tistedal, Norway: Radha Pandey, 2023

Also included in the exhibition is this modern flora, a book describing flowering plant species, explores how nature was perceived and shared in Mughal India before European colonization. As part of her commentary on the colonial extraction of plants and people, Radha Pandey collaborated with Indian artisans on all aspects of the book.

2. **Due Diligence** – The team conducts a thorough investigation to verify bibliographic details, assess condition, and evaluate the price.
3. **Purchase** – Once a book meets the Library's standards, an order is placed.
4. **Processing** – Upon arrival, the book is carefully unpacked and admired. The Collections team logs the book into the Library's catalog system while the Finance team closes the transaction.
5. **Cataloging** – The work conducted earlier becomes the foundation for cataloging. The Library's cataloging record aims to replicate the experience of handling the book in person, especially for international researchers who rely on remote access to access the collection.
6. **Digitization** – Books that are stable enough for scanning are sent to the Digital Initiatives Unit. There, they are digitized and made available online, expanding access to scholars and the public around the world.
7. **Outreach** – Select acquisitions are featured in blog posts, exhibitions, in-person presentations, and social media, inviting the public into the ongoing story of the History of Science collection.

## Visit the Exhibition

The 2025 New Acquisitions exhibition is free and open to the public Oct. 23, 2025 – Feb. 14, 2026. Exhibition hours are Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and the second Saturday of each month, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Interested in exploring the full History of Science collection? Special collections at the Linda Hall Library are available by appointment only. For more information about the exhibition or to learn about requesting a research appointment, visit [lindahall.org](https://lindahall.org).

# EXPANDING VOICES: TWO LANDMARK EXHIBITIONS AT KEMPER MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CONTINUE THE TRADITION OF COMMISSIONING NEW WORK

Kansas City's cultural landscape continues to evolve, shaped by artists who challenge history, celebrate identity, and create space for underrepresented voices. This fall, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art presents two significant exhibitions that reflect this commitment: *The Atrium Project: 10 Years, 10 Stories* and a solo exhibition *Raven Halfmoon: Ride or Die*.

## ***The Atrium Project: 10 Years, 10 Stories***

This exhibition brings together all nine existing Atrium commissions for the first time in a historic presentation. Over the past several years, the series has introduced Kansas City audiences to groundbreaking projects by José Lerma, Firelei Báez, Paul Henry Ramirez, Angel Otero, Joiri Minaya, Aliza Nisenbaum, Pepe Mar, Sarah Zapata, and Lucía Vidales. It also looks ahead to the 10th anniversary Atrium commission, opening in January 2026, with a newly commissioned work by Edra Soto.

## ***Raven Halfmoon: Ride or Die***

Caddo artist Raven Halfmoon presents a bold solo exhibition. "I build sculptures that demand to be heard and experienced," she has said. "My artwork exists to break the mold of the romanticized Native American stereotype and to simply say: We are still here, and we are powerful."

*Ride or Die* marks a turning point in Halfmoon's artistic journey, boldly expanding her creative practice. Created specifically for this exhibition, the works engage with Kansas City's cultural and historical landscape. Halfmoon reclaims cowboy mythology through powerful cowgirl figures that subvert colonial tropes with punk-infused energy. A new large-scale bucking horse sculpture, responding to Cyrus Dallin's *The Scout*, embodies resistance and sovereignty—an untethered force challenging stereotypes and asserting Indigenous power, protection, and narrative control.

*Raven Halfmoon: Ride or Die* opens Friday, November 14, 2025 and *The Atrium Project: 10 Years, 10 Stories* opens Friday, November 7, 2025. Both are on view through early 2026. *Andrea Carlson: Shimmer on Horizons* is on view through February 15, 2026, and *Figure it Out: Lucía Vidales Selects* is on view through January 11, 2026.



PHOTO: E. G. SCHEMPF, 2021.

Installation view, *Pepe Mar: Aqui Se Puede (Here You Can)*, August 21, 2021–July 31, 2022, Atrium,



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Raven Halfmoon,  
*Tushka Manahatta*,  
2025, Stoneware,  
glaze, 36 1/2 x 26 x  
17 1/2 inches



# FEAST OF GENERATIONS: THORNTON WILDER'S THE LONG CHRISTMAS DINNER SERVES UP TIME, TRADITION, AND TENDERNESS

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In Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory* the much-maligned fruitcake seems to take Center stage in the story of a young boy and adult cousin. Ignored by the rest of the family, the pair develops an amazing bond over their adventures, and their determination during the depression to earn and save enough money for the ingredients to bake the very special fruit cakes that they send as gifts to people sometimes very far away.

The fruit cake is the gift of course but their love, friendship and support of each other is the big gift that lasts. But how wonderful for all the recipients to be on the receiving end of that friendship and love, too.

There's something really special about feeding people and showing them that you love them. All that holiday baking, and gifts like that, do make a difference —how wonderful to be remembered! Time and again at the theater it's impossible not to notice how people light up when there are cookies, cake, or other treats appear.

We hope you will join us this holiday for this beautiful show featuring Park Buckner unfolding the Christmas Memory and

for the poignant *Long Christmas Dinner* by Thornton Wilder, celebrating the treasure of family directed by John Clancy.

More than anything else, though, we hope that we will find togetherness, sustenance, and a way of coming together in the theater, in our homes, and business, and life itself that allows us to celebrate and treasure one another this Christmas and every day.

We will be sharing fruit cake and other treats and recipes gathered from friends at every performance.

Please join us to celebrate together, let us treat you to a bite or two a fruitcake and carry some of that sweetness and connection through the holidays into every day thereafter.

Tickets are on sale now for the American holiday stories at MET. Visit [metkc.org](http://metkc.org) or call 816-569-3226 for yours or to give to others. In addition to doing the play, we are conducting a food drive and will be sharing all the canned goods and non-perishable items we gather with local food banks.

# MIDWEST TRUST CENTER PRESENTS A NEOCLASSICAL BALLET BASED ON ZORA NEALE HURSTON NOVEL

On Friday, Nov. 14, the Midwest Trust Center welcomes Collage Dance Collective for a dynamic evening of contemporary dance featuring *RISE* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Rooted in the heartland of Memphis, Tennessee, Collage Dance Collective embodies the greatness of American dance and is at the national forefront of inspiring the growth and diversity of ballet. Collage's meteoric rise over the last decade is fueled by its dynamic programming, virtuosic company artists, and its talent for presenting what the *Albany Times Union* called "ballet made utterly, gorgeously human."

## ***RISE* Reimagines the Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. Through Dance**

After visiting the National Civil Rights Museum, co-founder and Artistic Director Kevin Thomas was inspired to create a contemporary dance about the Civil Rights Movement and how its history is relevant today. The piece features Collage Dance Collective's company performing alongside the audio recording of King's speech "The Mountaintop," conveying the messages of hope, light and possibility for the future.

## ***Their Eyes Were Watching God* Inspired by Zora Neale Hurston Novel**

The neoclassical ballet, co-choreographed by Thomas and Amy Hall Garner, was inspired by the Zora Neale Hurston novel of the same name, once heralded as "one of the 100 best novels" by TIME magazine. The story centers on Janie Crawford and her search for love and independence as a Black woman in the South during the early 20th century.

## **Additional Performances in the 2025-2026 Season Include:**

Cirque Mechanics: *Tilt!* (Nov. 7)

Opus 76 Quartet with Alexander Markov, violin (Nov. 8)

*Christmas in Killarney* (Dec. 6)

*Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol* (Dec. 11)

*Jungle Book* (Jan. 17-18)

The Barricade Boys *Broadway Party* (Jan. 30)

The Acting Company – *Great Expectations* and

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Feb. 14-15)

The Westerlies (Feb. 20)

Ranky Tanky (Feb. 22)

*Tango After Dark* (Feb. 26)

Winterlude Jazz Festival Featuring Arturo O'Farrill  
and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra (March 7-8)

COURTESY OF COLLAGE DANCE COLLECTIVE



COURTESY OF COLLAGE DANCE COLLECTIVE



Tickets are on sale now. Purchase online at [jccc.edu/MTC](http://jccc.edu/MTC)  
or call the Midwest Trust Center Box Office  
Monday-Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at (913) 469-4445.



## NEW EXHIBIT MEDIA FEATURING BIG SONIA



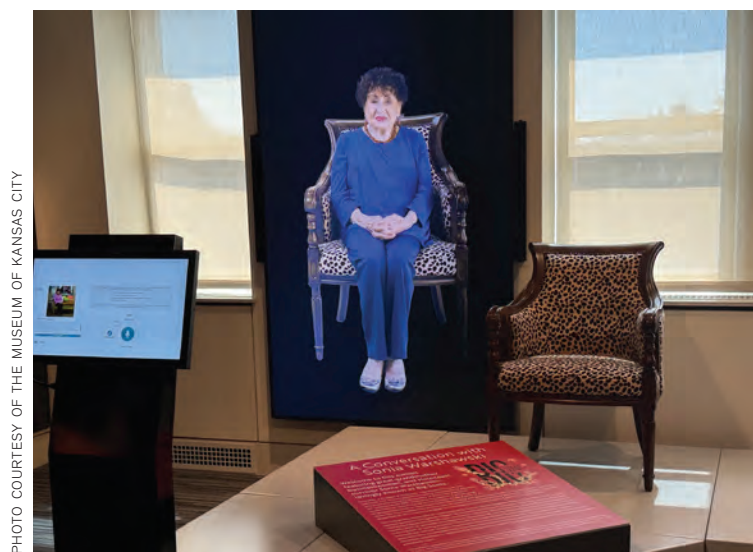
Sonia Warshawski in John's Tailoring & Alterations, which closed in 2023.

On Thursday, September 4, 2025, The Museum of Kansas City launched a new exhibit that features a conversational interactive experience with great-grandmother, businesswoman, and Holocaust survivor Sonia Warshawski—lovingly known as Big Sonia.

This new exhibit is located in the Museum's third-floor gallery called *Our City, Our Stories* and admission is free. The exhibit is presented in collaboration with Leah Warshawski, the Impact Producer and Director of Inflatable Film and a granddaughter of Sonia, and StoryFile, a division of Authentic Interactions.

StoryFile created the personal and conversational interactive experience to preserve and share the powerful testimony of Sonia Warshawski in her own words. In 2021, Sonia was recorded in a professional studio setting, where she sat in her favorite leopard print chair and answered a series of more than 400 questions about her life, experiences, and lessons of resilience. Using proprietary technology, StoryFile trained the responses to allow users to engage in meaningful conversations with Sonia's recorded likeness.

The exhibit interactive starts with an introduction by Sonia's oldest daughter, Regina Kort. Then, when you ask Sonia a question, the system triggers the closest matching pre-recorded response, ensuring that every interaction illustrates Sonia's own voice and



The new interactive at The Museum of Kansas City.

testimony. StoryFile has not used artificial intelligence to modify, alter, or generate new responses. Every answer comes directly from Sonia, exactly as she shared it during the recording process.

The exhibit is made possible with generous support from the Barton P. Cohen and Mary Davidson Cohen Charitable Trust housed at Midwest Trust Company.

To learn more about the Museum, visit [museumofkansascity.org](https://museumofkansascity.org).

# PAINTED WORLDS: COLOR AND CULTURE IN MESOAMERICAN ART



*Codex Laud (Codex Mictlan)*, Mexican, pre-Hispanic, possibly 15th century. Painting on gesso ground, deerskin with covers of jaguar skin, each page: approx. 6 1/2 x 61/8 inches. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS. Laud Misc. 678. Photo © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



*Figural Urn*, Zapotec, 500 C.E. Clay and pigment, 21 x 11 x 12 inches (53.34 x 27.94 x 30.48 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Gift of Estelle and Morton Sosland, 73-40.

This fall and winter, the vibrant art of Mesoamerica is coming to The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. *Painted Worlds: Color and Culture in Mesoamerican Art* explores the materials and meanings of works of art created by Indigenous artists, past and present, from Mesoamerica, a region that encompasses Mexico and much of Central America. Showcasing over 3,000 years of artistic production, *Painted Worlds* will enthrall visitors with boldly painted ceramics, glistening murals, intricate weavings, detailed carvings and colorful codices. This exhibition, our first Mesoamerican exhibition in 40 years at the Nelson-Atkins, includes works of art from Mexico, Europe and the United States, including 30 works from the Nelson-Atkins collection, like the Zapotec Figural Urn, shown here.

*Painted Worlds* examines Mesoamerican art through the lens of color. Although they spoke many languages and developed diverse cultures, ancient Mesoamericans shared a common worldview and many beliefs and practices. They organized their universe in five directions (north, south, east, west and center) and three layers (underworld, earth and heavens). This sacred cosmos was animated and given color by the sun. In Nahua sacred histories, the birthplace of the sun is called Tlapallan, “place of colors.” Many Mesoamerican cultures believed the sun

was born at Teotihuacán, the sacred temple site and city northeast of Mexico City. Fittingly, visitors to *Painted Worlds* will begin their color-filled journey at the great Sun Pyramid, which greets them at the entrance of the exhibition.

Along with the sacrality of color, *Painted Worlds* also explores the history and science of color. Indigenous artists explored their natural world, manipulated materials and invented brilliant pigments and dyes. Many of these materials were unknown outside of Mesoamerica. Fortunately, Indigenous Nahua artists and scholars created an encyclopedia about their world in the 1570s known as the *Florentine Codex*. Information recorded in the *Florentine Codex* informs our understanding of Mesoamerican art and history throughout the exhibition. Visitors will also have the rare opportunity to see the *Codex Laud (Codex Mictlan)*. Dating to the 1400s-early 1500s, this richly painted folding book is one of only about 15 surviving pre-Hispanic books — the *Codex Laud* is lent by Bodleian Library at Oxford. This precious object rarely travels, and it is an important highlight of a fascinating exhibition. I hope you will join us this fall and winter to experience *Painted Worlds* for yourself.

Written by: Kimberly Masteller, Jeanne McCray Beals Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art



# VISIONARY: THE WORK OF MICHAEL BRANTLEY

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COURTESY THE ARTIST

Michael Brantley, *The First Lady of Song*, 2012, oil on canvas, 50 x 52 x 2 in.

On view December 13, 2025, through May 3, 2026

McCaffree Gallery, Second Floor

NERMAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART,  
JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Free and Open to the Public

**V**isionary: *The Work of Michael Brantley*, guest curated by artist Harold Smith, will feature the elegant and sophisticated work of painter Michael Brantley. Brantley is a master painter whose work and practice elegantly and engagingly encapsulates the love, fears, hopes, and dreams within the Black experience.

Whether he is painting a portrait of a vibrant jazz singer, an emotionally stirring protest scene, or a reflective portrait, the

humanity in his painterly approach illuminates his dynamic work from within. This exhibition will feature the artist's latest work as well as some older works, giving the viewer a sweeping synopsis of Brantley's enlightening practice.

Michael Brantley (b. 1970) is a multi-disciplinary artist living and working in Kansas City, Missouri. His work reflects and celebrates the lifestyle, heritage, and culture of American Africans. He is a figurative artist working with oil paint as his preferred medium. He creates art that inspires, informs, and provokes dialogue. His large-scale monochromatic paintings in the jazz aesthetic have been spotlighted by the NFL and exhibited at the American Jazz Museum and at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

Learn more about this exhibition  
at [nermanmuseum.org](http://nermanmuseum.org).

# LIVE! ONSTAGE IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

*The theater season rolls into the holidays with more great productions. Give the gift of theater and support our local stages and the actors, designers and technicians who light them up with Christmas cheer.*



& Juliet

Compiled by Mark Edelman



*Alone Together*

**ALONE TOGETHER**  
Now through Nov. 16  
New Theatre Restaurant

KC's comedy cutie Cathy Barnett teams up with *Brady Bunch* heartthrob Barry Williams in a new piece of fluff about a middle-aged couple who've packed their three sons off to the real world. Wouldn't you know it — one by the one, the boys return home, robbing their folks of their much loved privacy but paying the dividends of joy, connection and family you can only experience alone—together. Tickets at [www.newtheatre.com](http://www.newtheatre.com).



**ELF THE MUSICAL**  
Nov. 11 – Dec. 31  
The Coterie in Crown Center

Buddy, a young orphan, mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole where he's raised alongside the other elves. With Santa's permission, Buddy

embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Quite a pedigree on this one: songs by Tony Award-nominees Matthew Sklar and Chad Beguelin and a book by Tony Award-winner Bob Martin and the guy who wrote *Annie*, Tom Meehan. Can you think of a better holiday gift for the 9-13 set? Tickets at [www.thecoterie.org](http://www.thecoterie.org).

**MAGIC VALLEY COMMUNITY THEATRE'S LITTLE WOMEN**  
Nov. 12 – Dec. 7 | Unicorn Theatre

It's closing night for Magic Valley's production of *Little Women*, so what could go wrong? Turns out, plenty, as the pugnacious crew barrels their way through the finale and on to the Nationals in Rochester. On the journey, the local ladies playing the March sisters encounter backstage chaos as creative dreams and practical worries ricochet through their performances. Tickets at [www.unicorntheatre.org](http://www.unicorntheatre.org).

**& JULIET**  
Nov. 18 – 23 | Music Hall

What would happen if Juliet didn't end it all over Romeo? This sensational new musical answers that captivating question and delivers so much more, thanks to a hook-filled score cobbled together from the super songbook of Max Martin (ask your 16-year-old granddaughter). Juliet's new story bursts to life to the tune of pop anthems from "Since U Been Gone," "Baby One More Time," to "Can't Stop the Feeling!" and tons more. Forget the balcony scene — there's life after Romeo and this show has it all. Tickets at [www.kansascity.broadway.com](http://www.kansascity.broadway.com).



### **NOBODY'S PERFECT**

**Nov. 19 – Feb. 1, 2026 | New Theatre Restaurant**

Jim O’Heir of *Parks & Rec* fame stars as an out-of-work writer who disguises himself to win a feminist writing competition—only to fall head over heels for the contest’s judge. Meddling families, wacky misunderstandings and a love story hanging by a thread make this fast-paced comedy another perfect evening to enjoy after the sumptuous buffet and those great desserts! Tickets at [www.newtheatre.com](http://www.newtheatre.com).



PHOTO BY DON POCK

### **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

**Nov. 22 – Dec. 27**  
**Spencer Theatre**  
**on the UMKC campus**

Celebrated actor Gary Neal Johnson has been donning the garb of Ebenezer Scrooge for more than 20 years. Join him and the sturdy cast of Dickensians delighting us with this story of hope and family, as important now as ever. Scrooge’s redemptive journeys with Christmases Past, Present, and Future, the Cratchits, Tiny Tim, the Fezziwigs, and all of your favorite Yuletide characters ring in the holidays with enough Christmas cheer to fill a baseball stadium—wherever they decide to put it. Tickets at [www.kcrep.org](http://www.kcrep.org).

### **JUNIE B. IN JINGLE BELLS, BATMAN SMELLS**

**Nov. 28 – Dec. 23 | City Stage in Union Station**

First grader Junie B. Jones is super-excited about the upcoming holiday sing-along and Secret Santa exchange at school. Too bad tattletale May keeps ruining Junie’s fun. What happens when Junie B. draws May’s name for Secret Santa — only the most perfect way to teach that girl a lesson. Based on the best-selling children’s books by Barbara Park. Tickets at [www.tya.org](http://www.tya.org).

### **CHRISTMAS IN SONG**

**Nov. 28 – Dec. 21 | Quality Hill Playhouse**

J. Kent Barnhardt and company continue 30 years of great American songbook tributes with their annual holiday program. From classics to contemporary, sacred to secular, Quality Hill promises something in song for everyone in the family. Tickets at [www.QualityHillPlayhouse.com](http://www.QualityHillPlayhouse.com).

### **EBENEZER SCROOGE’S BIG KC MO CHRISTMAS SHOW**

**Dec. 3 – 28 | Unicorn Theatre**

Ron Magee and the funniest cast in town return their 2024 holiday hit to a town (and country) desperate for some Christmas cheer. Those ‘Sons of Pitches’ take on dozens of characters in this energetic, imaginative retelling of Dickens’ beloved holiday tale. Wacky fun for the whole family make this a new, festive 90-minute highlight of the season. Tickets at [www.unicorntheatre.org](http://www.unicorntheatre.org).

### **DEATH OF A SALESMAN**

**Dec. 4 – 17 | Just Off Broadway Theatre**

Talk about your counter-programming for the holidays: KC Melting Pot Theatre revives Arthur Miller’s masterwork, a haunting exploration of the American Dream and the cost of chasing an illusion. As fading dreams and fractured memories blur his reality, “everyman” Willy Loman grapples with failure, strained family ties, and the illusion of success as the story comes to a heartbreaking conclusion. Tickets at [www.kcmeltingpot.com](http://www.kcmeltingpot.com).

### **AMERICAN HOLIDAY STORIES**

**Dec. 5 – 14 | Warwick Theatre**

Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre joins the Christmas carousel with a pair of one act plays by Truman Capote (*A Christmas Memory*) and Thornton Wilder (*The Long Christmas Dinner*). In the Wilder piece, six generations of an enterprising American family gather around the table to capture the poignant joys and humor of family life. Capote’s contribution recalls an idyllic Southern holiday when, as a young boy, he baked fruit cakes, gathered holly, and flew kites with the eccentric cousin who inspired him to become a writer. Tickets at [www.metkc.org](http://www.metkc.org).



*Martin City Christmas Show*

### **NUTCRACKER SUITE & A CHRISTMAS CABARET**

**Dec. 12 – Jan. 1**  
**Englewood Arts**

Jeanne Beachwood’s redoubtable Martin City Melodrama brings professional

theater—the family-friendly variety—to the new arts center in this charming strip of old Independence. Holiday hi-jinks highlight the festivities, including a Water Glass Symphony you won’t find at the Kauffman Center. Tickets at [www.martincitymelodrama.org](http://www.martincitymelodrama.org).

# GALLERY GUIDE

## KANSAS CITY AREA

### 18TH & VINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

#### The Black Archives of Mid-America

1722 East 17th Terrace, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 221-1600  
[blackarchives.org](http://blackarchives.org)



Step into the heart of African American history at the Black Archives. Experience transformative exhibits, engaging events, and a rich collection that honors our vibrant heritage. Connect with the past and inspire your future. Your exploration begins here.

### BROOKSIDE AND WALDO

#### Centered Earth Gallery @ KC Clay Guild

200 West 74th Street, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 363-1373  
[kcclayguild.org](http://kcclayguild.org)



Holiday Sale and Tour Dec. 5-7! The sale will be held at South Broadland Church, 7850 Holmes Road in Kansas City. Check our website for tour dates, times and locations. Located inside KC Clay Guild, the Center Earth Gallery features more than a dozen clay artists. All artists are members of the KC Clay Guild. Pieces range from functional bowls to wall pieces. Classes are offered to all ages and abilities.

### Leopold Gallery + Art Consulting

324 West 63rd Street, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 333-3111  
[leopoldgallery.com](http://leopoldgallery.com)



"Buddy Holly Crash Site" by Nick Gadbois

Located in the heart of Brookside, Leopold Gallery is a nationally ranked contemporary gallery as well as a professional art consulting firm. Carrying and creating world-class art in a variety of styles and media, the gallery has represented highly acclaimed artists from the Midwest since 1991. Leopold has works installed in stadiums, hospitals, museums, and hundreds of businesses and private homes around the world. Open Monday through Saturday. Come by for your daily dose of inspiration.

### COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA AREA Emily & Todd Voth Artspace Kansas City Art Institute

16 East 43rd St., Kansas City, Mo.  
[kcai.edu/artspace](http://kcai.edu/artspace)



The Arterie Grand Opening at KCAI  
Nov. 2, 1-3 p.m.

Social Practice Fall 2025  
End-of-Semester Exhibitions  
Dec. 5 - 13, 2025

### The Greenlease Gallery and Panacea Project Space

1100 Rockhurst Road, Kansas City, Mo.  
(between Sedgwick and Van  
Ackeren Halls on campus)  
(816) 501-4607  
[rockhurst.edu/gallery](http://rockhurst.edu/gallery)



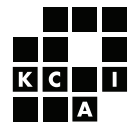
Detail of panel by Sierra Faust, artist photograph

"Song for the Muses" by Sierra Faust and Ben Havey on view Sept. 4 - Dec. 7, 2025.

Description: The Greenlease Gallery and Panacea Project Space is free and open to the public Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 1-5 p.m. while Rockhurst University is in session and exhibits both the Van Ackeren Collection of Religious Art, a permanent collection featuring objects spanning the 15th through 18th centuries, together with a rotating exhibition schedule featuring works by contemporary artists.

### KCAI Gallery

4415 Warwick Boulevard,  
Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 802-3357  
[kcai.edu/kcai-gallery](http://kcai.edu/kcai-gallery)



**KCAI Gallery**

**THE ARTS DESERVE  
EXPERT, TIMELY REVIEWS**



**Don't miss our online  
coverage of exhibits  
and performances at  
[kcstudio.org/reviews](http://kcstudio.org/reviews)**



## Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

4420 Warwick Boulevard, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 753-5784  
[kemperart.org](http://kemperart.org)



Raven Halfmoon, "Tushka Manahatta" (2025). Stoneware glaze. 36 1/2 x 26 x 17 1/2 inches. Images courtesy of the artist and Salon 94. © Raven Halfmoon. Photography by Kes Efstathiou.

Planning your weekend? Come to the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and experience two landmark exhibitions: "Raven Halfmoon: Ride or Die" and "The Atrium Project: 10 Years, 10 Stories." Admission is always FREE! While you're here, enjoy the art-inspired menu at the museum cafe Oil on Linen.

## Linda Hall Library

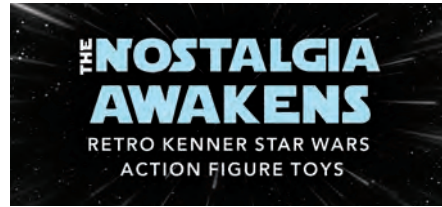
5109 Cherry St, Kansas City, MO  
(816) 363-4600  
[lindahall.org](http://lindahall.org)



The Linda Hall Library is a leading independent research library that has served students, researchers, businesses, and the intellectual curious since 1946. Visit the Library today to experience educational exhibitions, engaging events with dynamic speakers, and a rich collection that brings science, engineering, and technology to life in new and relevant ways.

## The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures

5235 Oak Street, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 235-8000  
[toyandminiaturemuseum.org](http://toyandminiaturemuseum.org)



Embark on an intergalactic voyage to see "The Nostalgia Awakens: Retro Kenner Star Wars Action Figure Toys," The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures' upcoming exhibition featuring EVERY action figure toy made by Kenner Toys from 1978-1985 based on the original three "Star Wars" movies.

When "Star Wars" hit the movie theaters in 1977, it instantly became a box office smash, especially with children. The exhibition is on view through Jan. 26, 2026.

## The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

4525 Oak Street, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 751-1ART  
[nelson-atkins.org](http://nelson-atkins.org)



Andy Warhol, American (1928–1987). Lana Turner, 1976–1986. Gelatin silver prints with thread, 27 5/16 x 21 1/2 inches. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Gift of Hallmark Cards, Inc., 2005.27.301. © Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

"More Is More: Reinventing Photography Beyond the Frame" features 43 photographs by artists wanting something more, presenting singular works of art created from multiple photographs building a new visual language.

## CROSSROADS

### Belger Arts Center and Belger Crane Yard Studios

2100 Walnut Street and 2011 Tracy Avenue  
Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 474-7316  
[belgerarts.org](http://belgerarts.org)



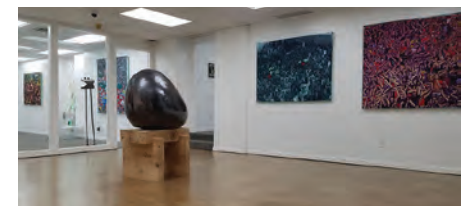
"Put a Lid on It" exhibition: Work by (clockwise from top left) Zuee More, LM Forgie, Desiree Warren, Tess Healy, Jacqueline Kaplan, David Ball, and Eric Ryser. Image: Belger Arts.

BELGER CRANE YARD STUDIOS:

- "Put A Lid on It"  
Oct. 3, 2025 - Jan. 3, 2026
- "Holidays at the Belger Crane Yard Gallery"  
Nov. 7, 2025 - Jan. 3, 2026
- "Holiday Open House and Studio Sale"  
Nov. 21 - 22, 2025

## Bunker Center for the Arts

1014 East 19th Street, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 866-8350  
[bunkercenter.com](http://bunkercenter.com)  
[facebook.com/bunkca](https://facebook.com/bunkca)  
[instagram: @bunkca](https://instagram.com/bunkca)



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CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The Bunker Center for the Arts comprises 10,000 square feet of studios and gallery space. Visit us during our monthly First Friday receptions, during regular business hours, or shop our inventory online.

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AT 816.361.0616**

# GALLERY GUIDE

## HISTORIC NORTHEAST

### The Museum of Kansas City

3218 Gladstone Blvd, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 702-7700

[museumofkansascity.org](http://museumofkansascity.org)



#### Special Exhibition Admission Open Now: \$7.50 per Entry

The Museum of Kansas City is proud to present "Arrive As A Star. Leave As A Star" -Illuminating 50 Years of Melinda Ryder in Kansas City. Through a stunning collection of costumes, images, and memorabilia, this exhibition showcases the legendary career of Bruce Winter, who has performed for 50 years in Kansas City as the iconic Melinda Ryder. Proceeds benefit the City's LGBTQ+ Commission and GLAMA at UMKC.

## TOWER EAST

### Kansas City Artists Coalition

3200 Gillham Road, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 421-5222

[kansascityartistscoalition.org](http://kansascityartistscoalition.org)



"Who Buys What?..."  
by Robert Dohrmann

#### November

- "Art for All," an all KCAC members group show in the main Gallery, with "Small Works Showcase" in the snap space. Two group shows showcasing accessible and affordable art

#### December

- "Some Assembly Required" by Robert Dohrmann and Dick Daniels, featuring chopped and assembled art, and
- "Your Digital Holiday" by Michael Webb, a collection of vibrant, digitally created, nostalgia and technology inspired art.

## UNION HILL

### Rachael Cozad Fine Art

200 East 30th Street, Kansas City, Mo.  
(816) 308-9489 by appointment  
[rachaelcozad.com](http://rachaelcozad.com)



Hung Liu  
(Chinese/  
American 1948-  
2021)  
"Empress  
Wanrong," 2008  
Oil and mixed  
media on panel,  
49.75 x 37.75"

We welcome you to Rachael Cozad Fine Art in Kansas City's Union Hill, where we offer private sales of modern and contemporary art, museum-quality American paintings, consulting and certified appraisals. Featured American artists include Thomas Hart Benton, George Caleb Bingham and Birger Sandzén; contemporary artists include Jim Dine, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Motherwell, Ed Ruscha and many others.

## INDEPENDENCE, MO

### Einglewood Arts

10901 E. Winner Rd., Independence, Mo.  
(816) 379-6011

[einglewoodarts.art](http://einglewoodarts.art)



- Now through Nov. 8  
Faces After Suicide | Created by Lindsey Doolittle
- Now through Dec. 20  
Current Works 2026 | Group Exhibition with KCSCP
- Nov. 21 – Jan. 10, 2026  
Something Wonderful: A Holiday Market

## KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

### Kansas City Kansas

### Community College

7250 State Ave, Suite # 2440  
Kansas City, KS 66112  
913-288-7408  
[KCKCC.edu](http://KCKCC.edu)



Nocturnes by Kate Clements

Kate Clements constructs delicate and ornate installations comprised of kiln fused glass panels. Working with frit, she scatters and pushes the sugar-like substance on a kiln shelf to form dimensional drawings. In her solo exhibition "Nocturnes," Clements leans fully into the seductive and beguiling nature of glass. Referencing moth wings and poisonous minerals she creates luminous rorschachs imagery that oscillates between the beautiful and the monstrousness, riding a precarious edge of dream and nightmare.

On display through Nov. 14

## LENEXA

### Lenexa City Hall Art Gallery

17101 West 87th Street Parkway, Lenexa, Kan.  
[lenexa.com/art](http://lenexa.com/art)



Exhibits featuring local and regional artists rotate nearly monthly and feature a wide array of 2D and 3D art. Some art is available for purchase.



## LIBERTY

### Liberty Arts Commission Galleries & Sculpture Walk

[libertymissouri.gov/arts](http://libertymissouri.gov/arts)



"Flying Thru the Abstract," by Rolie Grandbois, Sante Fe, Nm. Marble.

Check out 14 sculptures, all within a five-minute walk in historic downtown Liberty.

**Art Galleries – New exhibits monthly**

#### City Hall Atrium

101 E. Kansas Street, Liberty, Mo.

#### Liberty Community Center

1600 S. Withers Road, Liberty, Mo.

#### Mid-Continent Public Library, Withers Branch

1655 S. Withers Road, Liberty, Mo.

#### Stocksdale Gallery of Art at William Jewell College

252 William Jewell College Drive, Liberty, Mo.  
Brown Hall, 2nd Floor

## OVERLAND PARK

### Images Art Gallery

7320 W. 80th St, Overland Park, Kan.  
(913) 232-7113

[imagesgallery.org](http://imagesgallery.org)



A cooperative gallery in the KC Metro, Images Art Gallery is a non-profit gallery exhibiting a rich collection of local art, encompassing painting, glass, sculpture, jewelry, and gifts, available to art lovers with diverse budgets. Commissions welcome.

## Johnson County Museum

Located in the Johnson County  
Arts & Heritage Center  
8788 Metcalf Avenue  
Overland Park, Kan.  
(913) 826-2787  
[jocomuseum.org](http://jocomuseum.org)



Now featuring a special exhibit "Ripples: Water, Community, and You." Reflect on the ripples of the past in this immersive experience. Plan your visit at [JCPRD.com/ripples](http://JCPRD.com/ripples).

### Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art at Johnson County Community College

12345 College Boulevard, Overland Park, Kan.  
(913) 469-3000  
[nermanmuseum.org](http://nermanmuseum.org)

PHOTO BY MICHAEL SPILLERS



The Nerman Museum serves as a cultural leader, facilitating deeper understanding of our world and contemporary issues through their exhibitions and permanent collection.

- Dec. 12, 6-8 p.m.: Linda Lighton Artist Talk and Opening Reception
- On view Dec. 13, 2025 - May 3, 2026
  - "Angeline Rivas"
  - "Linda Lighton: Love & War, A Fifty-Year Survey," 1975-2025
  - "Visionary: The Work of Michael Brantley"



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## LAWRENCE, KANSAS

### Lawrence Arts Center

940 New Hampshire  
Lawrence, Kan.  
(785) 843-2787

[lawrenceartscenter.org](http://lawrenceartscenter.org)



Nic Dikin, Rainbow Vase,  
Blown Glass, William  
Bridges Thayer Memorial

#### • Oct. 31 – Dec. 13

Nic Dikin | Molten Lines

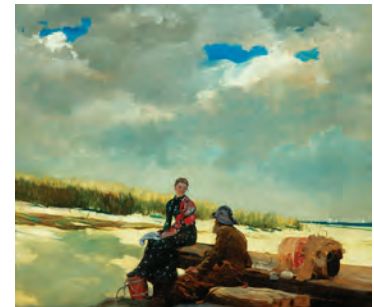
SunYoung Park | Simulated Bodies

King Sized | Juried Exhibition

### Spencer Museum of Art

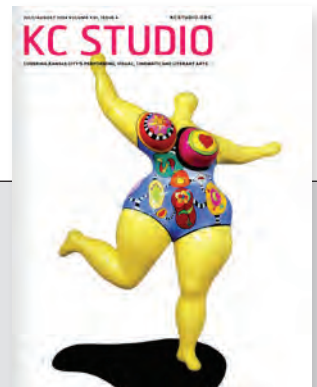
1301 Mississippi Street, Lawrence, Kan.  
(785) 864-4710

[spencerart.ku.edu](http://spencerart.ku.edu)



Winslow Homer, "Cloud Shadows," 1890  
William Bridges Thayer Memorial

- On view through Dec. 14  
"Soundings: Making Culture at Sea"
- On view through Jan. 4  
"My Mother's Tongue Ties Me Together"
- On view through Jan. 25  
"In'zhúje'waxóbe: Return of the Sacred Red Rock"



# GALLERY GUIDE

## LINDSBORG, KANSAS

### Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery

401 North 1st Street, Lindsborg, Kan.  
(785) 227-2220  
[sandzen.org](http://sandzen.org)



*Willow and Pond* by Birger Sandzen, 1925, oil on canvas, 14 x 18 inches.

The gallery furthers the art, vision and legacy of Birger Sandzén, along with exhibiting historical and contemporary artists of the region.

### Red Barn Studio Museum

212 South Main, Lindsborg, Kan.  
785-227-2217  
[lesterraymer.org](http://lesterraymer.org)



The home and working studio of artist Lester Raymer (1907–1991), where he created an extraordinary range of works—paintings, prints, woodcarvings, stitchery, toys, and more.

## MANHATTAN, KANSAS

### Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art

701 Beach Lane, Manhattan, Kan.  
(785) 532-7718  
[beach.k-state.edu](http://beach.k-state.edu)

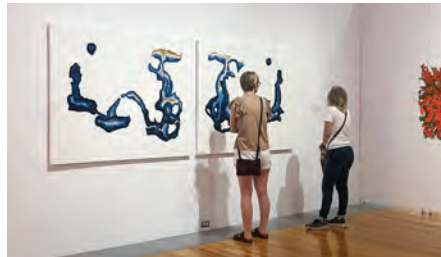


PHOTO COURTESY OF KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Kansas State University's Beach Museum of Art holds a collection of 12,000+ objects and offers exhibitions, educational programs and public events. Free admission and parking

### SNW Gallery & Custom Frames

328 Poyntz Avenue, Manhattan, Kan.  
(785) 537-2099  
[SNWGallery.com](http://SNWGallery.com)



SNW Gallery & Custom Frames, located in Historic Downtown Manhattan, has an extensive on-site inventory from the finest living regional artists. SNW Gallery also carries select estate pieces, artisan jewelry, and artisan apparel, and offers in-home art consultations in central and eastern Kansas and the KC Metro area. SNW Custom Frames provides in-house conservation framing of the highest quality. Visit [SNWGALLERY.COM](http://SNWGALLERY.COM) to view all available works and to shop online.

## The Museum of Art + Light

316 Pierre Street, Manhattan, Kan.  
(785) 775-5444  
[artlightmuseum.org](http://artlightmuseum.org)



"The Erosion of Time" in Mez Galleries 1 & 2

"The Erosion of Time" unites the powerful voices of two contemporary artists whose practices chart the shifting terrain of identity, place, and humanity.

Des Lucrèce's layered digital works question the notion of "no home center" by revealing how culture, history, and displacement shape the self. Dean Mitchell's portraits and landscapes capture the quiet dignity of overlooked communities, offering moments of stillness, resilience, and empathy.

Open now at The Museum of Art + Light in Manhattan, Kansas.

## SALINA, KANSAS

### Salina Art Center

242 South Santa Fe, Salina, Kan.  
(785) 827-1431  
[salinaartcenter.org](http://salinaartcenter.org)



Salina Art Center is a nonprofit, free contemporary art museum in downtown Salina. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Art Center's mission is "to create exchanges among art, artists, and audiences, that reveal life." The non-collecting museum realizes its mission through regional, national and international contemporary art exhibitions, a unique cinema experience, artist residency program and educational programming. Art-O-Mat site. Visit [vistsalinaks.org](http://vistsalinaks.org) to plan your weekend getaway.



## VOLLAND, KANSAS

### Volland Foundation

24098 Volland Road, Alma, KS  
(785) 499-3616  
[vollandfoundation.org](http://vollandfoundation.org)



Nate Hofer. "Echo - 07, Weta, South Dakota"

### Volland, A Place for Art and Community

Nate Hofer: "Heartland Silos"

(Decommissioned)

Winner of a World Peace Photo Award 2021  
Through December 7, 2025

November 2 | 2pm – Cold War historians  
Professor Adrian Lewis and Chuck Sexton,  
US Army Colonel (Retired)

December 7 | 2pm – Jubilation Bell Choir

**Volland Gallery** | Friday-Sunday | 1-4 pm  
The M.T. Liggett Sculpture Park  
Mark McHenry sculptures | Nature Trail  
Dawn to dusk

## WICHITA, KANSAS

### Wichita Art Museum

1400 West Museum Boulevard, Wichita, Kan.  
(316) 268-4921  
[WAM.org](http://WAM.org)



PHOTO BY FRASER MARR  
THE LEVETT COLLECTION

Emiko Nakano, "Composition in Yellow," 1957. Oil on canvas,  
34 x 46 in. Courtesy of The Levett Collection, CL864.

### "Abstract Expressionists: The Women"

**Aug. 23 – Nov. 16, 2025**

Featuring 40 works by 30 groundbreaking  
artists, including Grace Hartigan and  
Helen Frankenthaler, this exhibition  
highlights women's vital role in  
Abstract Expressionism.

"Abstract Expressionists: The Women" is organized  
by the American Federation of Arts from the  
Christian Levett Collection and FAMM (Female  
Artists of the Mougins Museum), France. The  
exhibition is curated by Dr. Ellen G. Landau. It is  
generously supported by Berry Campbell Gallery,  
Betsy Shack Barbanell, Monique Schoen Warshaw,  
and Clare McKeon and the Clare McKeon  
Charitable Trust. Additional support has been  
provided by the Pollock-Krasner Foundation  
and the Every Page Foundation.

## ST. JOSEPH, MISSOURI

### Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art

2818 Frederick Avenue, Saint Joseph, Mo.  
(816) 233-7003  
[albrecht-kemper.org](http://albrecht-kemper.org)

## SEDALIA, MISSOURI

### Daum Museum of Contemporary Art

3201 West 16th Street, Sedalia, Mo.  
(660) 530-5888  
[daummuseum.org](http://daummuseum.org)



The Daum Museum features a diverse  
collection and offers several exhibitions  
each year. The museum exhibits paintings,  
drawings, prints, ceramics, sculptures, and new  
media from both the collection and currently  
practicing artists.

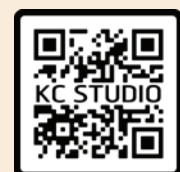
The heart of the Daum is the permanent  
collection of paintings, drawings, prints,  
ceramics, and sculptures created since the  
mid-20th century. The collection features  
significant works by Louise Bourgeois, Helen  
Frankenthaler, Kara Walker, Robert Motherwell,  
Ed Ruscha, Andy Warhol, and Betty Woodman

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SCAN ME

# GALLERY GUIDE

## WESTON, MISSOURI

### Northland Artists' Gallery

519 Main Street  
Weston, Mo.  
(816) 386-5400  
[northlandartists.com](http://northlandartists.com)

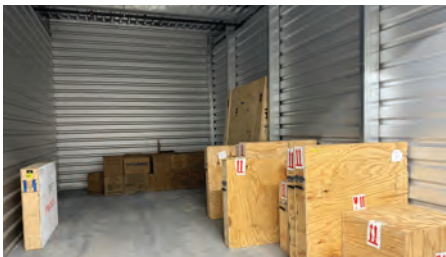


Northland Artists' Gallery is a destination gallery for art lovers in the Kansas City area and the Midwest. Artists offer a range of artistic expression and media.

## DULUTH, MINNESOTA

### Joseph Nease Gallery

23 West 1st Street, Duluth, Minn.  
(218) 481-7750  
[josephneasegallery.com](http://josephneasegallery.com)



Artwork on the way

Our Fall 2025 return to Kansas City as a private dealer is nearly here. We are getting the artwork moved!

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CHAD BEGUELIN  
BASED UPON THE NEW LINE CINEMA  
FILM WRITTEN BY DAVID BERENBAUM

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[thecoterie.org](http://thecoterie.org)

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TICKETS

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THEATRE**

# VOICES AND VOTES

## DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

**November 1 - December 13**  
Grain Valley Historical Society  
506 N Main ST, Grain Valley MO 64029

**From revolution and suffrage,  
to civil rights and casting ballots,  
everyone in every community  
is part of this ever-evolving story:  
the story of democracy in America.**

**Exhibition Hours:**  
Wednesday & Saturday 10am - 4pm  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday 1pm - 4pm



**MISSOURI  
HUMANITIES  
Smithsonian**

*This exhibit is made possible by the Smithsonian's Museum  
on Main Street, in cooperation with Missouri Humanities Council.*

[www.grainvalleyhistory.com](http://www.grainvalleyhistory.com)

# Explore

THE KANSAS CITY REGION'S  
ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS

Check out our digital directory at  
[kcstudio.org/gallery-guide](http://kcstudio.org/gallery-guide)



# 7591 Words: Sandra Van Tuyl and Christopher Leitch

CARTER ART CENTER GALLERY

Sandra Van Tuyl and Christopher Leitch are both expert gardeners, which underscores their partnership in the exhibit “7591 Words” at MCC Penn Valley Carter Art Center Gallery. Although Leitch and Van Tuyl had never met, Bernadette Torres, the Art Center’s director, knew the oeuvres of both artists. She was familiar with Leitch’s annual backyard landscape extravaganzas as well as his sculpture, paintings, videos and drawings, which often incorporate wordplay.

She had also recently seen a series of paintings on old cupboard doors that Van Tuyl had created during the COVID-19 pandemic, which combined images of native flora with words from the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. “7951 Words” refers to the number of words in those historic documents. Although Leitch’s and Van Tuyl’s artworks were stylistically different, Torres was intrigued by the potential intertwining of their notions and art into one exhibit.

It was a great idea, which resulted in this instructive and visually compelling exhibit.

Van Tuyl’s paintings are fresh and seductively pretty. Combined with phrases and words from the Constitution, such as “insure domestic tranquility” and “promote the general welfare,” they are also mysterious and powerful. As Torres notes, “These works pursue thoughts on ideals of justice and urge robust protection of democracy’s roots.”

Van Tuyl’s objective was to pair these “powerful words with imagery from the natural world, (and to invite) people to reconnect not only with the text, but with the living systems and communities these words are meant to protect.”

Leitch notes, “The U.S. Constitution is a story of unison, of interconnection and our reliance on one another — ideas familiar to any gardener.”



Christopher Leitch, “Standing Book, In(ter)dependence,” maquette

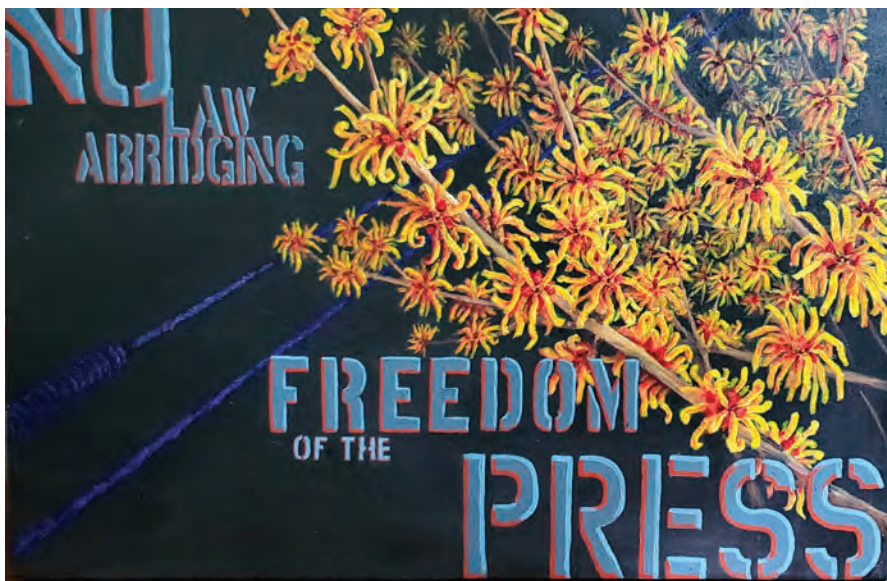
FROM THE ARTIST

Van Tuyl’s paintings have the impact of great billboards, despite their modest scale. Leitch’s work is more enigmatic. He sculpted large-scale letters and arranged them freestanding and upright, while a video is projected upon them. There are also works in brilliant red fiber. For Leitch, words are clearly something that can be played with, in more ways than one, and his innovative curation pokes us into the realization that words are malleable as well as seemingly obvious.

“Words are living, breathing things, just like plants,” Leitch says. “They are never static but dynamic and lively. And words as well as plants change from an idea state to a physical one. Longevity is never a permanent state, made from a non-changeable mold.

“Words have power — they create a resonance. Like the Constitution, they exist in a fertile soil that must be allowed to grow.” — Elisabeth Kirsch

“7591 Words: Sandra Van Tuyl and Christopher Leitch” continues at the Carter Art Center Gallery, MCC Penn Valley, 3201 Southwest Trafficway, through Dec. 5. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday and noon to 3 p.m. Saturday. For more information, 816.604.4752 or <https://mcckc.edu/campuses/penn-valley/carter-art-center.aspx>.



Sandra Van Tuyl, “First Amendment Free Press”

FROM THE ARTIST



# UNICORN



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Holiday Encore

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**DECEMBER 3 - 28, 2025**

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# THEATRE



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