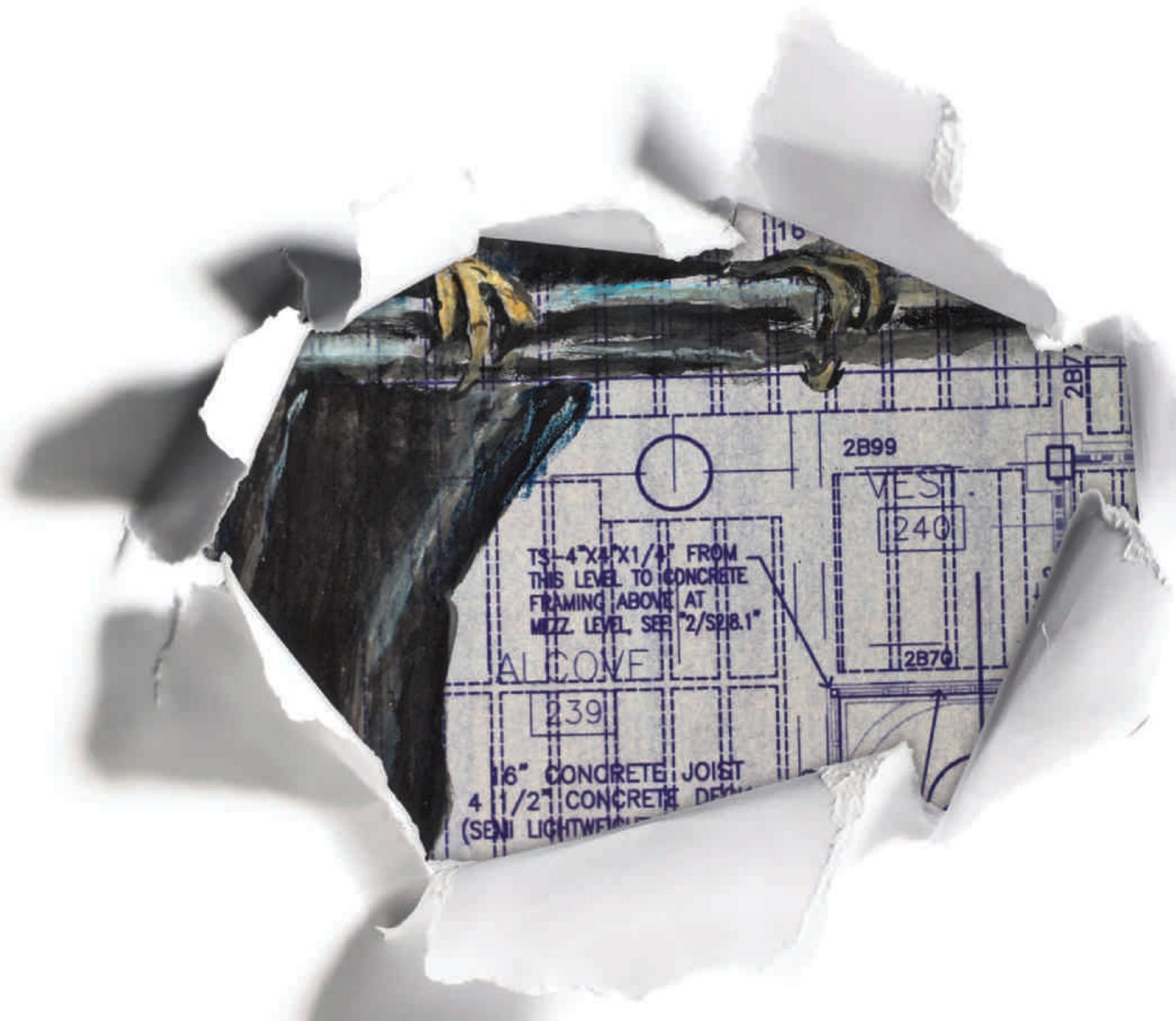


# jasper

THE WORD ON COLUMBIA ARTS

NOV // DEC 2011

VOL. 001 NO. 002



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3

4

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2B98

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S2.3.1

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THIS LEVEL TO CONCRETE  
FRAMING ABOVE AT  
MEZ. LEVEL, SEE "2/S2B.1"

ALCOVE

239

16" CONCRETE JOIST  
4 1/2" CONCRETE DECK  
(SEMI LIGHTWEIGHT CONCRETE)

2B64

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VEST  
240

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2B71 L2

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CONCRETE

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S2.8.1

CONCRETE JOIST  
CONCRETE DECK  
WEIGHT CONCRETE

L2

2B58

CB 40X84

VEST

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# A MESSAGE FROM JASPER

## Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Jasper Family, let me take this opportunity to officially say, *Thank You!*

I don't think any of us were prepared for the kind of welcome and support the Columbia arts community has given us as we've launched our new publication, *Jasper – The Word on Columbia Arts*. You've been exceptionally generous with your praise, wisdom, and advice. Hardly a day goes by that I don't have someone offer a suggestion or a word of encouragement, or that a friend at a restaurant or gallery will drop us an e-mail or a text saying their magazine supply is low – *will we bring another batch by?* And so, for the past two months we've been hopping all over town, out to Newberry and Camden, and as far away as Greenville and Spartanburg, replenishing piles of Jasper, visiting with friends, and making ourselves comfortable. Despite the fact that our magazine home is located downstairs in the Tapp's Arts Center – and please, do stop by and say hello – we've come to feel like we have hundreds of neighbors all over town. We have realized even more fully how expansive the Columbia arts community is and how much its individual members have to offer one another.

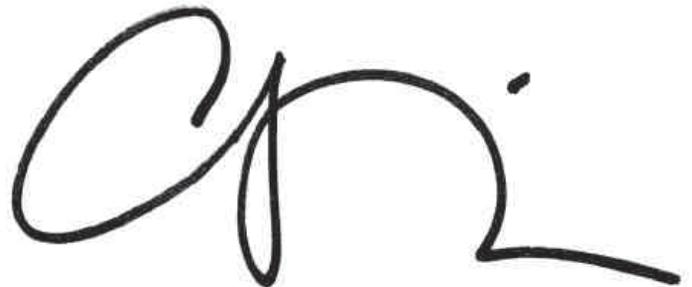
You see, I have a philosophy that art and wine have something in common. Much in the way that the most stressed soils tend to produce excellent wines, great art can also result when the political environment in which it is produced is, shall we say, less than encouraging. Despite the fact that our arts advocates must wage an uphill battle against state government for recognition of art and arts education as a cultural imperative, our artists continue to provide us with art that is intellectually stimulating, spiritually satisfying, and emotionally challenging. Even though they, themselves, may be starved for funding, our local artists generously feed the souls of their patrons with healthy helpings of visual, literary, and performing arts that nourish the quality of our lives, making us fat and happy.

At Jasper, we're proud to provide this community with a platform upon which artists of differing disciplines can come together to support, appreciate, and learn more about one another. And we are committed to offering comprehensive arts coverage, not only across artistic genres, but also across rivers and counties, into the communities that may not carry a Columbia zip code but still look to the city as the center of this remarkable renaissance in the arts currently underway. Because, as the greater South Carolina Midlands continues to grow as a southeastern arts destination, stretching from the galleries of Camden to the stage of the Newberry Opera House, Columbia will serve as its nucleus – the heartbeat of a living organism that attracts visitors and wanderers and, ultimately, more artists and arts lovers who will also call Columbia home.

As someone who understands the importance of the arts, Mayor Steve Benjamin writes in his guest editorial in this issue of Jasper, "There is something special about Columbia. Since its creation 225 years ago, our city has continued to attract men and women of unparalleled talent and passion to explore new horizons of creativity and push the boundaries of human expression."

Jasper is honored to record these new horizons of creativity in the pages of our magazine. We hope you enjoy reading about them as much as we enjoy bringing them to you.

Take care,  
Cindi

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cindi'.

**Jasper** // as in Johns, the abstract expressionist, neo-Dadaist artist  
as in Sergeant, the Revolutionary War hero  
as in Mineral, the spotted or speckled stone  
as in Magazine, the Word on Columbia Arts

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# DEAR JASPER

## Dear Jasper,

As an artist and gallery owner in Columbia, I follow your page almost daily and you can bet that on the days I miss, I catch up as soon as I get back online to see what you've uncovered. You're a magazine and so much more, Jasper.

You've rapidly become a daily resource for the local arts scene as you seek, expose, share, engage, interact and create within it. You're an octoPLUSpus, with more than eight legs, extended tentacles far reaching into every nook and cranny as you seek, expose, identify and share so many varied forms of art with us. You invite us into your magazine with the opportunities you give us to engage and create with you directly through your contests and requests for submissions. You interact with us by being present at arts events all over town as you support, report and create community within our arts scene. All one has to do is look at your website, blog or Facebook page to see that you are OUR arts magazine. WE are Jasper.

"What Jasper said" is rapidly becoming a catch phrase with so many of us around town as you continue to remain in the forefront between magazine issues and inform us with your up-to-date "What Jasper said" posts and blogs about current happenings within our arts community.

You're so much more than a magazine or website, you're a tour de force for the Greater Columbia arts community. Bar none ... nobody, absolutely no one, covers the arts in our town to the extent that you do. Not only does Jasper say it, Jasper does it!

You've shown us that you have and continue to keep your eyes on us. Just know that we're watching you, too, with MUCH anticipation to see what Jasper says and does next.

*With much appreciation,*

**Anastasia Chernoff**

*Artist/Gallery Curator, Anastasia & Friends  
Columbia, South Carolina*

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STEVEN SATER

BASED ON THE PLAY BY  
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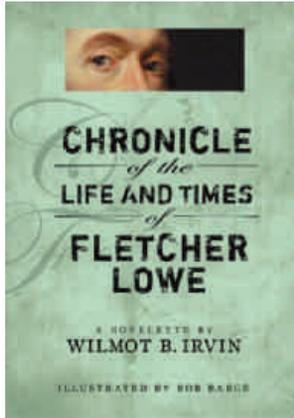
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## Wilmot Irvin and new Southern literature



It's a mighty curious little book, this *Chronicle of the Life and Times of Fletcher Lowe*. Little in size (5x7 inches) and length (not quite 20,000 words), it's billed as a novelette by author Wilmot B. Irvin, who makes a special point of saying it's unlike anything he's ever written.

"For readers of my earlier works of fiction, *Chronicle* will stand apart, for better or worse," he writes in the preface. "Perhaps those who read me here for the first time will find this story disquieting: amusing at times, aberrant at others. It is emblematic of our postmodern American culture."

That's one way of looking at it. You might call it a Dr. Seuss tale for grown-ups, a series of vignettes starring a deranged good ol' boy you better not tick off. Think Neil Gaiman writing about a grown-up Huck Finn who's slightly touched in the head. OK, more than slightly touched.

And yet there's something distinctively down-home about Fletcher Lowe's story. You could call it Southern Gothic, if it weren't for the references to Wal-Mart, Krispy Kreme, and Applebee's. But that's one of the oddly compelling aspects of this little tale, how it jarringly returns readers to the real world just as they are ready to dismiss the story as a simple surrealistic fantasy.

Then there are the sublime, provocatively rendered illustrations by artist Rob Barge. More than a dozen full-page drawings depict the antics of Fletcher Lowe, providing visual insights that nicely enhance Irvin's words.

A practicing attorney in Columbia, Irvin, who is 61, received an undergraduate degree in English literature and a law degree from the University of South Carolina. He began writing fiction more than 10 years ago. He's

published four full-length novels that "explore the depth and vitality – and often the fragility – of human relationships," he says.

Now comes Fletcher Lowe, a uniquely drawn, tragicomic character whose depth and vitality might be best left unexplored any deeper. Yet this little hardback book is a pleasant reminder of the days when words and pictures combined to tell a clever story. Fletcher Lowe might be hard to figure, but his creator has a firm grip on the artistic process. // **MM**

## Christmas at Red Bank



Danielle Howle

Jasper loves Christmas and Jasper loves local music, so you can imagine how the annual Christmas at Red Bank concert series makes us feel.

Started in 2006 by local music writer Kevin Oliver and hosted by the Red Bank United Methodist Church, the show generally features over a dozen local musicians performing a mixture of original and traditional Christmas tunes to benefit a local charity. No song gets repeated, and performers are encouraged to collaborate and dig up lesser known tunes. Past years have seen such notable figures as Mark Bryan, Johnny Irion and

Sara Lee Guthrie, and Danielle Howle along with scene mainstays like Josh Roberts, Hannah Miller, Sunshone Still, Todd Mathis, and Brian Connor. Last year also saw some groups branching out of the acoustic format, with John Wesley Satterfield bringing along Reggie Sullivan to play drums on "Little Drummer Boy" and The Restoration's elaborate version of the "Hallelujah Chorus," which featured a full choir and orchestration.

In addition to putting on the series, Oliver has also put out two compilations featuring songs from past Red Bank concerts to promote the series, with all proceeds also going to charity. Check them out at [christmasatredbank.bandcamp.com/](http://christmasatredbank.bandcamp.com/).

The 2011 concert is set for December 4th. The Red Bank UMC is located at 2909 Old Barnwell Rd. in Lexington. // **KP**

## Public Art



"Miss Liberty" by Matthew Kramer

It all started with an innocent comment during the well intentioned but, some say, best-forgotten Hootie and the Blowfish Ballet in April of 2009. A Columbia financial advisor named Michael Oana mentioned to Columbia City Councilwoman Belinda Gergel that it would be nice if the city officially honored

the band in some way. After all, the Blowfish had brought national attention to Columbia and given the city a welcome shot of self-esteem.

Gergel thought it was a good idea and prompted Oana to follow up with an email to Mayor Steve Benjamin, who also liked the idea. A committee was formed to explore the possibilities and decided that a piece of public art, preferably a sculpture, would best fit the bill.

Columbia artist Mike Williams suggested Christopher Stuyck and Matthew Kramer, who run a metal design and fabrication business on Shop Road as possible artists. Two committee members paid a visit to the Stuyck Company, a cavernous warehouse where blowtorches flared,

paint compressors hissed, and various metals clanged and banged as they were molded and shaped. In the relative quiet of a small office, the committee members pitched their idea. Stuyck and Kramer glanced skeptically at each other, but there was no hiding their interest. Their eyes sparkled as if they were already imagining carved steel curving up from a sidewalk in Five Points.

On the surface, Stuyck and Kramer are hardworking metal fabricators, but underneath beat the hearts of true artists. Stuyck studied fine art at the University of New Mexico before coming to USC to study the same thing, as well as to help create a glass-blowing program for the USC art school. Kramer studied at Pennsylvania State University and has completed many commissioned works in the years since.

The artists saw the Hootie project as a break from the creative-but-limited jobs of making gates and fences. The committee gave Stuyck and Kramer complete creative control, and the artists began to scheme and conjure. Over the next several months, they created four models for a sculpture and refined their idea of depicting the music of Five Points erupting from the street.

Their presentations to the committee were as entertaining as their model sculptures were enticing. Stuyck presented a more traditional model, while Kramer let his freak flag fly with a more radical, free-flowing design. Eventually, they reached a compromise and the design approved, with barely 10 weeks remaining until the scheduled October 20th unveiling.

This is where Stuyck and Kramer's work-a-day professionalism paid off. They carved out a corner of their warehouse, began bending and welding in earnest, and made the deadline with seconds to spare. When the curtain dropped on the corner of Harden and Santee Streets, fans and dignitaries cheered, the artists grinned, and a huge party ensued with rock bands playing into the night, Hootie and the Blowfish included.

One year later, the Hootie sculpture feels comfortable in its place. Folks are often seen stopping to read the inscription on the big marble guitar pick at its base, and snap a photo. It's well on its way to becoming an established Columbia landmark.

As for Stuyck and Kramer, they're still busy out on Shop Road catering to customers who want something made creatively with metal. But they're maintaining their artistic status as well. Both entered artistic alterations of recycled parking meters in the city-wide fundraiser, Change for Change, last year, with Kramer taking first prize. And there will be more street art from these two coming soon to a street corner near you. // **MM**

# The Art of the Story

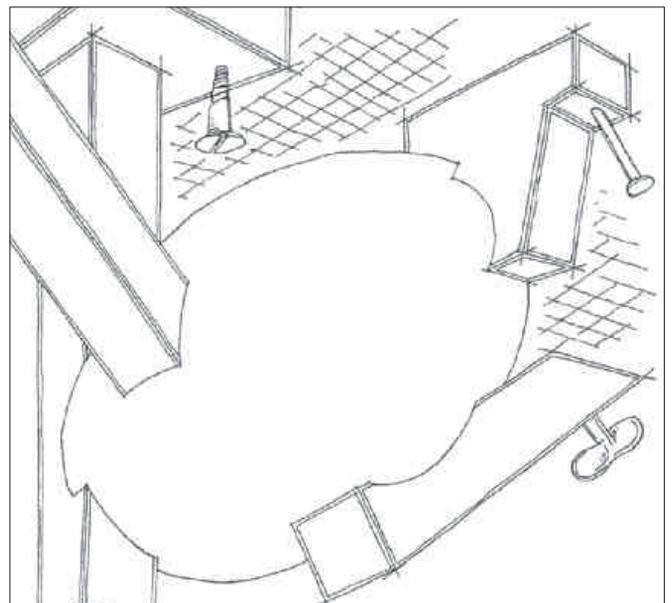
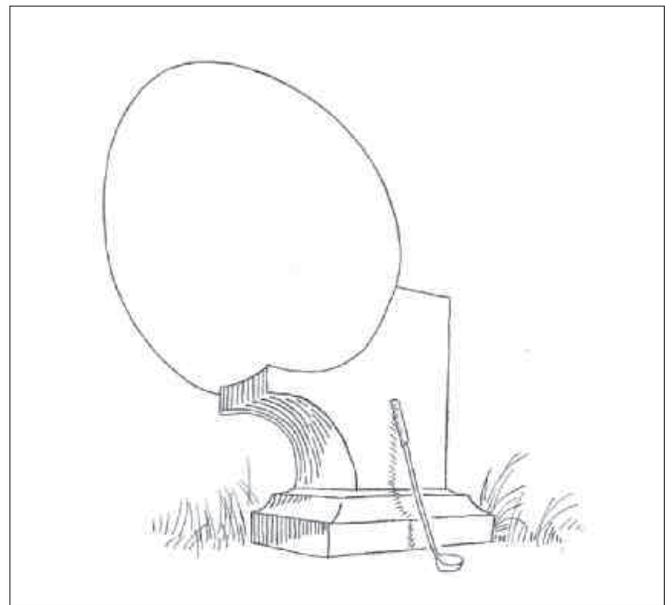
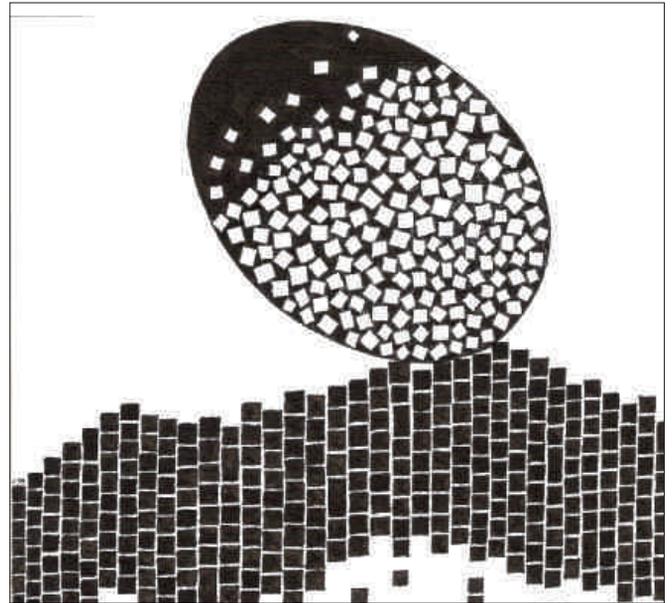
Tony Tallent, director of literacy and learning at the Richland County Public Library, is a dedicated advocate for books and the stories they tell. Tallent has made a reputation for himself by developing innovative methods of exploiting a library's rich resources, whether at his position here in Columbia or at previous posts in Colorado and North Carolina. One of his latest projects is the re-purposing of gallery space on the garden level of the Main branch library, formerly known as The Wachovia Gallery. He's calling it the "Gallery at Main Library" and his next exhibit tells a fascinating story.

"One of the things we conceptually want to do with the space is to feature artwork that has a story to tell," Tallent explains. "We're interested in exhibiting art that tells a story, whether it is about the city or the community, or that focuses on the story of how the art itself came to be."

*An Egg a Day: Drawings by Phil Burns*, tells the tale of Phil Burns, a retired California artist and designer who suffered from chronic and severe back pain resulting from a botched surgical procedure, forcing him into a homebound life of isolation. Recalling a meeting he had as a young man with Russian surrealist Pavel Tchetchilew, the now much older man belatedly took the rather odd advice from Tchetchilew to draw an egg every day. For 13 years and using a crow quill pen and India ink, Burns drew every kind of variation on an egg imaginable; funny eggs, lonely eggs, surrealistic eggs, even eggs in space. The final result was a collection of over 3000 eggs – 1000 of which will be on display in the newly repurposed space.

"This is an incredibly story about a man whose creativity helped change his life," Tallent says. And while Burns is not an artist from our community, his story does reflect the kind of art Tallent and the RCPL hope to display more of in the future in the Gallery at Main Library space. "We want to explore the gallery as a place for the community to tell a story," says Tallent.

For Tallent, Rod Stewart said it best that "every picture tells a story." *An Egg a Day* opens on December 1st and runs through March 4, 2012. Admission to the gallery is free. // **CB**



Egg Drawings Courtesy Phil Burns



The Fishing Journal's Debut Record

## Vinyl

Once upon a time, vinyl records were the coin and currency of the music world, but the rise of compact discs left the creation and distribution of music on vinyl only a narrow sliver of the market. The rise of the mp3, in turn, seems to be sending the CD packing, but it also seems to allow vinyl to come back in play, even for local bands.

In the past year we have seen vinyl releases from Fork & Spoon bands Coma Cinema and Mercy Mercy Me, as well as a 7" from the hard-scrabble rockabilly band The Capitol City Playboys. More recently, the Chris Powell-helmed The Fishing Journal put out its debut record on vinyl as well. The upfront costs of a vinyl pressing are prohibitive for even midsize bands, so for local musicians to do so speaks to something larger than just economics or fashion trends.

While the most obvious advantage vinyl records have is the appeal of larger cover art and their nostalgic hipness, other factors come into play. Powell cites sound quality as another reason to invest in vinyl, particularly when put up against the often-tinny sound of mp3s, a sentiment with which Jay Matheson, owner and sound engineer at The Jam Room and bassist for The Capital City Playboys, agrees. "Many consumers take pride in their collection of vinyl records and their vintage turntables," he says. "They choose to often sit in their living room and actually appreciate the sound quality that vinyl offers."

Matheson also says that he thinks of vinyl as a "durable good," whereas a CD feels like something more disposable. The physicality of vinyl is something that makes intuitive sense to any music fan, and seems to provide a reassuring, real-world presence to the music that a massive music collection on one's hard drive can't.

And, if nothing else, the sheer expense of the pressing says something in and of itself. "It shows other musicians that you're about what you are putting out," Powell says. Music on vinyl demands to be taken seriously. // KP

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## Theatre in the Burbs

Columbia's newest performing arts theater is located in one of the most unlikely places for such a venue: the Harbison campus of Midlands Technical College sunk deep in the Columbia suburb of Irmo.

Completed in October 2010 at a cost of approximately \$6.5 million, the 400-seat Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College was built specifically as a performing arts venue in an effort both to focus the role of the Harbison Campus and help change the way people see MTC. The theater, designed by Watson Tate Savory who won a 2010 AIA Honor Award for design, lacks for nothing and is state-of-the-art in nearly every respect. Its sound system and control board is the same used for Broadway shows; its lighting system could run a stadium-tour concert; and, its dressing rooms, rehearsal space, costume and scene shops are the envy of anyone, anywhere.

Director of Theatre Operations Katie Fox is understandably proud of the sparkling new venue. Sitting in her cozy office from which she can monitor live performances both on video and through a headset to communicate with backstage personnel, Fox says the reaction to the theatre from people visiting for the first time has been unanimously positive. "Everyone who comes in is like, "Wow! This is really, really nice," Fox says. "People are blown away by the place."

Fox says the reason for the theater was twofold. Midlands Technical College wanted to "reframe the use of this campus with more of a liberal arts focus," she says. The college has other large venues, but nothing that was specifically for theatrical performances. "Secondly, people have been saying 'We need a 400-seat theatre here. That's the size we don't have.'"

Fox says the location in the suburbs presents both challenges and opportunities. "Primarily, we're going to market to the people who live in the Irmo-Chapin-Lake Murray communities who all the downtown organizations fight to get to come downtown at night," Fox says. "We don't want to supplant anything that already exists, but to supplement it."

So far, the venue's calendar has been filled with a variety of events, from professional meetings to plays to concerts. Two local groups already are calling the new theater home: the Chapin Community Theater and the Palmetto Mastersingers.

Keeping with the educational mission of the college, Fox has reached out to local school districts and anticipates hosting a number of middle and high school arts and musical performances annually. "When you're going from performing in a 'cafetorium' to what we have here, it's night and day in terms of quality," Fox says.

A website, [harbisontheatre.com](http://harbisontheatre.com), will launch in November and will feature online ticket sales in addition to the theatre's schedule. To book a performance, inquire about availability or volunteer, call Fox at 407-5003 or email [foxk@midlandstech.edu](mailto:foxk@midlandstech.edu). // **RA**

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## Rachel Borgman

There's really nothing like young art. Be it raw and edgy, or crisp and clean, fresh art offered by fledgling artists, especially when the work is *good*, holds the promise of potential; the possibility of even better things to come. Jasper takes notice of new artists on the Columbia arts scene and strives to be sure everyone is aware of the energy their new art brings.

Jasper's first ever Newly Noticed Artist is Rachel Borgman, a 23-year-old senior at the University of South Carolina who plans to graduate in the spring of 2012 with a BFA in studio art and a concentration in painting. Borgman grew up in Easley, SC and attended Greenville Technical College before coming to USC to study under David Voros and Pam Bowers. She began painting seriously while in high school, using acrylics, because they were less expensive, then moving into different mediums – mostly oils, but also sculptural materials, including welding. She studied abroad at the International School of Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture in the Umbrian hill town of Montecastello di Vibio in Italy during the summer of 2011. Borgman's work has been shown in Columbia at Vista Studios Gallery 80808, Anastasia & FRIENDS, and the Tapp's Arts Center, as well as at the Hilton Convention Center, Greenville Technical College, and Riverworks Gallery in Greenville, SC.



"Working Women" By Rachel Borgman

Borgman looks forward to living the life of a professional artist one day. "But I want to work in a community of people," she says. "I don't want to spend all my time alone." Of his protégé, Voros says, "Rachel is a fine young artist, with an exceptional natural feeling for paint and fine drawing abilities. In my experience, this is a rare combination. I am certain that if she applies herself, and continues to grow, Rachel can become an important young painter."

Jasper takes notice of Rachel Borgman and the Old World approach she brings to her art. We look forward to seeing how this young artist and her work develop and progress.

Jasper is watching you, Rachel. **No pressure.**

*"Rachel is a fine young artist, with an exceptional natural feeling for paint and fine drawing abilities. In my experience, this is a rare combination." // David Voros*

# Thomas Crouch is un Artista di Molti Mondi

By Cynthia Boiter

Huddled in a dark pub on an approaching autumn day, Thomas Crouch could just as easily be prowling the cobbled streets of Italy like so many of his artistic influences. With an outer persona that conveys dissent, Crouch has the inner animus of a philosopher. Part Jeremy Bentham, part Jacques Derrida, Crouch wears well the mask of the misunderstood – until he finds comfort in the discourse at hand. And even though he still proceeds with due caution, he happily holds forth like a dissident out of jail.

One of the great minds of our city, Thomas Crouch speaks not only with his voice but with his palette. A classically trained painter, Crouch can identify the defining moment that changed the course of his life forever. With 1989 and his senior year at Lexington High School looming, a school guidance counselor offered Crouch the opportunity to study art in Florence. Already a fine visual artist and musician, but something of an '80s rebel with a penchant for skateboarding "before it was cool," he says, "all I had to do was to finish high school there and then I could stay for another three-and-a-half years on scholarship." He jumped at the chance. "People didn't understand leather and punk rock and studs around here back then," he says. "I packed my bags, and I was gone."

So during the time in a young man's life when many might sit through uninspiring college lectures or blindly follow a predetermined path, Crouch commuted daily from the Italian countryside into Firenze and the Lorenzo de Medici School of Art. His spare time was spent traveling throughout the continent and hanging out in the Uffizi Gallery, where he logged unknown hours studying the works of Botticelli, Michelangelo, and Caravaggio. He learned feminist theory in a setting that was free from right wing talk radio references of "feminazis" and postmodernism in an environment that, due to if nothing else than to his ex-pat status, allowed him almost complete subjectivity. "The most amazing thing was being exposed to the works of the master painters, sculptors, and architects in the museums and around every street corner," Crouch says, "and realizing that what I was seeing was where western civilization and thinking began."

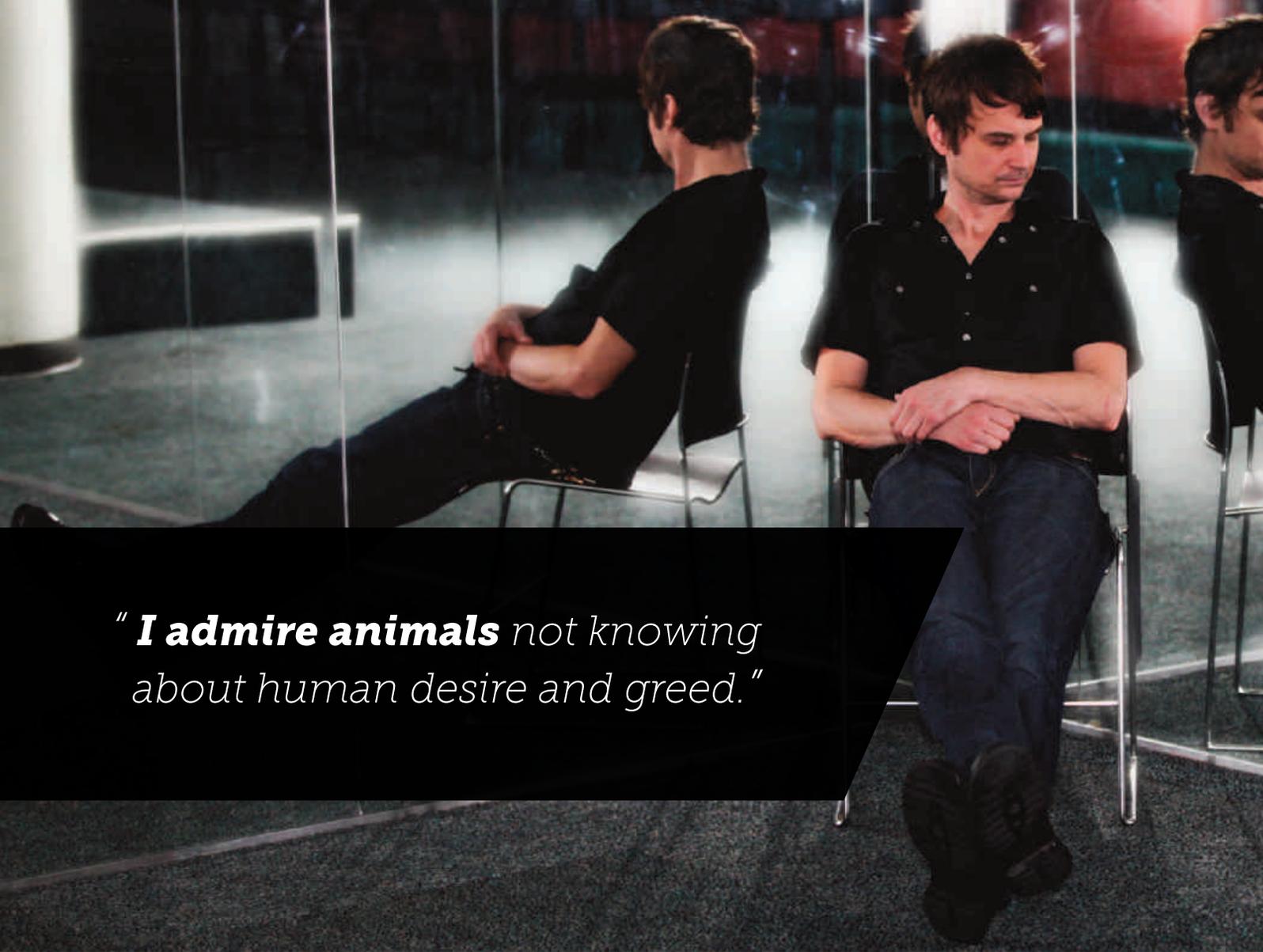
When Crouch returned to South Carolina, he did so not only on a new intellectual level but also with an Old World-inspired palette. "I came back to the states in 1993 and didn't want to be in Columbia, so I decided to go to Winthrop University. But they didn't teach oil there, and I had been painting and learning in oil in Italy."

Crouch changed from using oil paints to acrylics and noticed a distinctive change in the intensity of his colors. "It was really noticeable; the colors are so different, so saturated," he says, "I didn't like the brightness of acrylics and, in reality, I should have looked into the school better. I was coming from figurative painting and going into an abstract, acrylics-heavy situation. They didn't understand where I was coming from up there. In Italy, I had spent a lot of time studying theory and art history and had learned about a lot of postmodernists and fine arts and how to apply that to abstract expressionism. But there was nobody up there to further that discussion," he says. "So, I failed out."

Crouch tried two semesters in Columbia at the University of South Carolina but couldn't find anyone to work with in oils here either. Realizing he was experiencing something of a culture shock, he left the University and Columbia altogether and headed for New York City. "My sister lives in New York and works as an assistant fashion designer there, so I would go up there every now and then, do some building maintenance work to make money, and then come home. One day in 1994 or '95, I went up there and just didn't come back."

Crouch stayed in New York for about a year, he says, doing a little drawing, not much painting, but making some cash and visiting the myriad art museums the city offers. "I basically just got back into living in the U.S.," he says. "I did some traveling and then eventually said, 'screw it,' and came back to Columbia and petitioned USC to get back into school. After that, I did great – Dean's List and everything."





***“ I admire animals not knowing about human desire and greed.”***

Photo by Mark Green

It was about this time that Crouch began working with local artist Phillip Mullen, whose large color blocks he admires, and it was from Mullen that Crouch feels he learned some of his most important technique. “He taught me to be succinct and direct about what I was doing,” Crouch says. “I’m sloppy, but he’s not. I learned about the importance of using tape and crispness from him, and that has allowed me to get a kind of organic contrast to my paintings – darkness and light, drips, and a crisp straight line – that I might not have found otherwise.”

When tracing the evolution of his art, Crouch says he has abandoned the political slants of his youth, though his values haven’t changed, and he still enjoys figurative work. He sees in postmodernism a similarity to digital images and has explored the concept of painting as clip art, primarily because it “would show the transparency of the political process by picking up the falseness of political rhetoric, which,” he says, “is a very American way of doing things.”

For a while, Crouch explored large-format painting, but, as is often the case, he ran out of room in his home studio, so he started doing smaller pieces and often concentrating on animals. “As a human, I look up to animals for their constancy,” he says. “I admire animals not knowing about human desire and greed.” Fascinated by animals’ places within human society and the prospect of figuratively putting animals in human spaces, Crouch has recently explored painting animals – birds, especially crows, wolves, baboons – on abandoned blueprints for the Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center on the campus of USC that he happened upon years ago. The resulting images are evocative and compelling. “Space is such a human creation,” he says. “Animals don’t even think of it!”

Of the great artists who have gone before him, Crouch singles out the late 16th – early 17th century Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio as a major

influence, citing Caravaggio's use of dramatic lighting to realistically portray both the emotion and physicality of the human state. Like Caravaggio, Crouch will blatantly use the mechanism of an X when painting, a technique most often used in concert with a marked form of chiaroscuro, a tonal contrasting of light and dark, sometimes referred to as Tenebrism. Crouch references Caravaggio's Conversion on the Way to Damascus – in which Saint Paul is said to fall from his horse as the voice of God questions him – as a personal favorite. "If it was any other pre-Renaissance painting, it would have been very grandiose," he says. "But the thing with Caravaggio was that he painted it like the horse saw it, contrasting the light with another movement to make that characteristic X."

Contrasts appear frequently in Crouch's work, whether he is distinguishing light from dark or utilizing an unusual color scheme, oranges and blues, for example. "For the most part," he says, "I like to use a very small color palette – yellow, ochre, umber, maybe blue and crimson. It's what I learned in Italy and it stayed with me."

Crouch is also taken by Caravaggio's unguarded depictions of the story, as well as by tales of the painter's personality. "Caravaggio was a hell-raiser," Crouch grins and nods approvingly. "It's ironic because all his commissions were for the church and rich people, but he was a wild dude – and he was gay. In fact, he often used his boyfriend as his model. He once killed a guy in a sword fight and had to leave Rome," because the Pope issued a warrant for his arrest and execution.

Despite his admiration for Caravaggio's art and flamboyant lifestyle – an attraction that appears to be based on aesthetics and an appreciation of authenticity – Crouch's way of life is decidedly less dramatic. The never-married 39-year-old owns his own home and, when he isn't painting, he is typically making music – his most recent band is the Mercy Shot, though he has a rock band résumé that goes back to when he was 15 years old – or cooking meals at Hunter Gatherer Brewery and Alehouse, where he has worked for almost 10 years. "I don't think of myself as a foodie, and I have no formal training in food – I learned from the people I worked with," he says. But the artist does recognize a similarity between painting and preparing food. "There's a similar lexicon applied to each," he says, and then turns the conversation toward a discursive examination of the Spice Trail and its influences on Jamaican and Indian cuisines.



Photo by Mark Green

That's because, more than anything, Crouch is an intellectual spirit in the body of a man too young to be a hippie and too old to be a hipster – not that he would easily comply with either label – but he is certainly not of the time period in which the rest of us live today. While some might peg him as a Renaissance man – and though in many ways he looks and behaves the part – Crouch is without affectation and would likely reject that title as well. The artist simply seems to approach life from the perspective of a scholar contemplating a riddle with the complete confidence that he eventually will solve it. He doesn't take for granted the fact that everything is a clue. "Traveling through Europe and to Moscow enabled me to realize how big and diverse the world is and that people of different cultures, for the most part, share the same common humanitarian values and interests and are just curious to learn," he says.

Though in so many ways already accomplished, Crouch is intelligent enough to know that there is always more to be learned and assimilated into one's life, and one's art. As his body of work grows, the benefactors of his continued education are the patrons who follow his progress and document his evolution on the walls of their own galleries. ♪

## Columbia's Chapter of Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School is in

By Ron Aiken

Learning to draw the human form from a live model is a practice as old as humanity. From ancient Greece to medieval art schools to today's universities, gathering around a model – usually nude – to learn and sketch the body's unique proportion from various angles and poses is an invaluable tool for any artist, and the practice has survived relatively unchanged through today. As instructive and valuable as the formal exercise of life drawing, or figure drawing, is, however, there's always room for improvement – and fun – which is where the brief history of Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School begins.

Begun in 2004 by model/artist Molly Crabapple in Brooklyn, New York, Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School is now a regular monthly event in more than 100 cities around the country and world, including a chapter here in Columbia. Billed as a combination of cabaret, drawing, and drinking, a typical Dr. Sketchy's session is part social event and part art class, combining the formal world of studio training with the edgy world of live burlesque – and adding a healthy splash of alcohol, music, and fun for good measure.

Columbia chapter president Ashleigh Rivers, who uses the stage name Lola la Rouge while emceeing the monthly events, first learned of Dr. Sketchy while living in Asheville. "I went to massage therapy school in Asheville and was active in a belly-dancing troupe there," says Rivers, a graduate of Irmo High School and Brevard College. "A dancer friend of mine started the Dr. Sketchy's there, and, right before I was leaving to come home to Columbia, she asked if I could start one here. So I looked into it, and it wasn't easy but it was doable, so I did it."

Rivers held the first Dr. Sketchy's event in Columbia in June of 2009, and, 25 sessions later, it's still going strong. "Our turnout at the first event was amazing," Rivers says. "We probably had 22 people, which is really, really good."

The format of a Dr. Sketchy's session follows a traditional life drawing class, with timed poses of varying lengths, but that's where the similarities end. Rivers employs local DJ



Photo by Mark Green

Deft Key for each session to play music for the performer and artists, along with a photographer to document the event (first Joshua Beard, then Forrest Clonts and Mark Green) for inclusion on the chapter's Facebook page (user name: drsketchyscola). Prizes (courtesy of national sponsors What Katy Did and Baby Tattoo) are awarded for the best drawings during the one- and five-minute poses, another for the 10-minute pose, and the last is a model's choice. While some chapters incorporate drinking games into the process, Columbia's is a BYOB affair.

The venue for Dr. Sketchy's sessions has changed over time. It started at the home of local arts supporter Robin Dial. As it grew, it moved to Gotham Bagel. After that closed, it moved a few doors down Main Street to the White Mule before coming full circle back to Dial's Shandon home. "When we first started at Robin's house,



Photo by Mark Green

it was a social event rather than an artistic event," Rivers says. "We were happy to be at the White Mule, but there it was a mixture of patrons and artists, so we had to be careful with the kind of things we did there because, with patrons, it becomes kind of voyeuristic, which is not the idea. You know, cell phones coming out and pictures, which is not cool. Our attendance dropped off a little with the economy and other factors, so we've changed back to Robin's house, and it's been great. We may have another venue change in 2012, a more permanent one, so we'll see how it goes."

Getting the word out about the shows wasn't easy at first, but Rivers had lots of help. "I had posters up every month with photos of the model," Rivers says. "Joshua Beard helped me out with the photos and posters, and they looked fantastic. He was able to get lots of people's attention and interested in coming."

From there, buzz grew in the local arts scene, and both Columbia's mainstream and alternative art scenes took notice. "Blue Sky came to one of our sessions," Rivers says. "You never know who is going to come; our artists really run the gamut from amateurs to USC students to professionals. We've had Charles Akins, a local graphic designer, Denys Proteau, who does cutouts, Adam Kelly, a high school art teacher, Alexandria Baker, who has since moved to Charleston, and Lyon Hill, an internationally known puppeteer and puppet maker who is also an

amazing artist. Anyone is welcome; we've even had people drawing for the first time, people who come just to offer their perspectives, and people who have come to do free-writing off of the scene."

Attendance has varied since it began, but an average session consists of around 10-15 artists, Rivers says. "We're very fortunate in that we have a good core group who are there most every time."

The cost for attendees is \$10, \$7 for students, and sessions in Columbia are held the first Tuesday of the month. Artists are responsible for their own supplies. And while the models are paid a nominal fee to appear, tips are highly encouraged.

Dr. Sketchy's alternative models, in fact, have been a huge key to its dramatic success here and abroad. Rather than employing traditional art school models, Dr. Sketchy's draws its models from the ranks of burlesque dancers, drag queens, roller derby girls, and similar edgy worlds. Models each choose their own theme for the night, with three costume changes. "The biggest challenge always is finding a model," Rivers says. "I try to find one who has a talent so she can perform at intermission and help her gain an audience. If that doesn't happen, I try to find someone else who can perform at intermission, and if that doesn't happen, it's stupid human tricks, which are always fun."

Locally, models have come from roller derby, the Hash House Harriers running club, burlesque and belly-dancers, professional alternative models, singers (including Rivers' sister, Lorrie, who will be the model for the December session) and more. "I've had a few repeat models, the ones with the biggest draw," Rivers says. "Our first model was my friend who started it in Asheville, Ashley Bennett, and she was terrific. She had such great stage presence. She actually stripped down to pasties for one session at Gotham; we made sure people on the outside didn't come in. She got a great reception. The people with the most stage presence are so hard to get back because they're so busy."

While in some areas models will bare all, that's not likely to happen here anytime soon. "We don't have nudity here; we're still Columbia, South Carolina, and not Atlanta or New York," Rivers says.

River says the benefits for the artists – not to mention the fun she has staging the events – by themselves provide ample reward. "I've considered getting someone to help me with it or turning it over because there are some months when it's difficult, but it's my baby," she says. "It's different from what anyone's seen, a new concept all around, and it's really fun to be a part of."

If you're interested in learning more, email Rivers at [drsketchyscola@gmail.com](mailto:drsketchyscola@gmail.com) or visit the national website, which includes a Columbia page, at [drsketchy.com](http://drsketchy.com).

Photo by Mark Green



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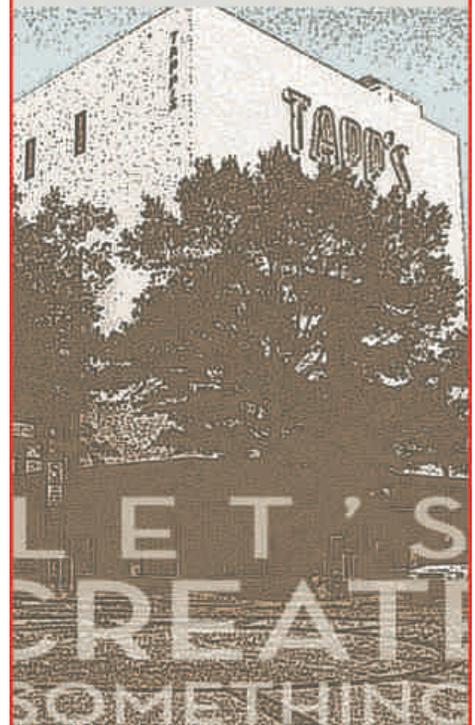
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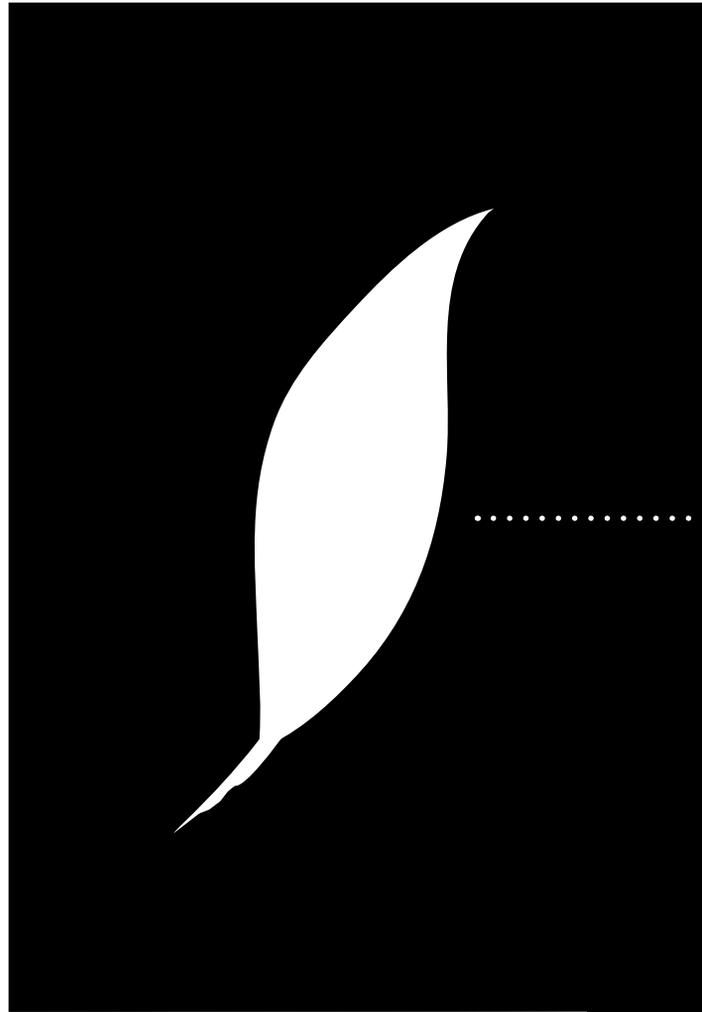
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CENTERFOLD **CHRIS BICKEL**



# Chris Bickel: Columbia's Dark Lord?

By Kyle Petersen

He's made stage entrances royally hoisted on a platform carried by his able-bodied underlings. And that trash littering the stage? It's gay porn. He encourages his audiences to smash stuff and scream at the top of their lungs. Dressed as a preacher, he's brazenly doled out open-mouth kisses from a booth at an area fund-raiser. He's hosted a private party to see how many naked humans he could stuff into a phone booth. And he can be spotted alternately in a tidy black suit along the quiet sidelines of an event and costumed as a monster from European folklore accosting pedestrians on the streets of our capital. Columbia artist Chris Bickel is an enigma, and you'd be hard-pressed to fit together his many disparate qualities – from observer, philosopher, and musicologist to punk, satirist, and provocateur. Adored, even worshiped, by many, he's also widely reviled. And he couldn't care less which way you swing.

Primarily known over the years as the front man of abrasive and political hardcore bands like In/Humanity and Guyana Punch Line, as well as his experimental music solo project Anakrid, Bickel also has become nearly infamous in the city as the rollicking master of ceremonies for Mr. B's Goodtime Karaoke Explosion at the Art Bar, his leadership of the queer-metal, politics-meets-partying rock band Confederate Fagg, his long career in some of the city's best record stores, or for the any number of disruptive, quirky, unsettling, and oddly unifying pranks and spectacles he has taken part in over the years. While his penchant for controversy and blunt, often outrageous, comments and actions have led to a somewhat checkered reputation, it is hard to deny that Bickel is the kind of unique and offbeat artist and performer that can serve as a talisman for an arts scene as quirky and diverse as Columbia's.

Of course, Bickel demurs when people bring up his status as any sort of leader or force behind Columbia's underground. "I'm just really bored [a lot]," he explains. "I have to be constantly distracted. ... I need to have a million distractions just to stave off depression. If I'm not constantly working on something, I fall off a bit. If I can involve people in that diversion and if it enhances their experience in this town, great, because this town needs a more enhanced experience."

Throughout his various activities, Bickel's fascination with "the extremes of highbrow and lowbrow," as he puts it, is evident. Whether singing "Free Bird" on the steps of the State House grounds while protesting the Confederate

flag or scoring horror movies using found-sound sonic collages, there is an endless collusion of the cerebral and the physical, the radical and the silly, the antagonistic and the unifying, in what he does.

## In/Humanity

Bickel first came on the Columbia scene with In/Humanity, an innovative hardcore band he started with guitarist Paul Swanson (the band would have a rotating cast of other musicians throughout its lifespan) while both were still attending the University of South Carolina. During the 1990s, this brash, oddly engaging punk band shook up the music scene in town and also had a presence in hardcore circles around the country. "At first we didn't know what we were doing," Bickel admits, "but as it went on we were trying to push every boundary we could do as far discordance and speed and even with the lyrics, trying to push buttons."

Among the things In/Humanity introduced to the hardcore world was the oxymoronic genre "emo-violence." "It was a joke," Bickel says smiling. "We were poking fun at all the pigeon holing of things [within hardcore]." The term nonsensically combined the two extremes of the splintering hardcore scene and, while it doesn't really describe the music at all, it does point to the particular sensibility and self-awareness that would become characteristic of Bickel's artistic endeavors. The term stuck to the band, and, even today, bands will claim it as well.

From the very beginning, In/Humanity was an important part of the city's scene but more as a counterweight to other groups rather than a direct competitor. The band appeared on the 1992 Please No Profanity compilation, which also featured future megastars Hootie & the Blowfish, but "we were definitely the opposite of what they embraced and strove for," Bickel explains. "We didn't want money; we didn't even really particularly want people to like us."

Hardcore punk rock has a different set of attitudes towards what constitutes success. It is not the sort of music that lends itself to casual fans. An offshoot of punk rock that is noisier, faster, and angrier, the songs deemphasize melody and hooks in favor of pounding rhythms, brutal distortion, and screaming, rarely comprehensible lyrics. Bickel is well-aware of the "limited audience" for such



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Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

work. "Most people are going to listen to it and think it sounds like garbage, blaring noise," he admits. "It's too fast to make it out, and you can't understand the lyrics; you hear frequencies that are very uncomfortable to the ears—most people won't pay money for that."

In/Humanity's sets were often only 15 or 20 minutes long, but they rumbled forward with such intensity and explosiveness that they left the group fairly well exhausted. Bickel likens the performance to primal scream therapy, a chance to let "everything you have built up inside of you to be released." Coming from this perspective, Bickel says he and Swanson just had "certain ideas we wanted to get out, certain things musically [that they wanted to do]." The appeal to others was a secondary factor, even as the band went on tours and released two full-lengths (*The Nutty Antichrist* in 1996 and *The History Behind Mystery* in 1997) along with a slew of EPs.

The band became almost as famous for its esoteric antics as for its music though. After releasing their first EP (a 7") at their release show and selling 300 copies, the band members decided they didn't like the recording and wouldn't let any more people hear it. Instead of simply tossing the pressing, though, Bickel and Swanson turned the records into a different kind of art. "We took compass needles and gauged out different words of phrases into them and gave them away [at shows], even though they were unplayable," Bickel explains.

In addition to the inaccessibility of the music, In/Humanity's performances also made the band rather unlikable. "We really went out of our way to make people hate us a lot of times," Bickel explains as he gleefully recalls a time when he re-appropriated another local band's gimmicks. The routine the other band was using involved feeding cereal to the audience members during a cereal-themed song—"it was really corny, so we just wanted to make fun of the whole shtick," Bickel remembers. So, the band performed the same routine at one of their shows—with a twist. "What the people didn't know was that I had in advance gone to a bait store and bought a huge Styrofoam cooler of live crickets," he says fondly. Events transpired pretty much how you would imagine from there. "People just went nuts and were so angry," Bickel says with a sense of accomplishment. "People were even waiting around to beat us up after the show, and the club told us never to come back."

Bickel works hard to temper the more antagonistic aspects of his past with a more sobering view of what he was striving for. "We really thought we were doing something then...but we were just pissing people off," he concludes. Still, Bickel's enthusiasm for disruption and getting people out of their comfort zones is clear.

Clearly, there is also a degree of sophistication and intellect at work beneath the chaos and abrasiveness of the band in a genre that often seems to boil down thoughts and emotions into simple, brute forces. From the beginning, it seems that Bickel had a taste for the odd, mixing in more angsty tunes with songs that feature extended jokes ("Teenage Suicide-Just Do It!"), political commentary ("Southern Swastika," "Too Drunk To Molotov") and song sequences telling murder mystery stories (the last three songs on Side A of *The History Behind The Mystery*). Even though lyrics in hardcore are often buried in the song, Bickel went out of his way to include lyric sheets in every release the band did. He also did the album's artwork and wrote extensive liner notes in a style that mirrored the group's self-aware mix of irony and pathos.

The band toured hard, and eventually won a national following in punk circles. *Maximum Rock and Roll*, perhaps the most influential punk 'zine at the time, began writing about In/Humanity and, later, *Guyana Punch Line*. Within certain circles, In/Humanity became kind of famous. However, around 1997 or so, Bickel and Swanson decided to move forward with a new project.

## Guyana Punch Line

Named after the infamous punch line in Jonestown, Guyana, *Guyana Punch Line* maintains the core partnering of Paul Swanson and Chris Bickel but adds a conceptual twist. Not just a band, the group would also be a vehicle for espousing the Bickel-created philosophy of "smashism." "I always wanted to have a band centered around a philosophy that was more than just a band," Bickel explains. "I wanted [the band] to embody something, a sort of live thought."

The word comes from an unreleased song by the obscure 1970s rock band *The Screemers* and didn't have any particular meaning, which Bickel seized on. "It always struck me as a brilliant word, so I sort of obsessed over it for awhile." He eventually wrote some "dorky manifestos" about what the term meant, incorporating Dadaism and other absurdist philosophies with radical politics in a "melting pot of ideas."

Musically, *Guyana Punch Line* was just as uncompromising as In/Humanity had been, calling themselves "an antimusical terror unit," but the group built naturally on Swanson's and Bickel's prior success. All three of their full-length albums would be released via *Prank Records*, a San Francisco-based punk label that also helped with In/Humanity's later recordings. The band toured and recorded through 2003.

## Anakrid

Around the time Guyana Punch Line got going, Bickel's solo experimental electronic project also began getting some press. "I'd been doing it all along, but for years it was a very personal thing and I'd been just doing it for myself, occasionally dubbing off tapes for friends," he says. He was surprised by the largely positive reception he got, though, and one friend went so far as to suggest he should apply for a grant from the Arts Commission—which he went on to apply for and win, paving the way for Anakrid to become a more official project. Now with 10 albums and a few film scores released under the moniker, Bickel now considers it his main musical endeavor.

If possible, the music of Anakrid might be even more difficult to listen to than his hardcore recordings. The sounds that Bickel likes are pointedly unfamiliar and uncomfortable to the ears, as he uses electronic manipulation and found sound recordings to create abstract musical landscapes. "A lot of it does come out scary sounding, because that's just where my head is at," Bickel explains, "but ... I wanted to create something that really sounded kind of alien. ... I want to take sounds and twist them in such a way that it isn't recognizable, so you can't always get a clear mental image of what [instruments] were creating the music." Such a lack of recognition, he suggests, is inherently scary for most people who are afraid of the unknown.

## Confederate Fagg

Bickel would briefly play with a slightly more palatable punk band called Newgenics, but his local rise to fame would be as the front man for a conceptually well-honed but musically sloppy band that specialized in the kind of glam-metal popularized by Twisted Sister and Mötley Crüe. What made the band stand out was its electrifying shtick—members dressed in queer clothing, sang songs in protest of the Confederate flag, and exulted in the excesses of rock-and-roll debauchery on stage.

The name for the band came to Bickel first as something he wanted to use, and an impromptu jam session with longtime scene member Jay Matheson led to the band's formation. The group never took itself too seriously, and their only album came from a single alcohol-fueled night in the studio, but they were a huge hit, something that amused the group to no end. "We thought it was funny, since we were this super-shitty band packing every club in Columbia," Bickel recalls. More surprising still was the eclecticism of the crowd – young and old, black and white, frat guys and hipster – everybody, apparently, loved the blustery rock and roll and quirky characters

the band had created, despite their very provocative mix of politics, challenges to gender and sexual norms, and Spinal Tap-esque level of lyrical sophistication.

In an odd, seemingly paradoxical way, Confederate Fagg fit right in with the idea behind the less-accessible work of In/Humanity and Guyana Punch Line. "It accomplished a lot of the things that I and a lot of other people wanted to accomplish with punk rock, which was this idea of unity," Bickel says. "Ultimately there's not a lot of unity in punk rock because it appeals to a very narrow base." Confederate Fagg, on the other hand, had "all these [different] people in one room, just having a really good time."

## Mr. B

If there is one thing that Chris Bickel is more known for than Confederate Fagg, it the Goodtime Karaoke Explosion he throws at the Art Bar each Wednesday night. After accidentally discovering the joys of karaoke at a friend's birthday party, Bickel lamented the lack of good karaoke nights in Columbia, so he decided to start his own. With an extensive song selection and a high-energy room like the Art Bar, Wednesday nights at the Art Bar features the kinds of enormous crowds and strong sense of community that the town is too often not credited with having.

Somewhat ironically now, the series was initially meant to be an occasional or one-off event. "The Art Bar didn't even want to do karaoke at all – I sort of had to twist their arm to let me do it," Bickel remembers. "And I think they only wanted to do it once a month, on their worse night, but after the first night, they asked me to come back and do it every week." Aside from a brief break last year where Bickel thought about pulling the plug and was met with an outpouring of support and praise, the series has been going strong for seven years.

## The Vinyl Side

In addition to all of these creative outlets, Bickel is also intimately tied to the record store scene in Columbia. One of his first jobs in town was at Manifest Records, and he would go on to start his own store, New Clear Days with Dan Cook in the early 1990s. New Clear Days specialized in punk rock and built quite a reputation for its well-curated inventory, but was difficult to keep afloat in a city like Columbia. After Cook left to join the staff at the Free Times, Bickel moved to the store to Five Points for awhile before selling it off and joining Papa Jazz as the head of the vinyl department.

Responsible for the amazing, high-quality selection of vinyl at one of the best record stores in the Southeast, Bickel travels around buying records from private collectors and also supervises submissions that come through the doors. He's developed a strong acumen for assessing vinyl over the years and has developed a wildly diverse collection. "When I started my taste were pretty narrow, but as you go along you learn about other things – now my tastes are really broad and I want to buy everything that's cool," he explains. Although he works hard at keeping the store's catalog top-notch, which it is, out-of-town collectors will come in and often spend thousands of dollars on the records Bickel painstakingly procured.

## Bickel About Town

Bickel shies away from the term "performance artist," but many of his activities probably would fit in that category. One summer he went around to various bars persuading people to form human pyramids, which he photographed and posted online. Another time he took pictures of people "outing" their crushes and posted the pictures on Facebook. "I like these things to be disruptive – not necessarily in a bad way – but that takes [people] out of what they are used to doing," he says. "At first they are really skeptical about it, but then they end up having a good time and having something to talk about for the next week."

This past Christmas, Bickel got a group of people together to celebrate the pagan Christmas ritual involving Krampus, the mythical creature that serves as a sort of dark counterpart to Santa Claus. "He was sort of a devil that punishes the bad kids," Bickel says. The idea came from some footage from small alpine towns where the celebration still exists, and Bickel was inspired by the message. "I wanted to pay homage to this neo-pagan tradition, because it seemed like a great antidote to this horrible sense of entitlement in the world we live in – we need something scary like that to keep kids in line."

In lieu of a more traditional ceremony, though, Bickel merely donned the grotesque mask of Krampus and walked the streets of Columbia, confronting people with his "identity" and talking about the tradition. He'll do it again this year and continue to "keep it under the radar a little and still have an element of chaos."

Which is really what Bickel is always doing for Columbia's art and music scene – keeping it going, under the radar, with just the right kind of chaos. 🍌

## Healing Our Nation's Heroes' Hidden Wounds

By Margey Bolen

*"I feel like everyone can see what I've done. I can't live this way."*

Lance Corporal Mills Palmer Bigham  
April 8, 1986 – October 19, 2009

On October 18, 2008, Lance Corporal Mills Palmer Bigham returned home from his last tour of duty in Iraq with the Marine Corps. Suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Lance Cpl. Bigham made futile attempts to access treatment for his anger, depression, and war trauma at the local Veterans Affairs hospital. His sister, Anna Bigham, stood close by watching her brother spiral into a dark depression, desperate for help. She did everything in her power to help her brother access the care he needed, to no avail. On October 19, 2009, Lance Cpl. Bigham placed a gun to his forehead and took his own life, a desperate act to escape the emotional pain inflicted on him by the horrors of war.

After her brother's death, Anna made a decision to dedicate her life to saving our nation's heroes who, like her brother, suffer from psychological war injuries. On January 1, 2010, she founded Hidden Wounds in honor of Lance Cpl. Bigham. Today, Hidden Wounds stands as the first and only organization of its kind with a mission to provide interim and emergency counseling services to ensure the psychological health and well-being of combat veterans and their families. It also aims to break the stigma of psychological injury within the military system and to teach families how to recognize symptoms of PTSD and depression so they can guide their veterans toward care.

Anna saw an unmet need, not only for her brother but also for the roughly 160,000 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who suffer psychological stress injuries. An estimated 19 of them commit suicide each day in the United States. These veterans who take their lives on the home-front account for twice the number of casualties per year from the war in Iraq.

Anna built Hidden Wounds as a safety net that provides support to those returning veterans with psychological injuries as they work through the system to access care. Hidden Wounds has set up several programs to help these veterans, including a network of psychologists within a seven- to 10-mile radius of every war veteran in South Carolina and a 24-hour hotline to support soldiers and their families in times of crisis.

Through Hidden Wounds, Anna has proven that Lance Cpl. Bigham's tragic death was not in vain. Since her brother's death, Hidden Wounds has provided counseling services for more than 240 soldiers and given over 1,765 veteran peer hours. "The greatest weapon we have is the ability to help each other," she says.

**To donate to Hidden Wounds visit  
HiddenWounds.org. If you are a military  
veteran or family member in need of  
assistance, please call 1-888-4HW-HERO.**



Photo by Thomas Crouch

## Art + Sports = Drè

By Kristine Hartvigsen

Like the robust center on a college football team, Drè Lopez can be an intimidating fellow. His bearded, no-nonsense game face belies the thoughtful fine artist at the center of Columbia's Piensa Art Company, which specializes in distinctive, nonconventional forms of illustration, graphic design, and writing services with a youth-culture bent. Over the past four University of South Carolina football seasons, the popularity of Lopez's art – particularly his series of Gamecock football posters – has grown faster than the nationally ranked SEC team has changed starting quarterbacks.

"When I moved here, I didn't know about the Gamecocks, but I was a sports fan," Lopez explains. "My brother went to USC, and most of my friends are USC fans." What quickly struck Lopez was the enduring love and respect Gamecock fans had for their team through thick and thin, no matter what. "It's easy for me to pull for them. As things have built up, little by little, it's very much how the fans appreciate it (Gamecock football) and what it is. It's a labor of love within the cause. It's real. I get it."

The poster project took off shortly after Lopez developed a print advertisement for a client, Devine Eyes, to run in the Free Times newspaper. It was football season, so the client wanted to include that theme in its ad. A staffer took notice and suggested that the Gamecock-related elements of the ad be transformed into a poster. The Free Times subsequently ran the posters in its publication, *The Sideline*, published for every USC home game for the past four years.

"The posters have been gathering more attention within the last two seasons," Lopez notes, adding that last year, when posted on Facebook, one of the posters gained 250 fans in a single day. "It just flew. Now every time I put one up, it gets constant support. I have sold quite a few prints of it. I love it. The people have reacted really well to it."

At 33, Lopez is the elder partner in Piensa Art Company, which he has run for more than five years with his younger brother, Sammy, and friend R. Chambers LeHeup. "Piensa," he says, is the Spanish word for "think."

Many on the local art scene truly took notice of Piensa this past summer, when the partners held a benefit for the Red Cross Japanese Tsunami Relief Fund as part of its release of a new comic book titled *Heavy Feather Falls*. The June 25th event at Tapp's Arts Center included related exhibits by several Columbia artists. *Heavy Feather Falls* is set in feudal Japan and written entirely in haiku form by LeHeup. Sammy Lopez did the illustrations, while the book's cover and colors were Lopez's contribution.

*Heavy Feather Falls* is the second of three books produced this year by Piensa, in addition to *The Heroes of Santa Moreno* and, most recently, *God Will Save Me*, which debuted at Cola-Con in September at the Columbia Museum of Art.



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A TIGER BY  
THE NECK.**

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As a young, small business in the Midlands, Piensa continues to inspire, not only with its distinctive approach to visual expression but through its ongoing practice of raising money for worthy causes in conjunction with its shows. The partners followed up tsunami relief with their latest cause, Hidden Wounds, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping military personnel dealing with combat stress injuries. For his November "tailgate" show sponsored by Jasper magazine, Lopez hopes to contribute to Hidden Wounds.

"There's nothing more American than football, so I thought it would make sense to most football fans to want to give towards our troops, their families, and their continuing battles at home," he says. "They fight, sacrifice, and die for America and don't get the proper help once they return home. All in all, we all want to be able to help out at several points throughout our lives and careers, so it will most likely be something that you will see PIENSA involved with as we move further."

As a self-taught artist, Lopez is driven to study and experiment constantly. The work he puts in is obvious, and he's been included in the Columbia Museum of Art's Contemporaries' Artist of the Year show for three years. "That is a great honor," Lopez says. "Obviously, the museum is the pre-eminent arts hub in South Carolina." He admits, however, to conflicts related to competition.

"My drive and motivation is that I want to be the best," he explains. "I realize there are so many ridiculously talented people out there. And I want to be better than them."

Lopez admires many local artists. His favorites right now are Thomas Crouch, Whitney LeJeune, and Lyon Hill: "I think Thomas Crouch is a great painter. His technique is great. I also respect how Whitney LeJeune does everything. It excites me to see what she is going to do next. And Lyon Hill – he is amazing. I love his work and his range. It's criminal that some people are just finding out about him. I think he is one of the best artists that this place has. I am glad he is beginning to get some exposure."

He's also quick to compliment his brother, Sammy: "He has had a natural spark from the beginning. He has an in-touch sort of mind that people connect with very easily."

Lopez recognizes that some of his darker works are not for everybody and takes no offense. He understands the market here and keeps a pragmatic business stance. "We are in a conservative market, but we are not a conservative company. We make methodical decisions. It's a careful balance. We are trying to be business savvy without alienating everyone, but at the same time, we want to stay

true to our vision," he says. "The one thing I can say about Columbia is that just about every time I have thought I was about to put something out that was going to be controversial or outlandish, the response from people has been nothing but positive." The people who come to me are the people who want to do something different. They want to separate themselves from the norm."

When it comes to self-publishing comic book titles, Lopez is proud to say Piensa funded Heavy Feather Falls itself and sold out its first printing. Creative freedom is essential when the partners are their own clients. "We like to have control of what we do. Everything just works. It can be a pain in the ass. It can be tedious. But the ability to do what we do for us – that liberty – is great," Lopez explains. "For now, it works. We get to dictate when and how we work and to express whatever the fuck we want to express and don't have to worry about an editor trying to censor us for content."

Lopez is justifiably proud of the niche Piensa Art Company is carving for itself.

"If I were to die tomorrow, I could be at peace because of our level of quality. How we handle stuff cannot be denied. As much as you may not like what we do, you have to respect us," Lopez says. "This is my passion. This is what I am. I am always an artist. I have always known that." 

Lopez's Gamecock posters can be viewed online at [www.piensaartcompany.com](http://www.piensaartcompany.com) or on the Piensa Art Company studio page on Facebook. An online store is in development.

## Caroline Lewis Jones Loves Herself and is Glad

By Bonnie Boiter-Jolley



Photo by Scott Bilby

Caroline Lewis Jones told her parents that she wanted to be a professional dancer when she was twelve years old. Now at 30, the performer, choreographer, and teacher whose impressive career has led her to New York City, Tokyo, and Los Angeles, among other exciting places, is back in South Carolina and stronger and smarter than ever. The powerhouse still has no room for “trying” in her vocabulary, only “doing”.

Known today for her raw, emotional and athletic movement, Columbia native Lewis Jones began her dance training, like so many others in the area, at the Calvert Brodie School of Dance. At a young age, Lewis Jones was drawn to tap because she “loved to bang [her] feet all over the ground.” Intrigued by what she deemed the “harder,” and more “new and fresh” movement her sister was learning, the young mover soon broke ranks to audition for and join the performing company Southern Strut. Lewis Jones asserts that this was where she made many of the best friends she has to this day.

At the age of 19, Lewis Jones began working with renowned choreographer Mia Michaels. She credits Michaels’ high expectations and the emotional requirements of the work with allowing her to really discover herself. A huge influence on her work, Lewis Jones says of Michaels, “She would push us to limits of joy, exhaustion, humility, and take my soul to the most insecure places.”

Lewis Jones’s work with Brook Notary in Notario Dance Company in NYC left a different but equally important stamp on her philosophy. She has only positive reflections on the four years she spent with the small company where she says she felt respected, important, and loved. These feelings play a large role in the way she engages with her students today. Along with Michaels and Notary, Lewis Jones says Nancy Giles, owner of the Southern Strut, was a major influence in her training and still remains her dance mentor. Not only did Giles teach her that she had to work for what she wanted, but she also instilled confidence in the young dancer, simply by believing in her. Lewis Jones, who is now constantly on the go teaching all over the country, says that if she can teach her students to love themselves and what they do, she feels as though she has accomplished something.

Along with love comes respect and Lewis Jones feels that, particularly for dancers, this respect demands a responsibility to one’s self and body. Nutrition plays a huge role in her life philosophy and she believes that a consistent regimen of exercise and a diet of natural and whole foods can help maximize a person’s potential and prevent disease. Lewis Jones says her mission in dance is to help dancers to be healthier. “I see a lot of talent,” she says “but they cannot sustain it.” Though she has always been health conscious, Lewis Jones admits that it wasn’t until after her mother’s death from a 17 year battle with cancer in 2005, that she really started to take a health initiative. Lewis Jones calls her mom’s death the “largest challenge” she has faced, but rather than letting the experience bring darkness into her life, she says it made her “want to take over the world.” Fueled by this determination, Lewis Jones began work on “Finding My Way,” a one woman show in tribute to her mother, Joan Hightower Lewis. Working in solitude, the artist recalls



*"To be an artist, **you must really love yourself.**"*

Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

spending three months in the studio, recreating the final days of her mother's life. "My mom was my everything," Lewis Jones remembers passionately, and calls her death "the most beautifully sad moment" of her life. Her work resulted in a reaffirmed belief in her artistry and what she views as her best and favorite work on stage.

Back in Columbia for seven years now, Jones reflects on how her life here differs from her life in New York City. "NYC is Art," she says, but she enjoys the fact that here, grown up Caroline can have a house, a car, a yard and a garden, and maybe even a family soon. Though Lewis Jones believes that change is in store for her hometown, she mourns the fact that she sees the same people at every arts event. While she loves the intimacy that comes with knowing her audience, she perceives that Columbia "wants and needs more." She calls for suburbanites to discover the abundance of talent in the city.

Among this talent is Unbound, the company Lewis Jones co-founded with close friend Susan Dabney in 2008. The group was originally intended to be a home for trained dancers who wanted to perform while maintaining their

day jobs, but over the years, the company has evolved with its founders. The differing but complimentary backgrounds, personalities and artistic styles of the two women are what Lewis Jones says make the company work. "We're like night and day," she says. Of her own choreographic style, Lewis Jones says she leads with her heart. She believes everything must have a focus and asks her dancers to reach within themselves to find the emotional motivation to get lost in her raw, passionate and athletic movement.

Lewis Jones has graced many stages performing works by renowned choreographers, appeared in music videos, on television, and with musical acts NSYNC and Britney Spears, but she still cites inspiring her students as her highest accolade. She recalls an email she recently received from a student claiming she changed her life by helping her to maximize her potential and get through a rough time with dance. "This made me cry," she admits. Lewis Jones hopes her students stay true to themselves. "We all have hardships," she says, "get over it." Though blood, sweat, tears and hard work may make a dancer, "to be an artist, you must really love yourself." ♪

## Crafting Broadway Bobby Star

By August Krickel

There is a moment on stage at Workshop Theatre, during *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, in which “volunteers” are plucked from the audience. At first they are given simple words to spell, then are quickly dispatched via increasingly difficult words; a judge rings a loud bell to signal their elimination. On opening night, Bobby Craft was chosen. Upon receiving his impossible word, Craft paused, looked around, then confidently strode over to the judges’ table and rang himself out, signifying that he wasn’t even going to waste their time.

Unrehearsed and spontaneous, it was a classic and quintessential Bobby Craft moment – part sass and impishness, part creativity and improvisation – with the talent to carry it out with perfect comic timing for maximum comedic effect.

And he wasn’t even in the cast.

Bobby Craft has been entertaining local audiences for more than 35 years. An attempt to tally the total number of shows featuring Craft quickly reaches the high nineties; then there are commercials, PSAs, training films, trade and industrial shows, singing groups, and benefit performances. In a city where performers often align themselves with a particular organization, Craft has moved freely from show to show, venue to venue, group to group. “I guess you could just charge that to my attitude,” Craft says. “I’d like to think I can get along with just about anyone, as long as you treat them the way you’d want to be treated. It’s as simple as that.” His secret? “Stay away from drama, divas, gossip, and generally people who complain all the time. Life is too short to waste your time and energy on anything or any situation that isn’t worth the effort. A little love and compassion goes a long way.”

Craft seems universally loved within the theatre community, thanks to that positive attitude. Actor Mark Newsome says that he remembers “Bobby being fearless and the consummate professional. Bobby always brings a large dose of positive energy to whatever he’s doing. He’s like sunshine.” Actress Laurel Posey agrees: “Bobby is an absolute original, one of a kind, and a Columbia theatre

institution. I can’t imagine our community without his presence and generous spirit.”

An ebullient performer on stage, Craft dresses the part of the “star” offstage as well. He’s often spotted in bright colors, decorated with stars and rhinestones. “The bedazzling!” as Posey relates. “I treasure my Bobby Craft-embellished items and always love seeing his latest ensemble, whether subtle or full-throttle sparkle.” Bobby doesn’t recall who first started calling him “Broadway Bobby” back in the ‘70s, but the nickname stuck, until someone else created “Bobby Star.” “I will answer to both,” Craft says, or even a combination, often signing a note with “Broadway Bobby Star.” “I even have a personalized license tag that says ‘STAR,’ and I’ve added a few rhinestones to it, to give it that sparkle that I love so much.” Now if a friend sees him without “some kind of sparkle or shine,” they wonder “What’s wrong? Where’s your rhinestones?” He confesses, “Sometimes I just want to be plain.”

Don’t think that Craft always has to be the star, however. Another of his endearing qualities, almost unique among performers, is his willingness to perform lead roles, then ensemble parts, then supporting characters, even cameo appearances. “I don’t always have to be in the spotlight,” he admits, preferring to be a team player, much as an athlete might be happy to be part of a winning team. He recalls how the late director Bette Herring often reminded her casts of the traditional aphorism: there are no small parts, only small actors.

Standing usually about a head shorter than most of his cast mates, Craft is nevertheless a giant on stage. In *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, Posey recalls that Craft played an Aggie football player, and “he was one of the Chicken Ranch girls in drag. How’s THAT for versatile?” Craft’s often outrageous and mischievous stage persona has led to some backstage hijinks as well. Actress Dell Goodrich recalls that Craft “was in every single musical I ever did around here for the first 20 years that I was a part of the theatre community.” She and her mother, Francy Goodrich, still laugh about an episode from a dress rehearsal for *The Sound of Music* nearly 30 years ago. As a somber procession of nuns slowly makes its way through the house towards the stage, “each of the nuns on house right seems to be tripping over something in the aisle. A few of them give a little shriek, and some of them giggle, but they try to maintain the solemnity of the scene.” Sure enough, it was Craft, “reclining across the aisle like he’s on the beach, grinning up at each nun as

Bobby Craft, frequent performer on the Kroger Center Stage.

Photo by Forrest Clonts



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she approaches him in the dark and nearly steps on him on her way to the stage. Mom said she and everyone else who witnessed it laughed about it all night and into the following weeks. It was a totally 'Bobby Craft' thing to do."

For one so uninhibited, Craft surprises many in person with his soft-spoken charm and humility. A youthful retiree after a 32-year career with the Circuit Provisioning Group in Southern Bell/BellSouth's Network Division, Craft embarked on a second career in November of 2008 as a guest teacher ("substitute," he clarifies) in Richland School District One. Teaching K-12, Craft has logged more than 100 days per school year, including long-term assignments in theatre and music. "I have enjoyed teaching, because I figure if I can turn even one child's life around, it would have been well worth it. I won't say it's been an easy job, because today's kids are a lot different than when I was growing up. You hear a lot of people say that teachers are underpaid? Well, I can attest to that." One difference he sees today is teens' addiction to technology, texting in particular. He recently stage-managed productions of *High School Musical 2* and *Hairspray* at Workshop Theatre and fought a never-ending (and ironic, given his career with Bell) battle with his young cast members to put down their phones backstage. Goodrich, now a teacher herself, notes how Craft "truly does connect with everyone, including moms and children." Even at age 9, she recalls: "I do remember how in awe I was of Bobby Craft. He was probably in his early 20s then, and we kids all idolized him." She still looks forward to his pranks, even if it's a call during her rowdiest class to request some Vitametavegamin, the tonic from *I Love Lucy* that has become a running joke between them.

Teaching in Richland One is familiar territory for Craft, a baby-boomer who was born in Columbia and attended Carver Elementary, W. A. Perry Junior High, C.A. Johnson High School, then A.C. Flora for his junior and senior years. His first musical was *Once Upon A Mattress* at Flora; the following year, his drama teacher, Jim Thigpen, cast him in *The Death of Bessie Smith*. USC followed, where Craft performed in numerous shows as well as in the marching band as a flutist. While at USC, he performed in *Purlie* with Brenda Pressley. "You might say she has been my inspiration to strive to be the very best in all that I do," Craft admits. "The first Broadway show I saw was *Dreamgirls*, and Brenda was in the original cast. That is where I met two other actresses, Vanessa Bell Calloway and Brenda Braxton, and I've kept in touch with them over the years. They, too, have been my inspiration; I call all three of them my *Dreamgirls*."

Interestingly, Craft is best known as a song-and-dance man but never formally studied either. "It's all been on-the-job training, watching other actors in shows, and you learn from them," he explains. He notes that his musical ability may have come from his father, who played upright bass in jazz bands with musicians like Dick Goodwin. He admits much of what he does on stage is improvised. Craft has performed in the Columbia City Ballet's production of *Off the Wall and Onto the Stage*, appearing as a bartender in the second act. In its latest incarnation, he wanted the chance to do more. "I went to William (Starrett) and said 'please expand my role.'" The result was Craft's participation in a jubilant number called *Let the Good Times Roll*. "Everyone goes down the middle like the old line on *Soul Train*," showing off their best dance moves, and for the most recent show in Charleston, Craft nonchalantly grins, confessing that at the last minute, "I added a cartwheel. And then a split."

It's those fearless moments for which Craft is known, from dressing up to portray a stepsister in *Cinderella* to running up the side of the old arch at Town Theatre while singing *Fabulous Feet*. As one of the most visible performers of color in a city where roles for African-Americans are not the easiest to find, Craft agrees that "in recent years, we've come a long way. But we still have a long way to go." Craft has played some of the stage's best-known African-American roles: Hud in *Hair*, Richie in *A Chorus Line*, and "The Negro" in *The Roar of the Greasepaint*, as well as roles traditionally cast with black actors: the Lead Player in *Pippin*, the Scarecrow in *The Wiz*, and the voice of Audrey 2 in *Little Shop of Horrors*. Yet some of Craft's best work has been in colorblind roles: Snoopy in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, Nicely Nicely Johnson in *Guys and Dolls*, Teen Angel in *Grease*, and the outrageous houseboy Jacob in *La Cage aux Folles*. "I can't say that I have a favorite," Craft reflects, "because each has meant something to me in a special way. I can say that I've done certain shows twice or in some cases three times playing the same role. Some of my friends kid me because I've done *Chorus Line* three times as Richie, and they say that the next time I'll be doing Richie with a walker. NOT!"

Is there anything he can't do? Craft concedes that, only once, at the request of the late Jim E. Quick, did he try his hand at choreographing, and that "wasn't my strong suit, so that will probably be the only time I will do that." Directors he has enjoyed working with are a veritable Who's Who of local theatre over the past four decades: Quick, the late Bette Herring, Ann Dreher, David Avin, and Cindy Flach. "Personally, I think people in the arts are some of the best people in the world when it comes to friendliness and to caring and loving individuals. I've met and held on to some great friends



"When I'm recognized on the street that **makes me feel good.**"

Photo by Forrest Clonts

over the years, and I wouldn't trade it for anything else." Yet his greatest joy is simply being able to make audiences smile. "I aim to please people. (A musical) revives their spirits, and it takes them away from their problems. If they've had a horrible day, it gives them a moment of happiness. When I'm recognized on the street, that makes me feel good."

Craft next will be seen in the Vibrations Dance Company production of *Sista Girl and the Soldier*, a contemporary urban retelling of *The Nutcracker*. While performing in *Smokey Joe's Cafe* this past summer at Trustus, director Terrance Henderson recruited him. Craft remembers: "I was judging a high school performance competition – singing, dancing, acting – and Terrance was a contestant. I knew right then that he was going places. I told him 'You go on and go for it and be successful.'" Several generations of performers in the Midlands now have benefited from their associations with Craft, and he shows no signs of slowing down. Whether behind the scenes as stage manager, out in front as a lead singer, or as part of a dance ensemble, there's no doubt that audiences will continue to enjoy the craft of Bobby Craft. ♪



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Photo by Kristine Hartvigsen

## Lee Ann Kornegay: The Beat Goes On

By Kristine Hartvigsen

Try to focus your lens on Lee Ann Kornegay, and you better be able to capture a moving target. One moment the Columbia producer and award-winning documentarian is reading research and sipping wine on her front porch; the next she is hundreds of miles away wailing on a djembe at a mountain-top drum circle or even riding bareback on a sandy beach in Cote d'Ivoire.

Those who know Kornegay for her documentary work that has raised the bar on cultural education and community involvement might be stunned to know that her earliest motivation was an '80s-era cable television network promoting pop music. The University of South Carolina media arts graduate initially balked when offered a position at Chernoff/Silver (now Chernoff/Newman), one of the most powerful ad agencies in the Southeast. "I thought: Advertising? Really? No!" Kornegay recalls. "I wanted to make music videos. It was the MTV era. I wanted to put moving pictures with music."

Kornegay had met agency patriarch Marvin Chernoff when she rented a small apartment over Chernoff's garage while attending USC. She felt fortunate to be connected with someone in the arts but had not considered approaching Chernoff for a job after graduation. He took the lead and made her an offer.

"It was 1984, and they were just beginning to pick up some video and broadcast work," she says. "That was what I was studying in school." Kornegay ultimately accepted the job. "The fun thing about Chernoff/Silver was that we became known as the 'loose creatives.' Our team was the wild child of the advertising world. We got to do more stuff that was fun and 'out there.' Our clients had big budgets. At the time, we didn't realize that. We had a lot of freedom because there was more money."

In the late '90s, Kornegay found herself drawn to a new discipline after seeing West African drummers perform

at USC. In the years that followed, she became much more than a simple fan of the art form, taking up the instruments and traveling to Africa to study the culture. It was life-changing and put her on the path to where she is today.

"When I saw drumming at USC, I was blown away," Kornegay recalls. "I wanted to be involved."

Indeed. Faisal Salahuddin, a guest drummer at the initial USC event, went on to form Djoliba Don, a West African drumming group in Columbia. Nevermind that she had no experience. A newly inspired Kornegay was determined to enter the troupe's ranks. "I bought a drum," she says. "I kept showing up at auditions and trying to nudge my way into that scene. Faisal became my teacher. And for three of my trips to Africa, he was there."

The two partnered to operate Djoliba Don for several years before dissolving after Salahuddin enrolled in law school. "We decided that seven years was a good run," Kornegay notes.

In 2000, after 16 years with Chernoff/Silver, Kornegay decided to break out on her own with L.A. Kornegay, Media Productions. It must have been difficult to leave the security of the agency where she managed all electronic media productions for the firm's offices in Columbia, Hilton Head, Orlando, and Houston. "She did some really special work for us," Chernoff says. "She is a very caring and wonderful person. I am proud she was part of our organization and proud that she is a friend."

Around this time, Kornegay and Salahuddin traveled together to West Africa twice to study drumming and dance. Those trips eventually influenced Kornegay to return on business to bring some of the region's stories to stateside audiences.

"The first two times, I went on my own dime to study the culture in West Africa," she explains. "The last two times, it was actually for work. The places I went were destitute, poor, and sad. We weren't chasing after zebras."

Kornegay grew up in a home that often bustled with visitors from all over the world. "Our home was always open to people from different cultures," she says. Those sensibilities likely moved Kornegay into the social and political activism that's most effectively communicated through the medium of the documentary. Two projects, in particular, emerged from her travels to West Africa. *Boloba* is a documentary that showcases individuals from Guinea, considered among the world's finest percussionists. Depicting the region's music, song, and dance, the film captures the joy and exhilaration

associated with the country's strong drumming traditions. *Boloba* was named Best Documentary in the Colossal Film Crawl in 2003 and also was selected for the Indie Grits Film Festival in 2006. "When she put that documentary together, with the power of her camera, she just made magic," Salahuddin says.

Another documentary, *Ivory Coast in Crisis*, depicts that country's struggles to reduce poverty and achieve democracy. Kornegay kept hand-written journals of her experiences, some of which she has shared on her blog at [lakornadventures.blogspot.com](http://lakornadventures.blogspot.com). "I spent my 43rd birthday on a plane to Cote D'Ivoire, West Africa," she writes. "... I was asked to document the volatile situation and to hopefully bring back some positive images of this area recently struck by civil war."

There had been an attempted coup about six months before she arrived. Most of the conversations around her were in French, and she sometimes found it challenging to know what was going on. But emotions transcend spoken language, and Kornegay found herself moved as she met with a local women's group: "I openly wept while at this meeting as they described the hardships and agony of war – how they were trying to cope. Their courage was amazing. ... These folks were testifying to us about the horrors of war and seemed to look to us to tell their stories and to get them help. It was brutal and wrenching, people breaking down in sobs and then gathering themselves to finish their story.

"The courage of the people, it seems, is the story – their perseverance and determination not to fight. The folks we talked to were trying desperately to find a peaceful solution to the conflicts wreaking havoc on their country, to try and carry on."

During most of the time she spent in Africa, Kornegay and Salahuddin were accompanied by armed security people. While in Conakry, Guinea, at a time when political tensions were high, Kornegay recalls an unescorted run-in with what appeared to be the unfriendly local powers that be.

Other documentaries she has produced over the years include *701 Whaley*, a history of the 1903 mill community building and its restoration. Kornegay also has produced several pieces for South Carolina Educational Television's "Southern Lens" series, including a West African cultural arts piece shot in Guinea and *I'm Building a Bridge*, the South Carolina civil rights story of the Briggs vs. Elliott school desegregation case. She has held multiple arts residencies, including teaching West African drum and culture to children at Harmony School in Columbia, all while single-handedly raising



her daughter Kellane, 20, who now attends the College of Charleston.

While Kornegay works hard, she plays just as hard. One eventful, wine-enhanced ladies night out in Columbia's Vista led to playful shenanigans and the development of one of Columbia's most anticipated and provocative evenings of the year – the (mostly) annual What's Love Valentine's Day show. The collective brainchild of Kornegay and artist Heidi Darr-Hope, What's Love is an adults-only exploration of sensuality expressed through art.

"We had gone out to Gervais & Vine and were sitting in the back room. It was a bunch of girls – and maybe a guy or two. Someone had a camera, and we started taking pictures. We were flashing each other and being really silly," Kornegay says. "A week or so later, we looked at the photographs and thought they were kind of cool and sexy and fun. We thought we should show them as part of something about sex and love and all that. We thought, 'Let's do a Valentine's Day show!' So that is how it started."

The first What's Love show was held in 2005 at Vista Studios Gallery 80808, where Darr-Hope has a studio. That first year, Kornegay and Darr-Hope did everything themselves, from the catering to soliciting artists to participate. Any costs came out of their own pockets. "The event was free, but we did sell some art," Kornegay

says. After a couple of years, they started selling tickets and still packed the place. In fact, What's Love quickly outgrew Gallery 80808 and was moved to the grand hall at 701 Whaley Street. That decision opened up greater opportunities for Kornegay to bring in performance artists in addition to visual artists.

Kornegay recently completed work on a 30-minute documentary about decorated World War II veteran, T. Moffatt Burriss, that is slated to air on SC ETV in November 2011. She's also finishing up films for Girls Inc. of Greater Columbia and the Historic Columbia Foundation. One topic she's like to focus her energy on is a project to help connect Columbia's Hispanic community with the larger local community, a challenge during a time of high anti-immigrant sentiment in South Carolina. "The whole thing kind of turns my stomach," she says. Her hope, as always, is that raising awareness can lead to meaningful change. So why does this multi-talented woman with so many diverse interests remain in South Carolina?

It's home, plain and simple.

"I never wanted to be famous or win an Academy Award or go to Los Angeles to do films," she says. "That has never been a dream or goal. For me, it's about what can I do here in my own community that is going to make some sort of difference." ♣

## Biennial 2011

By Jeffrey Day

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the "Triennial" exhibitions of contemporary South Carolina art held between 1992 and 2004 at the South Carolina State Museum. They provided insight into the state's visual arts for viewers, brought artists together, and encouraged artists to challenge themselves. But after the fourth one, the museum and its co-organizer, the South Carolina Arts Commission, terminated the "Triennial." Now we have a kind of replacement: the "Biennial 2011" at the 701 Center for Contemporary Arts (701CCA) in Columbia. The first part of the 24-artist show ran October 6th through November 13th and the second can be seen November 17th through December 21st.

The first installment was not only better than one could reasonably expect, but outstanding by nearly any standard. It offered a mix of established artists, such as Colin Quashie, Aldwyth, and Jim Connell; mid-career folks like Jim Arendt and Katie Walker; and five mostly unknown artists, displaying wide-ranging art in an excellent and intelligent installation.

Aldwyth's huge collages (the larger of the two in the Biennial is 10-by-12 feet) continue to mesmerize, as have the unusual assemblages she's been creating for nearly 20 years. These pieces build out from the center with various tones created through color and content that are mostly images of artworks, artists, and architecture. Her work always has been well-made and engaging on many levels. Now here she is, at 76, creating her best art ever.

Quashie always has been an attention-grabber with a mix of biting social commentary and humor. He was represented by a blow-up of a glossy home magazine, titled "Plantation Digest," dated July 1853. The cover is an old photo of two African-American girls looking through the barred gate with story teasers, such as "Can Religion Tame Your Savage Beasts?" Inside is an editor's column written in the tone that uncomfortably, but expertly, mixes the tone of today's Striver class with racist content. The rest is made up of disturbing advertisements for clothing from "J. Crow."

Although many people know him as a painter, for the past few years Arendt has made figurative relief sculptures from cut-up blue jeans. Although well-crafted, they can seem gimmicky, especially with one seen in isolation, but this show included five pieces installed in such a way that you felt yourself a part of the denim group as it was gathered near the gallery entrance.

Chris Todd has taken her lead from a familiar and simple object – the straight back chair – and stretched and shocked it into something else with the results ranging from a simple and beautiful peg-joined naked wood piece to what look like a burnt and brutalized figures.

One wall was covered with Thomas Whichard's 21-monoprint work of larger-than-life heads rendered in tobacco-color, washy and dripping ink. The work, titled "Bastille," nearly overwhelms the viewer with the raw emotion on the faces and the huge scale of the piece. Whichard is only 26-years-old, but his fellow Winthrop University graduate Mike Gentry is a year younger. Gentry creates tightly packed, grid-like abstract collages of junk mail and advertisements. He uses a transfer technique that renders all text in reverse and lets him layer information without physically building up the surface. Each work is like 10 years of junk mail compressed both in structure and content. Jon Prichard, another young artist connected to Winthrop, does intricate and obsessive multi-colored pen drawings more closely aligned with the work of visionary and outsider artists than the academy.

In what passed for more traditional offerings were large abstract paintings by Katie Walker and Jim Connell's ceramics. With a few lines, some chunks of color, and a lot of empty space, Walker creates spare but always compelling works. Jim Connell's ceramic teapot variations might strike some as old-fashioned, but he always comes up with something new to say through different forms, glazes, and surfaces. (The display of Connell's work on pedestals under Plexiglas domes is the only distraction from the excellent installation.)



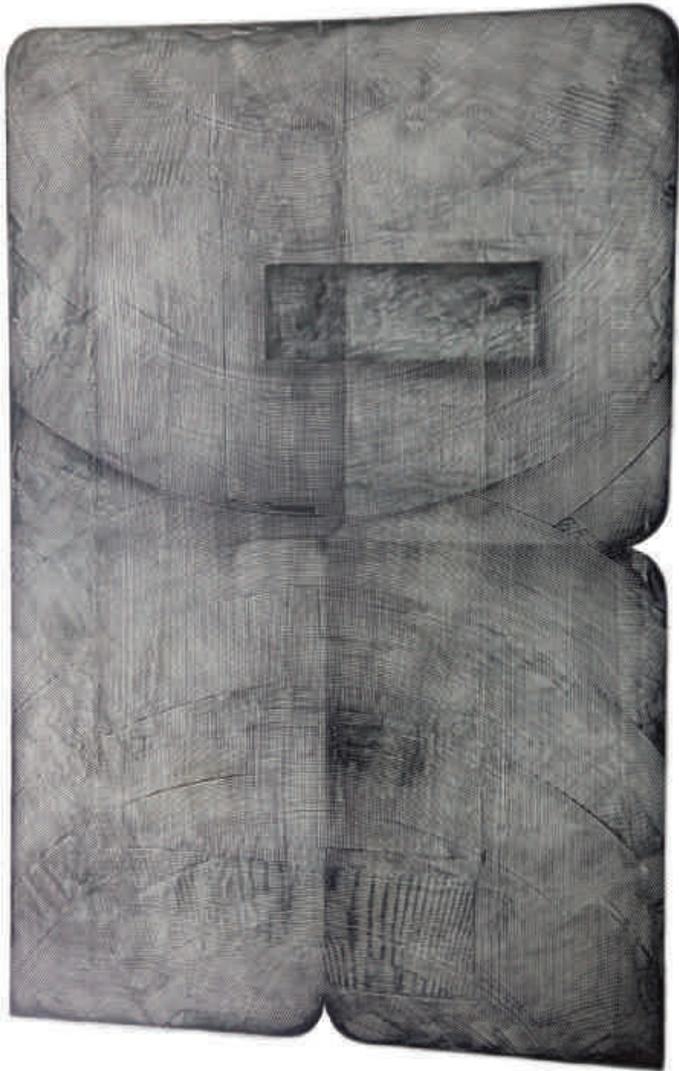
Overall, the first part of the Biennial is an excellent examination of what is going on in the arts in South Carolina. It will be interesting to see if Part II can live up to these high standards. If not, it won't be for lack of some terrific artists, including Chapin's James Busby, Karen Ann Myers, and Columbia's Peter Lenzo.

The "Biennial" is not without problems. Working in a space a quarter of the size of the State Museum art gallery has forced the Center for Contemporary Art to split the show into two parts, which is much better than cutting the number of artists in half. Each show is only up for a month, while "Triennial" exhibitions were usually on display for three months. There appears to be no programming, such as discussion panels or artists' talks. Some important artists and art forms are missing, and there are a couple of questionable choices in Part I.

One important role of surveys, such as the "Triennial" and the "Biennial," is generating conversation within the arts community. How well do the selected artists represent the state's art production? What areas have been overlooked? Who got in, who didn't, and why? All that boils down to the picking process. For the "Triennials," artists had to enter, and participants were selected by a three-person panel of in-state and out-of-state art experts. The out-of-state jurors were usually not familiar with South Carolina artists, which increased the chances that the quality of the work rather than connections or resumes would be the dominant deciding factor. Once the artists were tapped, the head of visual arts for the South Carolina Arts Commission and the art curator of the South Carolina State Museum decided on individual works, sometimes giving artists the option of doing a whole new body of work for the exhibition. The system had its problems, the main one being that it put the burden of entering on artists, but it ended up working reasonably well.

The selection setup for the "Biennial" looked like a recipe for disaster. A dozen in-the-know art folks (most of them both artists and curators) were asked to nominate two artists. This has a tendency to put resumes and connections higher on the list than quality, but, judging by Part I, that didn't happen. Still, it has made for an exhibition that is unbalanced in several ways and leaves the "Biennial" and 701CCA vulnerable to questions of fairness. This was the same problem that dogged the "Triennials," because the first cut was made by the artists themselves; the "Biennial" puts the onus on a huge group of "curators" rather than one curator, or two, who know the art scene backward and forward.

Three of the nominators are connected to Winthrop University, and six of the seven artists chosen are students, graduates, or faculty members of the school. This doesn't mean there was collusion or that the artists are not deserving. In fact, most of



Page Left: Bailey  
 Page Right Going Clockwise: Richard, Lenzo, Busby

the nominators gave the nod to artists they have links to through colleges and universities, and eight of the 12 nominators work, or worked, for a college or university. At the other extreme, not a single permanent faculty member from the University of South Carolina and only one from the College of Charleston are in the show. Just two artists from Greenville and four from the Columbia area? In the "Triennial" exhibitions, the regions of the state were equitably represented, and the jurors didn't even know where the artists lived. One could parse the process forever, but during the next two years, 701 CCA should make a thorough examination of the best way to round up artists.

As it is, this first-ever South Carolina "Biennial" is amuch needed, very welcome, and – judging from Part I – excellent exhibition. ♪

# DAY JOBS

If Berlioz or Nijinsky were alive today and living in Columbia, South Carolina, would either of these artistic geniuses be able to buy their bread and beer based on the sale or performance of their art alone? Wishful thinking, but sadly – probably not. Like most painters and poets, musicians, sculptors, dancers, actors, and other individuals who make art their lives, a modern-day Michelangelo would likely have to wash dishes to buy his marble; Oscar Wilde might sell shoes during the day then write plays about his customers come dark.

Day jobs. It's rare to find the artist who doesn't have one.

The reality is that most South Carolina artists make multiple contributions to their communities in addition to their arts. They work, vote, pay taxes, raise families, and grumble about the government like the rest of us mere mortals.

In our new and regular feature, Day Jobs, Jasper Magazine – The Word on Columbia Arts salutes our local artists and the myriad ways they work to sustain our community at the same time that they create our culture.



**Paul Kaufman** // actor  
**Day Job** // Principal, Kaufmann Forensic Actors, LLC

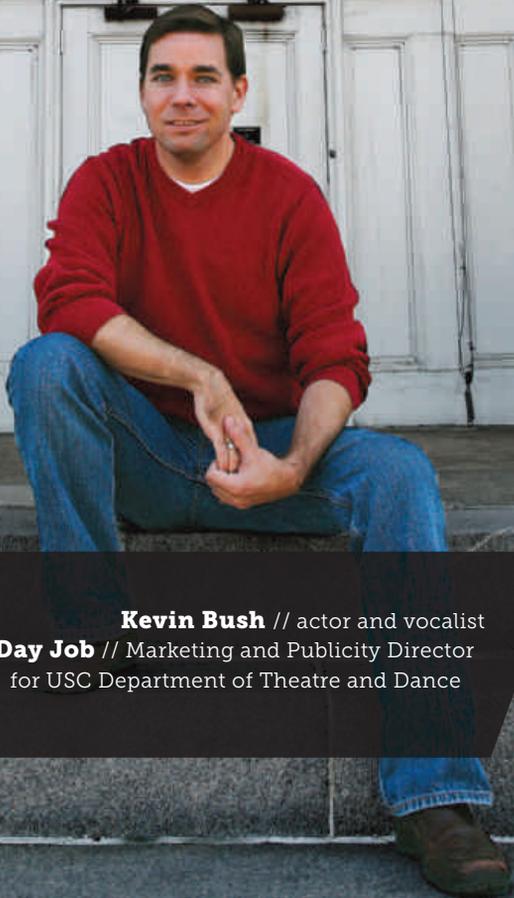


**Alex Smith** // visual artist and actor  
**Day Job** // Production Operations Manager at Tapp's Art Center

**Brenda Schwarz Miller** // visual artist  
**Day Job** // Executive Director at Tapp's Arts Center

**Here's to all 24 hours in an artist's day!**

# LONGSTREET THEATRE



**Kevin Bush** // actor and vocalist  
**Day Job** // Marketing and Publicity Director  
for USC Department of Theatre and Dance

**Todd Mathis** // singer, songwriter, musician  
with the band, American Gun  
**Day Job** // paralegal with the law firm  
Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough, LLP



# Covered Dish

By **Lindsay Green McManus**

She can do it all in her sleep:  
Sift, knead, separate,  
Roll up and drop  
The one inch balls.

In the other room, the baby  
Is plopped in front of the television,  
Picking up and dropping a small  
Piece of paper, fascinated by

The slow, uneven fall,  
Over and over.  
She watches while her hands  
move, put a fresh block  
to the grater, plow her  
knuckle and bone.

*Lindsay Green McManus earned her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of South Carolina in 2007, and she currently works in academic support services at USC Aiken. She lives with her family in Lexington, SC.*

# Annunciations

on attending a Marie Howe reading

**By Terri McCord**

The poet, hair massed  
like moist cradling hay,  
spoke first  
of Mary, said                      we could all be mothers

of Jesus—quoting Meister  
Eckhart. The podium flowers shed

as she read—small tufts  
as from baby fowl.

My first bed was a drawer,  
and, later, when I had a crib,  
my mother left me belly-down,  
legs      wish-boned  
until      my hips turned,

and I wore orthopedic shoes,  
until                      told they were unclean,  
I washed them in the toilet—

as if they were small feet  
I imagine now  
I was trying to anoint.

She read as if her throat  
were a well              dug deep.

She prefaced the next  
poem with a pronouncement—  
that she had adopted a toddler  
at the age of fifty-three.  
And I recognized  
I am childless. Am I a mother?

And she read again              to the crowd  
a last poem about a child lost  
in a parking lot,  
and I saw her, the poet, mouth to me  
Now go forth, but no one noticed.

*Terri McCord, of Greenville, is a South Carolina Arts Commission's Literary Fellowship recipient, and the South Carolina Poetry Initiative published her chapbook *In the Company of Animals* in 2008. She has also won first place in the SC Poetry Initiative/The State Single Poem contest. Other publications or forthcoming publications include *Connecticut Review*, *Cream City Review*, *Seneca Review*, and *Potomac Review*.*

## The Transformative Power of Art

By Mayor Steve Benjamin

There is something special about Columbia. Since its creation 225 years ago, our city has continued to attract men and women of unparalleled talent and passion to explore new horizons or creativity and push the boundaries of human expression. Our streets are filled with these remarkable individuals leading their disciplines as painters, writers, musicians, dancers and performers of the highest caliber.

Earlier this month, we added another chapter to that proud history with the Tapp's Art Center's grand opening and, with this incredible new 22,000 square feet facility, took a major step towards ushering in a new era of innovation and achievement.

But this accomplishment is only part of the equation. Look around our city and you see the State Museum and EdVenture, the Museum of Art and the SC Philharmonic, the Nickelodeon, Gallery 80808, the Trustus and Workshop Theaters, multiple ballets and a new generation of artists streaming from our diverse and vibrant college campuses.

Look around Columbia and you see a wealth of unique talent and, more importantly, opportunity. But in order to take advantage of that opportunity, we have to change the way we look at the arts as a community, as a city and as a state.

We have to realize that cultural and creative industries add \$9.2 billion annually to our state's economy and support more than 78,000 jobs throughout South Carolina. We have to start talking about the ripple effect of institutions

like the Columbia Museum of Art whose visitors generated \$23 million for Metro Columbia's hotels, restaurants, and local shop owners in 2008 alone. We have to see the arts as a major economic catalyst driving successful downtown revitalization efforts here in Columbia as well as in Charleston, Greenville, Newberry and Rock Hill.

Only then, when we step back and look at the whole picture, can we start to really make a difference. Only then can we maximize art's transformative potential in every aspect of our daily lives from how we recruit industries to how we educate our children. Only then can we start connecting the dots to create a critical mass of creativity that reshapes our entire community.

Imagine welcoming potential investors to an urban landscape adorned with public art. Imagine sidewalks filled with local sketch artists, potters and jewelry makers all supporting families through their talent. Imagine the Indie Grits film festival as a marquee event for independent film makers worldwide. Imagine musicians and fashion designers, architects and ad men from across the nation all deriving inspiration from Columbia, South Carolina.

Imagine the impact that would have on a child who doesn't see the point in school because he's never known anything but bare asphalt and concrete. Imagine exposing that child to a new world of promise and potential, a world he'll carry with him back into the classroom and throughout his whole life.

Imagine our potential, because that's what we're talking about. Not increasing patronage of oil on canvas or boosting attendance at this year's Nutcracker performance; but the wide world of possibilities just waiting on us to grab hold and believe.

I believe in our future as the most talented, educated and entrepreneurial city in the Southeast if not America. I believe in our future and in the promise of Columbia.

*"...we have to change the way we look at the arts*



Artwork by Kirkland Smith

*as a community, as a city and as a state."*

## Bill Wells Made Bluegrass Cool Again

By Michael Miller

It was a Saturday night back in September at Bill's Music Shop & Pickin' Parlor, and the place had the feel of a great big family picnic.

There were laughter and hugs. Small children scampered here and there. A long table was filled with covered-dish staples, and folks were unpacking guitars, banjos, and fiddles.

A hush fell over the crowd when someone said the guest of honor was on his way. Cameras were readied, kids were shushed, and when the doors to the Pickin' Parlor swung open, in stepped Bill Wells, the man who has championed bluegrass music in South Carolina for the past 26 years.

There were cheers and applause, and with the help of a walker and his wife Louise's steadying hand at his side, Bill made his way inside. It was tough going. Bill is suffering from stage-four melanoma, and the Pickin' Parlor's extended family had gathered to show support and thank the man who "always loved the acoustic music."

Bill opened his first music shop on State Street in 1985. Two years later he moved it to its present location on Meeting Street, and it was around the same time that I became an entertainment writer for The State newspaper. One day the phone on my desk rang, and it was Bill calling to tell me about an artist he was bringing to play a concert in the Pickin' Parlor. He also told me about the open jam sessions he was hosting every Friday night. Bill said folks could come to play or just listen. I told him I thought it was a great idea and I wrote about it in the paper.

As word spread, musicians from outside the region began showing up at the Friday-night jams, and before long, some of the best pickers in the state were filling the room. The beauty of the jams was how they provided instant lessons for beginners who sidled up to a circle of hot players and learned on the fly. (I even tried this myself a couple times and always felt like Andy Taylor trying to keep up with the Darling boys.)



Photo by Mark Green

Over the years, these jams played a major part in reviving the bluegrass scene in South Carolina. Bill also hosted great shows by major artists such as Del McCoury, Rhonda Vincent, and Dr. Ralph Stanley, thus putting the Pickin' Parlor on the national bluegrass map. In 1998, Bill was given a Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award by the South Carolina Arts Commission, and a few weeks ago, he was awarded the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest civilian recognition.

As the years went by, my journalist-source relationship with Bill evolved into a fond friendship. My trips to the Music Shop were not always to pick up a press release for an upcoming concert. Sometimes I just stopped by to sit for a few minutes, chat with whoever was hanging out, and maybe strum a chord or two.

Bill touched many lives just as he touched mine, and one after another, many of those recipients of Bill's friendship and influence walked up to the microphone that Saturday night in September and thanked him for guiding them to bluegrass. He championed the purest form of traditional bluegrass, the totally acoustic unplugged variety of Bill Monroe and Flatt & Scruggs, and after he thanked everyone for the outpouring of affection, he added, "and keep on pickin' the good music."

Thanks to Bill Wells, the circle will stay unbroken. ♪



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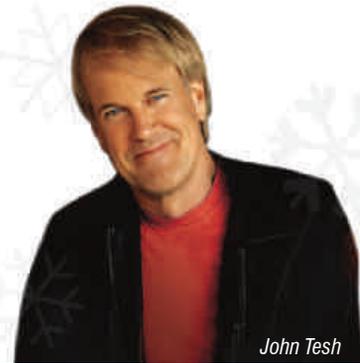
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Doyle Lawson



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## NOVEMBER 2011

- 11/11 Chi of Shaolin, Tale of the Dragon
- 11/13 The Grascals
- 11/14 SC Storytelling Network, *Tellabration*
- 11/15 Chicago Brass w/ Sally Cherrington-Beggs
- 11/17 Jane Pope Cooper, *Jewelry* & Celena Hudgens Burnett, *Potter*
- 11/19 Cowboy Movies with The Saddle Pals

## DECEMBER 2011

- 12/1 Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver Christmas
- 12/2 Palmetto Mastersingers
- 12/5 An Irish Christmas
- 12/6 Christmas w/ Emile Pandolfi
- 12/7 Carolina FreeStyle Holiday Show
- 12/8 BJ Thomas
- 12/9 Vintage Christmas, *Downtown Newberry*
- 12/10 208<sup>th</sup> Army Reserve Band, Charlotte
- 12/10 Harley Davidson Toy Run
- 12/12 Stuart & Sylvester
- 12/13 John Tesh – *Big Band Christmas!*
- 12/14 A Christmas Carol, *The Musical*
- 12/18 The Lettermen
- 12/31 New Years Celebration w/Dick Goodwin Big Band

## JANUARY 2012

- 1/13-14 Newberry Ballet Guild, *Upon the Wind*
- 1/19 Travis Tritt
- 1/21 Doc Watson and David Holt
- 1/22 Glenn Miller Orchestra
- 1/28 Rigoletto, *Opera*
- 1/29 Jake Shimabukuro

## FEBRUARY 2012

- 2/2 Ain't Misbehavin', *The Musical*
- 2/3 Hotel California "A Salute to the Eagles"
- 2/4 Miss Newberry College Pageant
- 2/8 The Temptations
- 2/11 Abbey Simon, *Pianist*
- 2/12 Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder
- 2/14 Brigadoon, *The Musical*
- 2/17 Ray Price
- 2/18 The Four Freshmen
- 2/19 Arlo Guthrie, "Boys Night Out"
- 2/23-24 Newberry College Theatre Department
- 2/25 James Gregory "The Funniest Man in America"
- 2/29 Burlesque to Broadway

## MARCH 2012

- 3/2 An Acoustic Evening with The Buckingham
- 3/3 Cowboy Movies with The Saddle Pals
- 3/4 Lee Greenwood & Louise Mandrell
- 3/15 Vienna Boys Choir
- 3/16 Martha Reeves and The Vandellas
- 3/22 Steep Canyon Rangers
- 3/28 The Highwaymen, *Musical Tribute, Waylon-Willie-Johnny*

## APRIL 2012

- 4/12 Jefferson Starship
- 4/13 An Evening with Nanci Griffith
- 4/15 The Oak Ridge Boys
- 4/18 Stand by Your Man *The Tammy Wynette Story*
- 4/19 Canadian Brass
- 4/21 Pork in the Park, *Downtown Newberry*
- 4/22 Jim Brickman, "An Evening of Romance"
- 4/23 Newberry College Music Dept., *Opera Scenes*
- 4/27 Loretta Lynn
- 4/29 Doug and Bunny Williams

## MAY 2012

- 5/5 Summer Fun – *Horseshoe Tournament*
- 5/5 Artie Shaw Orchestra
- 5/12 Hen Party, *Comedy*
- 5/19 Rick Alviti

## SUMMER 2012

- 6/15 Taste of Newberry



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