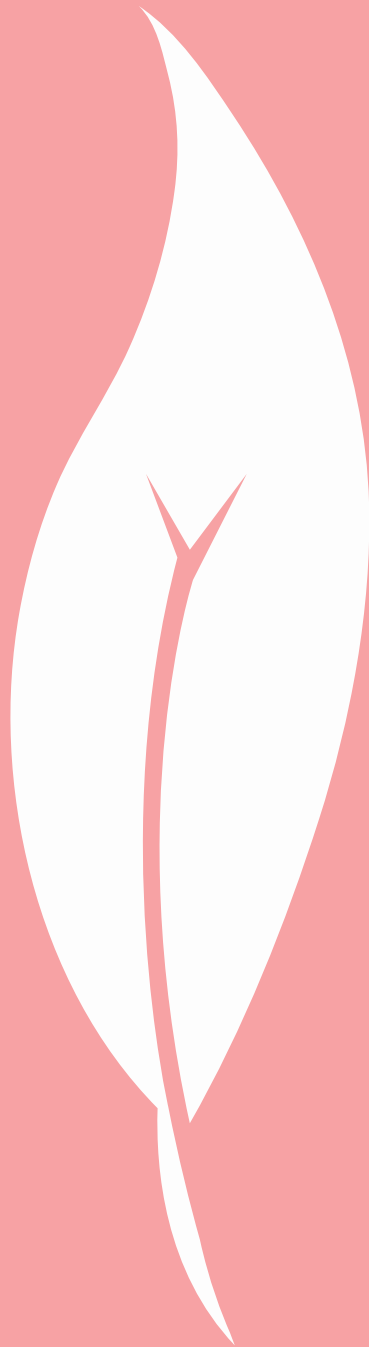


# JASSTPEAR



"GOD'S BEAUTIFUL WORK" making music

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# Indie Grits

FESTIVAL

PASSES

PRESENTED by the Nickelodeon THEATRE

11-20  
april  
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columbia  
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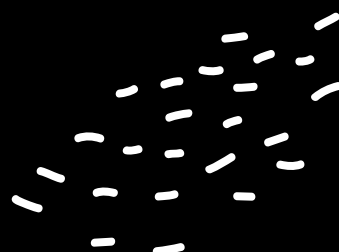
"TERROR AND AGONY AND CONFUSION  
AND YES, OCCASIONAL HAPPINESS"

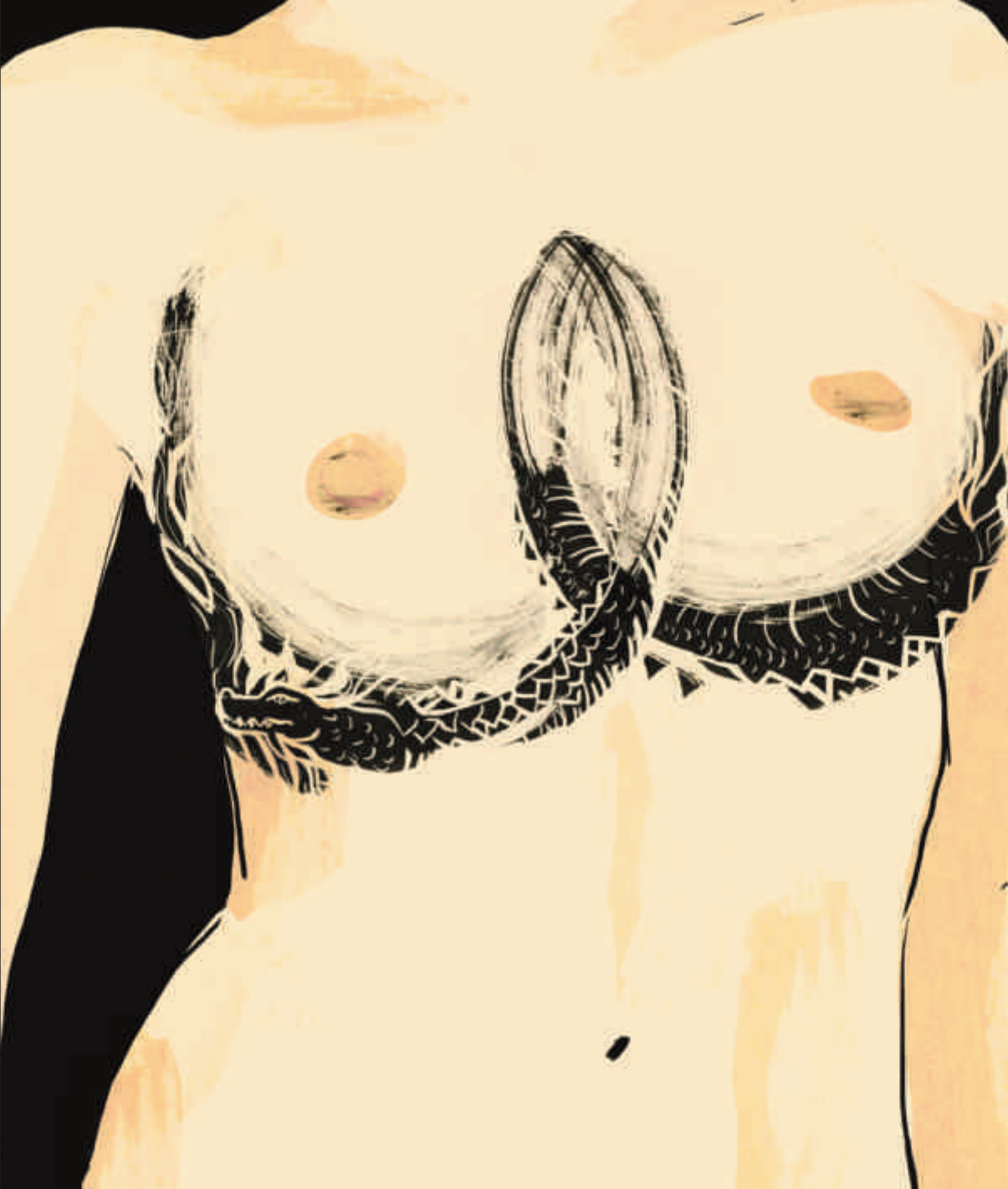
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MOJO

FOOD





ACTRESS ANGELINA JOLIE SHARES STORY OF HER DOUBLE MASTECTOMY  
MARIA FABRIZIO / WWW.WORDLESSNEWS.COM

## 5 A MESSAGE FROM JASPER

## 6 JASPER FANCIES

## 12 LISTENS

- Break-out bands Stagbriar and Death of Paris
- Local record reviews with Kyle Petersen

## 22 WATCHES

- Curtain Up! with August Krickel

## 24 GAZES

- Women Behind the Camera: Kathleen Robbins, Molly Harrell, and Jessica Christine Owen

## 30 CENTERFOLD

- The women of Workshop Theatre look back with August Krickel

## 38 SCREENS

- Seth Gadsden has a hand on the helm at this year's Indie Grits

## 42 COVER

- Maria Fabrizio designs for Jasper and National Public Radio

## 46 DANCES

- Multitalented dancer Ashley Concannon photographs from within the ballet studio

## 50 SPECIAL

- A Runaway Runway veteran returns to the stage by Giesela Lubecke

## 56 ART OF THE MEAL

- Jonathan Sharpe talks with Shigeru Kobayashi and makes sushi less mysterious

## 60 READS

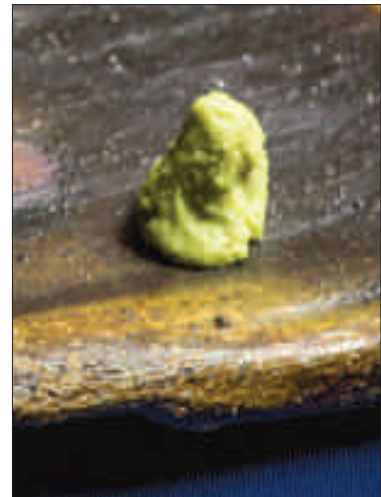
- Poetry by Colena Corbett and Nicola Waldron

## 62 GAZES

- Chris Robinson takes the measure of Columbia arts

## 63 GUEST EDITORIAL

- Alexis Stratton invites us to imagine a world without violence



## 42 ON THE COVER

MARIA FABRIZIO

## 56 THE ART OF THE MEAL

W/ JONATHAN SHARPE

## JASPER IS

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## Dear Friends,

**i** love putting together the March/April issue of *Jasper*. Like many people, in the Venn diagram of my life, there is an immense area where art and social justice overlap, particularly when it comes to equality of the sexes. We've reminded our readers in issues past of how long it has taken humankind to move toward equal opportunity for and representation of women in the arts. We hope that our efforts to focus a single yearly issue of *Jasper* specifically on the myriad cultural contributions of women artists will help move us all a little closer to where we want to be. And what a great joy it is to make this effort with such a talented array of local artists from which to choose.

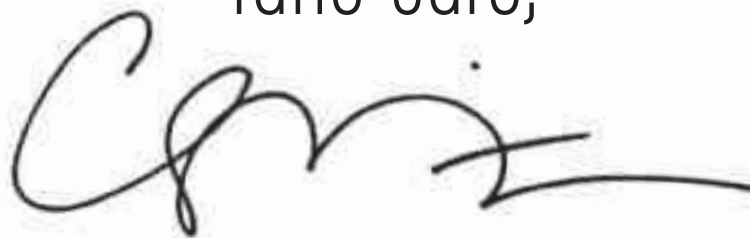
This issue we're focusing on women who practice their art from behind the camera and we're sharing some of their work with you. Molly Harrell, Kathleen Robbins, and

Jessica Christine Owen all approach their photography from diverse perspectives. They all came to their profession via fascinating paths, and each produce unique outcomes. Similarly, ballet dancer Ashley Concannon is also a photographer who brings her own distinctive experience to her work as she captures the beauty of dance from the perspective of someone looking from the inside out. Cover artist and graphic designer Maria Fabrizio also produces visual images but, of late, her work has taken a turn for immediacy gaining national attention via her blog *Wordless News*.

Finally, as some of you may know, I was recently given the great honor of learning that I have been selected to receive a Verner Award, presented by the SC Arts Commission. My dear friend—acclaimed poet, *Jasper* literary arts editor and the kind soul who nominated me—Ed Madden writes about the Verner on page 58. Like so many good things

that have happened in my life, this award has been the result of a group effort. From the enormously generous friends, artists, and patrons who worked alongside Ed to make the recognition happen, to the members of the *Jasper* staff and the *Jasper* family writ large, the contributions of support, talent, advice, and love demonstrate how easy it is to make difficult things happen when we work together. Although my name will be inscribed on the Verner plaque, this award belongs to the entirety of the *Jasper* staff, the collection of writers for Muddy Ford Press, and the hundreds of local visual artists, dancers, writers, musicians, filmmakers, photographers, and stage artists who have risen to the call for an artist-driven arts community in which the makers of the art are empowered with its agency and control. We all reap these rewards. Congratulations to us all!

Take care,



**Errata:** In *Jasper* volume 3, number 3 Ed Madden should have been credited for writing about the Columbia Broadside Project, and for the story on Steve Daniels, Wade Sellers should have been credited as writer and Alexis Schwallier as photographer. *Jasper* regrets these errors.

**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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PHOTO BY JONATHAN SHARPE

## NEW BLOOD AT THE NICK

The days of walking into the main offices Nickelodeon Theater by ducking your head and tromping down concrete block steps are not that distant a memory just yet. The lighting of the beautiful new marquee over the entrance to Columbia's indie art house theater officially signals its permanent arrival at its new downtown Main Street location. There are a bundle of new programs the theater has planned for 2014. It is an ambitious slate of expanded and new programming after the arrival at the new location.

For the past couple years, Andy Smith, executive director of the Nickelodeon Theater, has been supervising these efforts. However, it was rare to ever see Andy without former Nickelodeon marketing director Isaac Calvage at his side. Last year, Calvage announced the surprising news that he was moving to Denver, Colorado. Anyone that had ever attended Nickelodeon screenings or events may have wondered what the theater was going to do without the pair together.

But ambition attracts talent, and in 2013 many ambitious and talented people joined the expanding staff at the theater. In January of last year, Sherard Duvall was brought on as Director of Media Education. He is charged with expanding the Nickelodeon's media education mission throughout the community. Recent transplant and artist Seth Gadsen joined the staff last year and has since been named co-director of the Indie Grits Film Festival. Carolina Quillen moved across the street from the Columbia Museum of Art and joined the staff as Director of Development. Her job is to continue the efforts in seeking support for the Nickelodeon's long term goals. Janell Rohan was hired as Director of Programming. She is in charge of the films and various programs the Nick screens and offers to the public. From daily screenings to

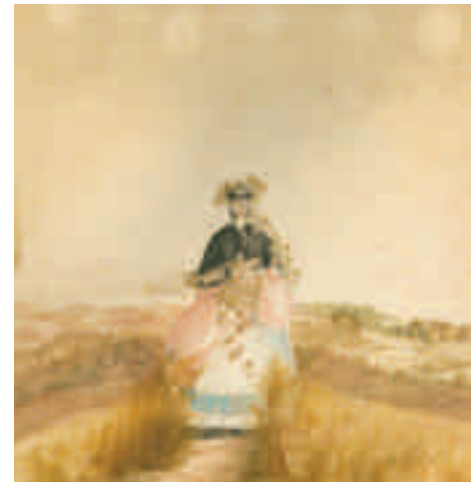
the various themed festivals as well as the popular civil rights Sunday programming, Rohan offers an ambitious slate for 2014. "Since we have such a small staff we all help each other. It might not be in the job description but we do it. Everything is so new to us that we have each other's back," Rohan states. "I can throw any idea out there. It's a fun and creative environment." Along with existing staff and new support staff, the face of the theater has changed greatly from its days on South Main Street. And just as Jasper was going to print we learned that Kristin Morris, one of the driving forces behind Girls Rock Columbia, has joined the staff of the Nick as Marketing Director!

The theater has sat on its new location for more than a year, but when the switch was flipped and the lights of the marquee flickered on, Columbia's home for independent film made the statement that the town hasn't seen anything close to what the theater hopes to offer. And it's through the creative and talented efforts of the new blood that the Nickelodeon will continue to spread the indie film gospel in our city for years to come. **-WS**

## WOMEN AND ART AT THE SC STATE MUSEUM

The fact that March is Women's History Month is not lost on the folks at the South Carolina State Museum, especially when it comes to the museum's attention to women in the arts, and that's encouraging to see.

Making the best use of technology while the museum undergoes some exciting and innovative improvements and new construction, the online exhibit of "The Art and Life of Addie Sims: A Look into her World," opened on March 15<sup>th</sup> with a reception and celebration of Sims' cultural contributions. According to marketing director Merritt McHaffie, Addie Sims was a prolific painter in both antebellum and post-war South Carolina who



worked diligently to overcome the social barriers to women pursuing careers in art.

Another online exhibit, "A Woman's Light: Making History in South Carolina," recognizes the historic contributions of SC women in the arts as one of the many ways women create culture. This virtual exhibit, for example, explores the work of Henrietta Dering Johnston, the first professional artist in the American Colonies, who moved to Charleston in 1708 and supported her family with money she earned by creating pastel portraits of wealthy and influential Charlestonians. Writers Penina Moise and Mary Boykin Chesnut, and book curator Laura Bragg are also represented, as well as sculptor, arts patron, and preservationist Anna Hyatt Huntington, founder of Brookgreen Gardens.

But you don't have to leave home to enjoy either exhibit. The virtual exhibitions are available via your home computer by visiting [sc.museum.org](http://sc.museum.org) any time day or night. **-CB**

## THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FILM FESTIVAL

In many ways, it's like sensory deprivation, only the opposite. It's sensory saturation. You're sitting in a dark theatre with literally larger than life people, skilled at compelling you to feel what they appear to be feeling, and looming in front of you like giants. The sound of their voices surrounds you and the musical score is so immersive, yet so subtle, you hardly realize the strings it plucks in your head and heart and how it causes you to experience anything from fear to faith; a broken heart or one ready to burst with joy. The act of watching films may be our culture's most effective catalyst for the myriad ways that we empathize with the vagaries of life.

At *Jasper*, we have a special place in our hearts for high quality, authentically arts-driven (and often independent) films. So we were pleased to learn about the annual Columbia Jewish Community Film Festival and even more delighted when we were asked to serve as a sponsor for this year's festival.

Beginning on March 30<sup>th</sup>, the CJCF follows a 2 pm matinee of the *Zig Zag Kid* (2012), based on the novel by David Grossman, with an Israeli food



"SCOTTISH ROOTS" -- STONWARE WITH SUN-BLEACHED SCOTCH BROOM SHRUB ROOTS, 16" BY PAT GILMARTIN

extravaganza opening party and a screening of *Jerusalem on a Plate* (2012), which is essentially a tour of Jerusalem through the eyes of food critic Yotam Ottolenghi. The evening is capped off with a showing of *Fill the Void*, starring Hada Yarum, 2012 Venice Film Festival Winner for Best Actress, as a young woman caught between her loyalty to family and desire for her own self-fulfillment.

Like *Fill the Void*, many of the films selected for the festival address issues traditionally of importance to members of the Jewish faith. Others focus on both historical and contemporary political dilemmas. In director Lorraine Levy's *The Other Son* (2012), for example, two young men—one Israeli and one Palestinian—learn that during a bombing on the night both were born they were accidentally misidentified and sent home with the wrong families. The families struggle to reconcile love and allegiance with mothers and fathers responding in entirely different manners. A talk-back follows the screening on Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 with guests Katja Vehlow, assistant professor of Religious Studies and Jewish Studies at USC and Agnes Mueller, associate professor in the department of language, literature, and culture, also at USC.

The arts are another recurring theme in this year's line-up of films. *The Return of the Violin* (2012) is a fascinating look at how a priceless Stradivarius, owned during the Nazi occupation by the great violinist Bronislaw Huberman, finally

made its way into the hands of the contemporary violinist Joshua Bell. The story of Huberman, who saved the lives of countless Jews by transporting them to Palestine to play in an orchestra that would eventually become the Israeli Philharmonic, is exquisitely told in the film *Orchestra of Exiles* (2011), which screens on Wednesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6 pm with a talk-back conducted by USC School of Music Dean Tayloe Harding. *Orchestra of Exiles* is sponsored by *Jasper Magazine*.

With a cast that includes the late Lou Reed, B. B. King, Joan Osborn, Shawn Colvin, Dr. John, and more, *AKA Doc Pomus* (2013) relays the often untold story of paralyzed blues singer and songwriter Jerome Felder (AKA Doc Pomus) who is an inductee into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame and was the first white person admitted into the Rhythm and Blues Hall of Fame.

The mission of the Columbia Jewish Community Film Festival is to "offer outstanding world cinema that promotes awareness, appreciation and pride in the diversity of the Jewish experience. Reaching out to the entire greater Columbia area, the Festival's aim is to educate, illuminate and entertain views about the language, history, and contemporary issues of the Jewish People and Israel through film." The ten films that make up the festival run from Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup> through Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. For tickets and additional information go to [columbiajewishfilmfestival.com](http://columbiajewishfilmfestival.com). -CB

## ART ON THE FLY

It may not be paintings by the famous brothers Jan Breughel and Peiter the Younger like those you'd find on loan from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport; and it may not be an Alexander Calder mobile like the one hanging from the ceiling at Pittsburg International. But Columbia Metropolitan Airport is coming in vogue at last by implementing a rotating exhibition of original art by some of the finest of the Midlands area artists in the airport terminal in West Columbia.

According to Norree Boyd-Wicks, executive director of the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties, over 60 Midlands area artists responded to a Cultural Council call for art last December and from them, a dozen 2-D and 3-D artists were chosen to exhibit during the first year of the project. "It was time for it to happen and we were very pleased to facilitate it," says Boyd-Wicks who has previously worked on airport art installations throughout the country.

Silk artist Libby Bussinah and sculptor James Davis will kick off the exhibition period, which begins in March, and start the precedent of artists showing in two-month-long cycles. Following Bussinah will be 2-D artists Tish Lowe, Kirkland Smith, Mark Conrardy, Charles Hite, and Alicia Leeke, whose work will show from January through February 2015. The 3-D artist line-up includes Pat Gilmartin, Linda Lake, and Susan Lenz.

Now, whether boarding or deplaning, Columbia air passengers can take the memory of attractive and provocative art with them as they continue on their journeys. -CB

## THE SC ACADEMY OF AUTHORS

The South Carolina Academy of Authors recently awarded fellowships to two Midlands writers, continuing the organization's tradition of recognizing both established and emerging writers in the state for over 25 years.

Columbia writer Nancy Brock received the Academy's 2014 Fiction Fellowship for her short story, "Davy Crockett's Last Stand." It was "a welcome surprise," she says. "When I received the email announcement," she admits, "I had to call before I actually believed I'd won." The winning story, she says, is an excerpt from a novel in progress.

Set in 1956, when *Disney's Davy Crockett, Indian Fighter* was broadcast on network television, the story focuses on a battle of wills between a young high school history teacher and her student. The fiction judge, novelist Randall Kenan, who teaches at the University of North Carolina, describes the story as "well-written, well-made, wonderfully memorable."

"Though it is set in the so-called more innocent times of the 1950s," he says, "it gets at some important social undercurrents efficiently and not at the expense of character and story and drama.

Florence poet Jo Angela Edwins, who teaches writing and American literature at Francis Marion University, received the Academy's Carrie McCray Fellowship, which was established in 2009 "to support South Carolina poets whose work employs skilled verse composition and reflects a heightened awareness of the human condition." The fellowship is named in honor of Columbia writer Carrie Allen McCray Nickens, who died in 2008. McCray was a widely published poet and author of the memoir, *Freedom's Child: The Life of a Confederate General's Black Daughter*.



"Writing poetry isn't terribly easy," Edwins says, "and at times it seems there's such a small audience out there." She describes the fellowship as "both an honor and a validation of the work that goes into making poems."

This year's judge, Lavonne Adams praised Edwins' "coherence of voice" and "mastery for form." She adds, "I believe that when we read poetry, we look for a narrative voice that we can trust, the chance to delight in how another perceives the world—insight into a moment turned luminescent. Inside each carefully crafted poem, this poet provides us with those opportunities. This is art to treasure."

The South Carolina Academy of Authors was founded in 1986 to recognize the state's distinguished writers, living and deceased, and to promote the reading of their works. According to Tom Mack, chair of the Academy's board of governors and a professor at USC-Aiken, the organization was quite active in its early years, inducting three or four established writers each year into the hall of fame, and awarding fellowships to emerging writers. Sue Monk Kidd won fiction fellowships in 1994 and 1996, says Mack, "giving her the incentive to pursue her goal of one day writing a novel." Kidd is the author of the widely acclaimed *The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Invention of Wings*, a recent Oprah Book Club selection.

Mack says the organization went through "a state of semi-hibernation" at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but has been revived and going "full-force" for the past five years, establishing statewide library partnerships, expanding induction weekend programming, and reviving the fellowships program. Board members credit the organization's revival to Mack's leadership. Fiction prize coordinator Jon Tuttle calls Mack "the heart and soul of it."

According to board member and poetry prize coordinator Libby Bernardin, the organization has also had a long history of recognizing poets, the first fellowship awarded to Paula Goff in 1988. (*Jasper* editor Cindi Boiter received fellowships in fiction and creative nonfiction in the 1990s.) The fellowship was first awarded in 2010, and the annual fiction fellowship was revived in 2011. Past winners have included Ed Madden of Columbia, Angela Kelly of Spartanburg, Kit Loney of Charleston, and Susan Laughter Meyers of Givins. Since the fiction fellowship was revived, winners have included Craig Brandhorst of Columbia and Tom McConnell of Spartanburg.

The 2014 fellows Brock and Edwins will each receive a \$1000 prize at a special brunch held in conjunction with the Academy's annual induction ceremony. At this year's ceremony, to be held April 26-27 in Greenville, writers John Lane, Gilbert Allen, Janette Turner Hospital, and Robert Quillen will all be inducted into the state's literary hall of fame.

For more information about the organization, its fellowships, and South Carolina's literary heritage, visit the Academy website at [scacademyofauthors.org](http://scacademyofauthors.org). -EM

## SMALL LOCAL THEATRE

Philip Rowe grew up around theatre. His parents were active in Baltimore community theatre, and appeared in a series of national commercials for Viva paper towels with their older son Mike, the host/narrator of cable shows like *Dirty Jobs*. In college, Rowe took a few drama classes, realizing how familiar and comfortable the environment felt, with or without the academic setting. He



toured briefly with a children's theatre, but eventually found himself selling used books online. His business flourished, growing to nine employees, with surplus inventory easily sold at Lexington's flea markets. In the back of his mind, however, Rowe felt that a dinner theatre could be a rewarding combination vocation and avocation. Appearing in productions at Workshop, On Stage, and Village Square, he heard from fellow actors that Columbia Children's Theatre was attracting audiences to the largely vacant Richland Mall. Ever the entrepreneur, Rowe pitched the idea to mall management, who gave him a break on the first year's rent for a space previously occupied by a formal-wear shop.

The venue isn't fancy, but is as nice and functional as perhaps a small family-owned restaurant, or a church dining hall, with comfy chairs, an elegant black and salmon-toned color scheme, and tables that can be configured for a couple, a family, or a larger group. Dinner is prepared by A & J Catering, a side project of the head chef at the Clarion Townhouse. The ticket covers dinner and the show, with beer and wine available separately. Entree choices have included Chicken Marsala and Sautéed Tilapia, and there is always a vegetarian option. Theatre Rowe is named for its founder, who wears every hat, building most of the minimalist sets himself, directing, acting, producing, taking reservations, and greeting patrons as they arrive. In Richland Mall, plays are presented as "Columbia Dinner Theatre," but on the road, his troupe becomes the Southeastern Theatrical Arts Bandits (S.T.A.B.) Interactive murder mysteries are popular, and upcoming locales include Bogart's Restaurant, the Old Mill Brewpub, and the Bubble Tea Café. The mysteries have titles like *Who Killed the Boss?* and *Murdered By the Mob*, often incorporating plot devices explaining why actors double as wait staff. There are any number of jokes about how a career in acting means waiting tables, and plenty of cartoons where some thespian holds a sign proclaiming "Will act for food," but Rowe has found a way to make it work. At Richland Mall, his cast enjoys the same meal as the patrons, plus any tips they may earn. On the road, they are paid a modest honorarium, plus tips. Straight plays, like 2012's *Second Samuel* and 2013's *Of Mice and Men*, may use actors not performing that evening (many roles are double or triple cast) or servers from the caterer or the host venue. It might just

be gas money, but a performer who worked all three performances of *Marriage Can Be Murder*, presented over Valentine's Day weekend at both the Clarion and the Mall, earned a little over \$110, for under six hours of work. Many of the mysteries then become a part of the group's repertoire, meaning that an actor may have the chance to reprise a favorite role.

Rowe credits a growing corps of loyal volunteers. Lisa Buchanan was in many ways a co-founder of the theatre, helping with resources and connections to the broader performing arts community, and appearing in most productions. Rowe concedes that he doesn't always attract "big names," who regularly play leads at more established venues. Yet he is able to give opportunities to younger actors ready for their first juicy character part, and veterans looking for something different. "With dinner theatre," Rowe explains, "you're allowed to do things not allowed in traditional acting." Characters may improvise with patrons, sitting down at their table. A speech may be delivered from the middle of the room, giving 80% of the audience a commanding view, while facing away from the other 20%. Rowe cast George Kaupp in a show, even though his resume as an actor was fairly slender. "But he's a teacher," Rowe recalls, "so I figured he knew how to perform for an audience." Kaupp has now done ten shows for Rowe, and has steadily developed his acting skills, playing the challenging role of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*.

Rowe acknowledges that he is growing and learning both as a director and business owner. "Some (shows) truly sucked - others were fantastic! Isn't that what makes a theatre truly a theatre?" Logistics can be challenging; nearly 450 attendees showed up for the Valentine's show, but by the third day everything went like clockwork. Going into year three, Rowe is diversifying and expanding. The next production, *Sunshine Class Social Committee*, will be directed by its author, Pam Godfrey, after which she and Rowe will appear in the two-character play *Six Dance Lessons In Six Weeks*. This spring, Theatre Rowe will move to a larger space in the center of Richland Mall, where Rowe will also operate a used book store. Plans are also in the works for a second performance space in Lexington's Old Mill. For up-to-date details on upcoming productions and dates, visit [scdinne theatre.com](http://scdinne theatre.com). -AK





DETAILS OF DECORATIVE SILVER AT THE ROBERT MILLS HOUSE

## FANCY THINGS & HISTORIC DECORATIVE ART

Not all of us have the luxury of silver to shine and set for Sunday dinner, and many of us wouldn't welcome the burden of doing so if we had to. But it's nice sometimes to pretend. Historic Columbia makes it easy to fantasize about a more elegant way of life by visiting one or more of the historic properties under their domain—including the Robert Mills House, the Hampton - Preston Mansion, the Seibels House, and the newly opened Woodrow Wilson Family Home—and then leave the luxury and all its trappings behind.

Take silver, for example. In a new exhibit opening on March 28<sup>th</sup> at the Robert Mills House on Blanding Street, Historic Columbia opens the storehouse of silver for us to *ooh* and *ahh* over before going home to our paper plates and mismatched stainless steel flatware. "Prideful Possessions: A South Carolina Silver Sampler" is an exhibition of silver that was made, traded, and used in Columbia and Richland County during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and there's some beautiful and intricately designed patterns being shown.

Also in the Mills House is a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramics, some prized and imported from England, with others made right here in Columbia at Landrum - Stork Pottery, which was once located in what is today's Forrest Acres. The exhibit is called "From Landrum to Leeds: Common Ceramics in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Columbia" and is plenty swanky enough to fuel one's fantasy of a fancier day. For more information contact [HistoricColumbia.org](http://HistoricColumbia.org). - **CB**

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# YOUNGBANDSONTHEBRINK

Two of the City's Best and Brightest Mull Their Future

By Kyle Petersen







DEATH OF PARIS  
PHOTO BY ALEXIS SCHWALLIER

## Death of Paris

In a music scene largely characterized by indie rock bands playing on the fringes of mainstream interest, Death of Paris sticks out a bit like a sore thumb. And it's not because they are corporate or moneyed—if anything, the group is the most DIY act in town. It's because they so clearly *want* it more.

“We just look at the band as more as a job,” says multi-instrumentalist/synth maestro Blake Arambula, who founded the band with singer Jayna Doyle in July of 2009. “We have a good time and have fun with it, but it's something we work at every single day.”

That sense of tireless hustle is apparent as the two sit down for this interview, as they both nervously await the results of a fan-centered voting contest for a slot in Charleston's Spring Jam Festival that has seen some vicious social media sniping between their loyal fans and those of Peanut Butter Lovesicle, an ill-named Boswell, PA outfit that has four times the Facebook following (DOP would eventually win the spot). At the same time, they've been finalizing a month-long tour in March that will take them out to the South by Southwest Festival for the first time.

The moment seems emblematic of who the band is and where they're at—slightly shamefaced at how much they have beckoned and cajoled their fans, exhausted by the never-ending PR work, but also thankful to have a sense of continued drive and purpose, along with a small cadre of die-hard supporters.

The two first came to prominence as members of This Machine Is Me, an indie pop band that Arambula started as an undergraduate at the University of South Carolina that eventually recruited Doyle as a singer. Following the dissolution of that group when its members graduated, Doyle and Arambula were at a crossroads, unsure of whether they should continue doing music at all.

“I was a media arts major, so I thought about going to film school,” says Doyle. “But we just started writing songs to cope with not knowing what to do. We got so pumped on writing songs that we took it as a sign.”

From these new songs, along with a handful of material borrowed from TMIM, the two crafted their self-titled debut. Recorded out in Los Angeles with nationally-recognized producer David Baker at Killingsworth Studios, the album placed the emphasis on Doyle's indelible hooks and Arambula's arsenal of shiny synthesizer lines at the expense of their previous, more rock-oriented sound. It was an accomplished effort that won them prominence regionally



and provided a solid base for touring, but failed to truly break out the band.

Since then, DOP has embarked on a number of multi-week tours and done all of the little things right—making each show in town an event, creatively maintaining contact with their fans throughout the country via social media, and continuing to grow as a band.

That last matter has been more than a little difficult given the constant demands of being, essentially, an unpaid full-time job, and DOP has rotated through a cast of bassists and drummers. Since 2010, though, guitarist Patrick Beardsley has been a constant, imbuing their live shows with a rock and roll crunch to counterbalance to Doyle and Arambula's pop tendencies.

"We never wanted it to be the 'Blake and Jayna' thing," says Doyle. "The new record was really meant to be [more] collaborative." That record, the 6-song *Gossip* EP, arrived at the end of 2013 and made a renewed case for DOP as a band that could succeed on mainstream radio and the national spotlight.

Again recorded with top-notch producers (this time with Zack Odom and Kenneth Mount in Atlanta), *Gossip* is loaded with sky-high choruses, of-the-moment bass synths, and a dynamic swagger that was missing from their debut. It also seemed to solidify the identity of the band in ways that their debut hadn't, particularly for Doyle. Her persona on this record splits the difference between assertive girl power and heartbroken romantic, recalling, in some ways, the blockbuster successes of *American Idol* success story Kelly Clarkson or Paramore's Hayley Williams.

"We knew that the first record really set up a certain expectation for [the band], to work at a certain level," says Arambula. "We can't go backward, so we knew we had to top that." The group spent roughly three weeks in the studio narrowing more than two dozen "song ideas" into final products. Only "Shut Up and Kiss Me," the EP's first single, was universally agreed upon.

Despite their current level of stress and preoccupation with the business side of things, Doyle and Arambula are still riding high off that recording experience. "The atmosphere was just so encouraging," Doyle says. "They weren't like jaded producers or anything. They took us at face value." The producers also made the key suggestion to record solely as a four-piece, with Arambula creating bass lines using synthesizers, that allowed the record to more accurately represent the band's live sound.

While whether *Gossip* can launch DOP to the next level remains unclear, the band is charging head-long into 2014, determined to make it any way they can. Once again without a drummer, they would spend the weeks





STAGBRIAR  
PHOTO BY THOMAS HAMMOND

*...if everything's  
been done,*  
***screw it***

following the interview auditioning new ones via YouTube, buying a used tour van, and preparing for a bout of heavy touring.

"We're slowly trying to eliminate or reduce all of our bills to a bare minimum so we can go on the road for extended periods of time," Arambula says. Doyle claims, somewhat impetuously, that they aim to play 200 dates this year.

"I keep saying it so we'll have to live up to it and do it," she says somewhat sheepishly. But she, and the band, are not really kidding.

## Stagbriar

There are certain assumptions you are going to make about a band that calls its first album *Quasi-Hymns, Murder-Ballads, and Tales of How the Hero Died*, but perhaps the most accurate one for Stagbriar, an indie folk-rock band led by brother-and-sister duo Alex and Emily McCollum, is that they are nothing if not artistically ambitious. The album opens with, true to its title, a murder ballad of sorts. But, aside from that, it is probably not what you are expecting.

In fact, that track doesn't really sound like a murder ballad at all. Built on a propulsive rock groove and spit-fire vocal chants that gives way to disorienting chiming guitars and the impassioned cries of the dueling lead singers, the music itself seems more concerned with evoking the emotionally-fueled fall down the rabbit hole that Tom, the "hero" of the song and album, is experiencing. And with lines like "he found his anger in the shape of a seven inch blade and gave the neighbor a brand new tattoo" and indecipherable lines about cocaine snouts and carbon wind, there's an elusive, metaphorical vagueness here that flies in the face of the more expository approaches of traditional folk music.

From there, things only get more cryptic and labyrinth-like as the album follows Tom in a world of burning bridges and sinking ships, all the while knowing that "in the end the hero dies." It's pretty dramatic stuff.

What's more impressive, though, is how quickly and naturally the collaboration between Emily and Alex blossomed into such a heady album. The offspring of a music minister, the young McCollums were constantly making music, but, apart from singing together a few times in church, rarely did so together, often put off by the 4-year

age difference between them.

Emily was the first to take songwriting seriously, releasing a pair of EPs while still in high school that had traces of Taylor Swift-style melodrama curbed by an achingly pure voice and tasteful production from Kenny McWilliams at Archer Avenue.

Meanwhile, Alex played some in cover bands and explored an entirely different musical world as a composition major at the University of South Carolina. "I lived in the classical music world for a long time," says Alex, who got a degree in composition from the USC. "But not just like Mozart and Beethoven. I got heavy into experimental composers, like Iannis Xenakis and John Cage. I kind of went off the deep end. There was a good six months where I kind of hated music because I thought nobody could do anything new. I don't know if I would ever have been okay with playing [this kind of music] had I not gone through that. I realized, if everything's been done, screw it."

The spark for the duo came when Emily asked Alex to sing some on what was originally meant to be a solo EP but eventually became the first Stagbriar release. It pales a bit in comparison to *Quasi-Hymns* songwriting-wise, but the magic of their two voices blending together is evident from the start. Both are blessed with versatile instruments that can swoop under and over each other, attentive to dynamics and texture as much as the notes themselves.

"If you look at it from a music theory perspective, it's really pretty simple stuff," Alex says. "We're in parallel thirds or sixths the entire time. It's not very intricate, except for a few parts, and it just [ends up] really natural."

As it turns out, that chance collaboration led to a much closer relationship than they had ever had before, turning them into frequent co-writers and each other's biggest fans. "She's my favorite writer," Alex says. "She has a way with words that I can't explain. I just want to get her in a place where she's comfortable writing for a [full] electric band now."

For her part, Emily credits Alex with shifting her musical tastes a bit and adding more complexity to their approach. "All the wordy stuff is [him]. He likes to spit a lot of words out at one time. He's also taught me a lot about the way I deliver the things that I say. The way he delivers words, the tones and emphasis he gives to certain words, or not give, is something I've really picked up on."

Despite the clear evenhanded nature of their music, in conversation Alex tends to dominate, swept up in analytical and conceptual approaches to thinking about music as Emily, still an undergraduate at USC, comfortably chimes in at appropriate points. It's likely a residual effect of the age gap, and noteworthy in that the other current members of Stagbriar—Jared Pyritz on guitar, Brett Kent on bass, and Steve Sancho on drums—are all older than both of the McCollums.

However, once you see her on stage, the reticence disappears almost entirely, with a natural, almost fierce stage presence that gives none of the sense of reserve she might have in conversation. "I'm definitely okay with that," she says in response. "Being on stage for me, I feel a bit like a different character. I feel a lot younger [in general] when I'm not on stage. When I'm [performing], I feel bigger and sort of over everything."

Like Death of Paris, Stagbriar is currently planning to head to the South by Southwest festival and are deep in the midst of writing a new album with a full band for the time, testing the limits of the material from *Quasi*. It will be a stark difference from their early days as a three-piece, where drummer Brandon Edwards would often add little more than a floor tom to the guitars and banjo-laden siblings.

"It can be a lot to hold [musically], when you are all there is," says Emily. Alex agrees, noting that they "were always on edge about it, because we never knew if we were doing it 'right.'" They've found a lot of comfort in their current line-up, which features three scene veterans who have helped them through a lot of first timer jitters regarding touring and playing live. Kent has even taken on a bit of a managerial role, booking all of the band's shows and allowing the McCollums to focus on writing.

As for a second full-length, which the group hopes to have out in 2014, they are hoping to be very methodical and deliberate in their approach to better what they did on the last album. "We were willing to get as big as we needed to get [on that record]," he says. "We weren't trying for any kind of Shovels & Rope-style aesthetic or anything. But now that we're writing in that [full rock band] atmosphere, we have to be super-aware of [that] false energy."

"I think [though]," he admits, "that we're finding a place where we're slowly [becoming] more comfortable."



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# LOCAL RECORD REVIEWS

EDITED  
BY KYLE PETERSEN



## Can't Kids

*Ennui Go*

On what is likely one of the more anticipated releases in the local scene in 2014, Can't Kids leader Adam Cullum seems intent on delivering something a bit different than the group's well-received debut *Brushes Touches Tongues*. While the group hasn't exactly abandoned their self-described brand of "Southern Gothic cheerleader metal" that seemed so startlingly refreshing in 2012, there does seem to be a deliberate sense of stepping back, leaving the songs a bit more open and making the lyrics a bit more pensive than that raucous effort. On a number of efforts here, including the album's bookends "Oh Momma" and "Oh Adam" and the album's centerpiece, the hauntingly bereft "You Don't Plan," the songs mostly feature a pretty cello line from Amy Cuthbertson and Cullum's quiet fingerpicking and plaintive vocals at

the expense of the two members who bring much of the dynamism to the band, bassist Henry Thomas and drummer/second vocalist Jessica Oliver, who tend to only appear on the back end of these tunes. In keeping with that feel, Oliver, who used to be almost a co-leader in the group, seems to have taken more of a backseat in these sessions, sounding more like a traditional harmony singer than ever before. Only two songs here—the rollicking pop-punk number "More Soda" and the Modest Mouse-y "Alison Wonder"—see her and the band up to their old tricks.

While some fans may be put off by the left turn, *Ennui Go* actually makes for a better listen than *Brushes*. The two raucous rockers break-up some of the more singer/songwriter material nicely, and the band is mostly finding a sweet spot between the two extremes, finding a buoyant pop bounce on tunes like "The Calm" and "The Twist" that feels different, but every bit as singular, as their early material. And Cullum has always been a brilliant songwriter, alternatively astutely honest and self-reflective as well as caustic and cackling. He still occasionally shows his love of Isaac Brock on his sleeve a bit too much, but his misanthropy never reaches his hero's dire levels—instead, Cullum always seems to write, even when he is engaging in casual wordplay or humor, with a keen desire to figure out, however bleakly, the world around him.

With a short running time and a quieter, humbler approach, it would be too easily to think this is a sophomore slump. I would argue, instead, that not only is it a stronger and more cohesive effort, it is also exactly the kind of record Can't Kids needed to make to grow and mature as a band. — Kyle Petersen



## The Mobros

*Walking with a Different Stride*

Like so many other things worth writing about, I first heard about the Mobros in a bar.

After consuming many beers, an older gentleman started telling me about this two-piece blues band he had seen the previous weekend. Because Americans receive two-piece blues bands with the regularity of a utility bill, I listened to him rave about his latest discovery with a mild air of cynicism that I have since come to regret. He told me that they were too young to be as good as they were, and that they were one of the tightest local acts he'd ever seen. As it turned out, he was pretty much dead-on.

In the years since they've appeared, the Mobros have become one of the most talked about bands not just in the state, but in the entire Southeast. Columbia music veterans speak of them with the sort of pride and



amazement usually reserved for parents whose teenager has been allowed to skip the tenth grade. It's for this reason that the Mobros' first proper release, *Walking with a Different Stride*, has been so hotly anticipated.

And the album is good--there's no doubt about it. All of the brothers' strengths are on full display. Kelly Morris has a rich, soulful voice that would be unusual even for an older and world-wearier man, while drummer Patrick Morris deftly melds creativity with discipline and plays in perfect syncopation with his brother's galloping guitar lines. For added flavor, breezy harmonies are spread throughout the album with effective economy. As recorded proof of the duo's talent as musicians and songwriters, *Different Stride* is a success; but it lacks a certain energy that has always been integral to the band's appeal.

The Mobros aren't exactly at fault. This is the sort of problem you run into when a live band this good tries to translate its stage energy into another form altogether. Some bands do it with ease while for others it can be like gluing a lightning bolt to the sky. But the problem really has less to do with the artist and more to do with the way people consume the music in their own community. A big-time national touring band may only come around once or twice a year, so the record is really the best you can do while you wait to see them again. When an act as undeniably talented as The Mobros is something local, and it's not that difficult to see in person, an album will always feel second best. But really, it's not unthinkable that the Mobros could become a national touring band someday soon, and when that happens, *Walking with a Different Stride* might benefit from reappraisal. —Michael Spawn



## Mat Cothran

### Failure

Cothran has always had a penchant for brevity, but this, his final release of 2013, takes that credo almost to its breaking point.

Of the four songs here only one passes the two minute mark, and just barely at that. Fittingly, it's also the songwriter's most direct paean to apathy yet, with dark pronouncements that "all last year I wanted to die / and no one was there to change my mind" and "someday we'll beg to die" clouding his warm, cozy melodies and lo-fi arrangements.

There's less use of keyboards and synthesizers here than we get from a typical Elvis Depressedly or Coma Cinema release, with mostly acoustic guitars and prominent bass lines guiding these songs along. That starkness is perhaps why this is one of his rare releases to get tagged with his given name.

For all its slightness, though, the power of Cothran's seemingly innate gift for song shines through brightly here. On the closing "I Don't Know," he sings with aching poignancy and intimacy of "sinking down into your heart where I belong / but in the end my secrets keep me alone" over a spare guitar line, and the record ends just a few moments later, leaving you painfully, beautifully alone. —Kyle Petersen



## Release the Dog

### Out for Justice

This young indie rock trio's debut LP can be a little rough around the edges (it was recorded and mixed entirely in the member's various abodes), but it's hard to deny how fun and engaging these tunes are. Pulling from their favorite college rock bands like Dinosaur Jr and Pavement, Release the Dog blaze through their intricate tunes with a carefree urgency, matching understated vocals to ferocious guitar riffs and winding solos with aplomb. In fact, most of the fun of this record is the sheer exuberance of the group's fresh-faced arrangements.

On the downside, there sonic consistency can be a little overbearing over the course of the album's runtime, a problem that has also plagued some of J. Mascis and company's middle-period efforts. Fortunately, Re-

lease the Dog also has tunes like "Back to the Wind" which reveal the more earnest singer/songwriter side that the louder tunes can often mask that also have the added bonus of providing a breather for an excellent record whose run time can feel a little long. It also, perhaps, suggests how good these guys are at focused songwriting when they put their minds to it, suggesting that the best is yet to come. —Kyle Petersen



## Sheem One & Jorai

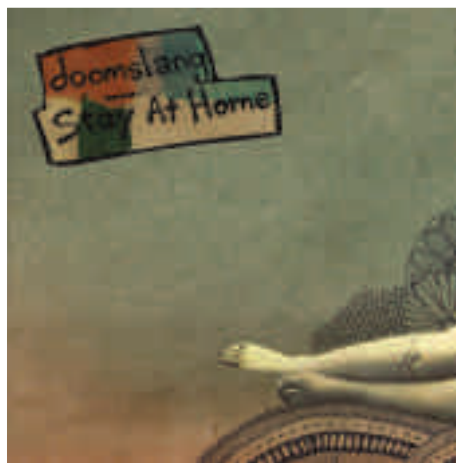
### Success

*Success* marks the first collaboration between local MCs Sheem One and Jorai Williams, and the title is a fitting one. The common theme uniting the record's 19 tracks is the pursuit of one's dreams and the internal and external conflicts that can threaten to interfere when the dreamer insists on writing the rules. There are also fluid meditations on women ("Ole Girl," "Your Love), the joys and struggles of fatherhood ("I Ain't Got Time," "Push"), and day-to-day tasks like balancing the checkbook ("Fly"). But Sheem and Jorai never stray too far lyrically from their shared belief that real, honest success can't come from anything but intuition, and hard work doesn't stop for anything except tucking in the kids.

The most striking thing about *Success* is how unrelenting the album is in its commitment to positivity. These guys are *for real*. They dote on their women. They don't use swear words. They don't smoke weed. They're critical of the hero worship that can negatively influence young fans ("If rappers are your heroes then they're failin' ya / If you're locked behind bars they ain't bailin' ya") and, indeed, there's no trace of the braggadocio and self-involved opulence that permeates so much of mainstream hip-hop. Philosophically, Sheem and Jorai are more in line with artists like Dead Prez, but without the militancy and adoration for conspiracy theories.

Both guys possess laidback, conversational rapping styles that push the lyrics front and center, and there isn't any doubt that the message, for them, is everything. And the music is likewise low-key, jibing easily with their alternately confessional and motivational sermons without ever sounding passive or phoned-in. Female backup singers, non-intrusive beats, and soul-infused hooks are all over the place, recalling the East Coast sound that dominated much of '90s hip-hop. And that's another part of *Success's* appeal—the love these guys have for the Palmetto state, and Columbia in particular, is in plain evidence. They namedrop everything from churches they grew up attending to specific streets they hung out on as kids.

It's hard to find fault in an album this earnest, not that it would matter if you did. They aren't the least bit vague in the assuredness that their cause is right and proper, and I'm in no position to disagree. I haven't heard either of their work without the other, but *Success* is proof that a shared vision between two original talents, along with a pay-the-car-insurance-or-die-trying attitude, can yield something unique and worthwhile. You should be rooting for 'em. — *Michael Spawn*



## Doomslang *Stay At Home EP*

Doomslang, the pet project of Joshua McCormack, straddles some heretofore unseen line between The Residents, Bon Iver, and Broken Social Scene. That's a line I wasn't sure I thought existed, largely because the quirkiness and hesitancy may not necessarily be fully intentional.

Carrying the highest banner for lo-fi production, "Tonight's Offerings" sees liquid treatments of hissy, smoky vocals, with tenuous rhythmic treatments of electronic sounds and Moldy Peaches-style guitar playing. There is a certain naiveté to the song—and much of the album—that vacillates between irascible and endearing. "Dawgie Lullaby," the third track on the record, drifts quietly into what sounds like it could be an unreleased track from Her Space Holiday or old-school Xiu Xiu as McCormack sings with a close-to-the-mic intimacy as his vocals almost turn away before as the necessary chimes and drums come in to flesh the song out. McCormack's androgynous voice doesn't soar so much as it flows through the drifting through the terrain on "I'm Supposin,'" a song which capitalizes on the various techniques—

spatial, instrumental, rhythmic, melodic—that McCormack tests out through the rest of the album. This is the closest McCormack gets to channeling Kevin Drew, as "Nerf Hospital" sounds like it could comfortably fit on the last third of a KC Accidental album.

McCormack has talent. There's something to be said for his tiny symphonies and the delicate monologues, but it isn't without its issues, both formally and structurally; musically, there is a preponderance of stasis, and rather than fully-formed melodic lines, ideas tend to be individual points that rarely fully evolve. Still, I would love to see McCormack iron out some of the technical ideas—and spend more time mastering, especially—than he did here. It would be well worth McCormack pairing up with additional musicians, as he did in "Nerf Hospital," and more fully fleshing out his musical universe. It's one that seems worth exploring. — *Tom Dempster*



## We Roll Like Madmen *The Kids Must Die*

Recently signed to Post-Echo, this remarkably compelling experimental electronic dance music duo called Clemson home prior to their relocation to Columbia late last year. It's a welcome addition to our local scene, particularly with the release of *The Kids Must Die*, a five song EP that sees the group adding hip-hop flourishes (and guest MCs) to their sonic arsenal.

While the most characteristic part of their sound is Jordan Young's emotive vocals, which are often pitched and processed in interesting ways, it's the way that he and partner Chris Tollack build sonic landscapes of pulsating synths, roving bleeps and blurps, and oddball percussion to create a thoroughly heady mix that really excites. Bringing to mind the adventurous innovation of Daft Punk in spirit if not always in practice, their compositions always seem relentless more

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than anything, rarely stopping their idiosyncratic twists and turns to catch a breath.

Still, it's the two guest MCs who are going to get most of the buzz here—scene mainstay FatRat da Czar sounds reinvigorated by the new territory of Tollack and Young's beats, with his husky flow taking on a new texture in the reverb-y world of EDM. His wizened confidence sits somewhat uncomfortably next to Young's pained vocals, but it somehow works to acknowledge the exciting distance the performance bridges. It's a similar experience for *Believe* (Grand Prize Winner from Last Year), whose first verse on the opening cut "On" gradually builds the song to its riveting, dubstep-influenced climax, and then proceeds to skitter another verse over the top of the throbbing riffs that constitute the song's coda.

It's not all pounding rhythms, though—WRLM try out everything here from spacey melodies and ambient white noise to clean dance grooves and genuine pop hooks over the course of these five songs, evincing a wide-eyed sense of adventure that should be fun to follow as the duo continues to evolve.  
—Kyle Petersen



## FK MT

### *Underwater Goddammit EP*

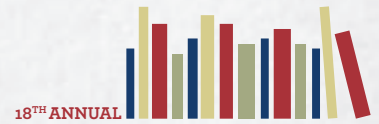
Beginning somewhere between a Modest Mouse riff and a Yo La Tengo drone, "out ov it"—the second cut on fk mt.'s EP *underwater goddammit*—bristles, demanding to escape a distortion pedal. The vocalist, Ryan Morris, jumps into the fray, channeling what may have been Wayne Coyne's younger brother. Ryan pushes the upper range of his voice into often uncomfortable spaces, bemoaning an oft-heard sentiment in under-30 guitar rock: why, oh why, must I continue to screw it all up? The lyrics—few and sparse, unadorned and direct-channel straight to the heart

of angst, with cleanly-grafted and driving guitar work pushing against the often-dragging, less insistent and much more unsure drums laid down on the track.

"Good listener," the EP's opener, demonstrates a thoughtful riff and sophisticated harmonic treatment, and a much more mature lyrical treatment, at least from a formal standpoint. The track still suffers from an unsteady pulse in the drums, though the tension and push-me, pull-you does not go unnoticed as the singer laments "I had a plan to get myself together / But it all fell through on account of the changing weather."

"Take it slower," the most accomplished cut on the EP, stands out for numerous reasons, though chiefly for a much-needed differentiation in the treatment of guitars and more tempered approach to texture. Lyrically, it's the strongest too, clearly showing the decentered desperation the other two songs dance around. The length is right, too—the musical pacing fits well with the straightforward vocals, which Ryan delivers in a broader, though more comfortable, range.  
—Tom Dempster

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Dell Goodrich rocks the title role in *Stand By Your Man: The Tammy Wynette Story*, continuing at **Town Theatre** through March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Then director Jamie Carr Harrington, choreographer Tracy Steele, and music director Chris Cockrell team up to bring animated fantasy to life in *Shrek the Musical*, opening May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Scott Stepp plays the title ogre, with Sirena Dib as Princess Fiona, Matt Wright as Donkey, and Paul Lindley II as Lord Farquaad. (Harrington promises “a who’s who of Columbia theatre as assorted fairy tale creatures.”) For information, call 803-799-2510, or visit [towntheatre.com](http://towntheatre.com).

USC’s Dave Britt returns to **Workshop Theatre** to direct another of Neil Simon’s semi-autobiographical serio-comedies, *Biloxi Blues*, running March 14<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>. Eugene Jerome (Jason Fernandes), last seen in as a naive teen in *Brighton Beach*, is now in boot camp, as he and fellow G.I. Epstein (Colby Gambrell) contend with a hard-core sergeant (Lee Williams); Haley Sprinkle and Jennifer Moody Sanchez play good and bad girls respectively. Then prepare to roll, roll, roll in ze hay, as director Chad Henderson, music director Tom Beard, and choreographer Mandy Applegate present Mel Brooks’ *Young Frankenstein*, opening May 9<sup>th</sup>. For information, call 803-799-4876, or visit [workshoptheatre.com](http://workshoptheatre.com)

**Stage 5 Theatre** presents *Sordid Lives*, the quirky cult favorite from Del Shores centering around the death of a Texas family matriarch, and the resulting scandal. Darlene Natili’s cast includes Brock Henderson, Catherine Christian, Tori Jepson, Jessica Fox, Crystal Gleim, Bill Boland, and Shirley McGuinness. Run dates are March 14<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>. Gleim then takes quirky to the next level, directing *Psycho Beach Party*, running April 25<sup>th</sup> - May 4<sup>th</sup>. For information, call 803-834-1775, or visit [mbfproductions.net](http://mbfproductions.net).

A dream musical cast, including Kevin Bush, Vicky Saye Henderson, Chase Nelson, Kendrick Marion, Linda Posey, Kyle Collins, Caroline Weidner and Matthew DeGuire, set out to *See Rock City And Other Destinations*, running March 14<sup>th</sup> - April 5<sup>th</sup> on the **Thigpen Main Stage at Trustus Theatre**. Vignettes follow characters searching for purpose and connection in life, as the setting hops from the Alamo to Niagara Falls. Dewey Scott-Wiley directs, with music direction by

Randy Moore. Heather McCue then directs Darion McCloud and members of the Nia Company in David Mamet’s gripping and controversial *Race*, running April 11<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> in the Trustus Side Door Theatre. Director Robin Gottlieb then takes over the main stage with a revival of John Guare’s *The House of Blue Leaves*, a dark comedy of family and societal dysfunction in 1960s Queens, NY, which opens May 9<sup>th</sup>. For information, call 803-254-9732, or visit [trustus.org](http://trustus.org).

**Columbia Children’s Theatre** presents *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, based on Jon Scieszka’s popular children’s book. Jerry Stevenson directs Paul Lindley II, Evelyn Clary, Toni Moore, Elizabeth Stepp, and Julian DeLeon in a parody of classic fairy tales like Red Riding Hood, and the newly-merged “Cinderumples-tiltskin.” Run dates are March 28<sup>th</sup> - April 6<sup>th</sup>; for information, call 803-691-4548, or visit [columbiachildrenstheatre.com](http://columbiachildrenstheatre.com).

Director Pam Godfrey depicts a hilarious struggle for power in a small town Sunday school class in her original play *Sunshine Class Social Committee*, running March 28<sup>th</sup> - April 5<sup>th</sup> at **Theatre Rowe**. While not a murder mystery, dinner is still included with your ticket! For information, call 803-200-2012, or visit [scdinnertheatre.com](http://scdinnertheatre.com), and see the profile on page 8 of this issue.

There’s a new kid on the block: **Blythewood Community Theatre** will produce its inaugural show, *Hello Dolly!*, at Westwood High School, April 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>. Rachel Tefft directs Kathy Million as the titular matchmaker, and the cast includes Dan Reyes, Nicholas Sargent, William Ellis, Emily Clelland and Zana Mills. Christy Shealy Mills choreographs this musical extravaganza, which originally won a record-setting ten Tony Awards, thanks to music and lyrics from Jerry Herman and a book by Michael Stewart. For more information, visit [facebook.com/groups/178781565652102/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/178781565652102/).

There’s something rotten in the state of Denmark, as murder, madness, and a restless ghost plague the royal family. **USC’s Theatre South Carolina** and director Robert Richmond tackle possibly Shakespeare’s greatest work, the tragedy *Hamlet*, running April 18<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> in Drayton Hall. Visiting

Equity actor Richard Willis plays Claudius, with James Costello in the title role. Meanwhile, over in the Lab Theatre (at 1400 Wheat St.) rascally rake Petruchio hopes to “wive it wealthily in Padua,” but first he must warm the heart of the fiery Kate. Marybeth Gorman directs *The Taming of the Shrew*, running April 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>. For information, call 803-777-2551, or visit [artsandsciences.sc.edu/thea/2014/Season13-14.html](http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/thea/2014/Season13-14.html).

There’s no shortage of new material locally, and Robert Harrelson and Teresa McWilliams are directing *Hey G*, the latter’s original adaptation of the vintage William Pow-

ell/Carole Lombard film *My Man Godfrey*. Presented by **West Columbia’s On Stage Productions**, this screwball comedy follows a flighty heiress who passes a homeless man off as her butler, with expected hijinks ensuing. The cast includes Mark Ingham, Mandy Tenney, Emily Meadows, and Gary Pozsik. Run dates are April 25<sup>th</sup> - May 4<sup>th</sup>; for information, call 407-319-2596, or visit [onstagesc.com/](http://onstagesc.com/).

**The SC Shakespeare Company** is producing *Cymbeline*, a tragedy/romance involving forbidden love and dynastic succession in ancient Britain, with Chris Cook, Libby

Campbell, and Katie Mixon featured in the cast. This rarely-produced epic will be performed live under the stars in Finlay Park, May 1<sup>st</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>; for information, call 803-787-BARD (2273), or visit [shakespeare.org](http://shakespeare.org).

Leslie Dellinger and Vicky Jackson are directing *New York Minute: A Musical Revue*, running May 9<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> at the **Village Square Theatre** in Lexington. The show follows the history and evolution of American musical theatre, from the Ziegfeld era to the hits of today. For information, call 803-359-1436, or visit [villagesquaretheatre.com](http://villagesquaretheatre.com).

# JAPAN AND THE JAZZ AGE

February 7 – April 20, 2014

**Columbia Museum of Art**

1515 Main Street in Columbia, SC | 803.799.2810 | [columbiamuseum.org](http://columbiamuseum.org)



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## Women Behind the Camera

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# Molly Harrell: Finding the Naked Truth

By Cynthia Boiter

She says it was a “midlife crisis” that brought her back to the camera, picking up on a proclivity she developed in her first photography class in 1983 at the University of Tennessee, but Molly Harrell was bound to find her way back behind the lens. The freedom she found there has allowed her the kind of comfort—with self as well as others—many people would spend hours on the therapist’s couch to achieve. And bravery? It takes a special kind of guts to switch careers in the middle of it all, go back to school, study seriously, start anew. But guts are something Harrell has no shortage of, whether she’s picking up and moving to a new city, or standing full frontal before her own camera for a self-portrait. The chick is tough.

A freelance photographer since 2007, Harrell specializes both commercially and personally in portraiture, but not always the run of the mill kind. Inspired by the works of Diane Arbus, Harrell has had the opportunity to study with some of the most influential photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries including Vincent Laforet, Albert Watson, and Chase Jarvis. But her top two idols include Michael Kenna, whose work with extremely lengthy exposures she has yet to emulate, and Robert Mapplethorpe, whose work

with nudes, she has. “The essence of any portrait,” she says, “is the nude. ... Most nudes I shoot have never been shot nude before.” But doing so “takes the mask off and breaks it all down.” Harrell believes that working with nude portraiture leads to a relationship between photographer and subject that transcends physical intimacy to a highly sensitive place of emotional intimacy—one that is ultimately, and ideally, visible to the viewer of the finished photograph.

Nudity often plays a role in her own self-portraits, as well. “When you take pictures of yourself it helps you learn to deal with other people’s insecurities,” she says. “My job is to make people feel good about how they look. When they feel good; they look good. It’s a dance; a tango. And the better you dance the better the shot.”

Her favorite subject, however, is the everyday person. “I’m very proud of the work I got to do with One Columbia,” Harrell says, referencing the period in 2013 when she photographed 1300 Columbia residents over a six week period of time. Each person chose a wooden picture frame in which to pose with a color that coordinated to their specific arts discipline. While these photos are available online at [www.OneColumbia.com](http://www.OneColumbia.com), Harrell’s other work can be seen at her own website at [mollyharrell.sites.livebooks.com](http://mollyharrell.sites.livebooks.com).







## Women Behind the Camera

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# Jessica Christine Owen: Learning and Teaching

By Deborah Swearingen

Packing up and moving across the country to a place where the people and culture are completely unknown can be intimidating. For some, it would likely be too daunting a task to consider. But for Jessica Christine Owen, it was a challenge willingly accepted. As an innovative photographer who grew up and attended school in New Mexico, the change was more about a new perspective and the opportunity to work with other women who created work completely different from her own.

Owen fell in love with photography after taking her first class as a sophomore in high school, although her style and skill level have grown tremendously since then. While obtaining an undergraduate degree at New Mexico State University, Owen switched her major from physics to art. It was a huge adjustment, no doubt, but art was a passion with which she felt she couldn't part.

She believed that if she was passionate enough, she would be able to make a living.

The young photographer humbly thinks that her greatest accomplishment thus far has been her acceptance into the University of South Carolina's graduate program. She participated in a post-baccalaureate program at NMSU, after a disappointing outcome in her first attempt at higher education. That said, Owen has won several local awards during her time in Columbia, including first place at USC's student show in 2013, and she maintains that graduate school continues to be an unsurpassed source of pride in her life.

Conceptually, Owen's work deals primarily with female stereotypes, gender roles, and the absurdity of beauty standards in Western culture. Interestingly, she uses herself in her photography—something that many artists shy away from. But Owen says that utilizing her own

physical landscape helps to make her work more confrontational, while also emphasizing the messages she hopes to convey. She also likes that she is personally involved in every aspect of what she does. It intertwines her with the work and provides her with an even deeper connection to her art.

After she finishes graduate school, Owen plans to teach. Teaching keeps her enthusiastic about her work and allows her to continue to learn and grow as a photographer. Perhaps her own ability to cultivate a depth of knowledge is what excites her most about working in photography. "Art is the most rewarding when you get to teach yourself something you don't already know," she says. Owen's final show will be the first week of April, right before she graduates in May. For more on Jessica Christine or to view some of her projects, visit her website [www.jessicachristine-owen.com](http://www.jessicachristine-owen.com).





## Women Behind the Camera

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# Kathleen Robbins: Photographing the Most Southern Place on Earth

By Kara Gunter

Some part of photographer Kathleen Robbins permanently exists in the flat, rural, alluvial plains of the Mississippi Delta. Her family has farmed cotton there for six generations, so the soil has practically entwined itself into her DNA, creating the need to visit often and record the changing landscape of the place itself, but also a vanishing way of life. Cotton fields are being replaced by soy and corn, and communities that grew up around the cultivation of cotton are dispersing.

Robbins, who teaches photography at USC, makes the trip back home to Mississippi every three months, or so. She doesn't really consider herself a documentarian, but a steadfast diarist. The work is personal to her and her family, and photographing the region is a way of understanding her own identity. "I need to photograph in Mississippi. It satisfies something in me to have my camera in that particular landscape. I have a desire to make photographs in general, but I must make pictures in Mississippi and in the delta. It allows me to understand something about my past and my present. And it helps me understand a place that is not easy to understand. But I'm not trying

to make definitive or declarative work. It is quite personal."

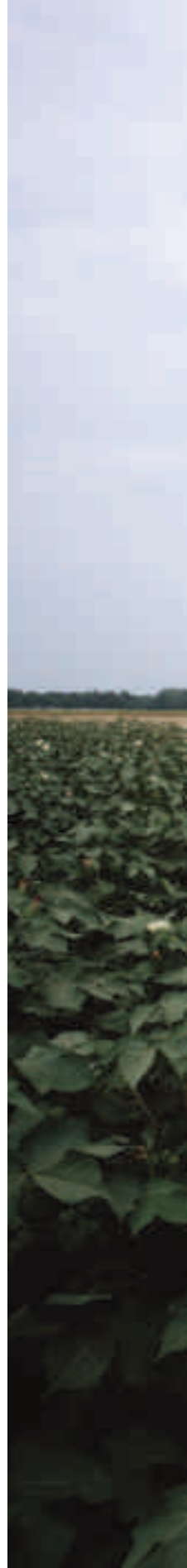
This visual diary is entitled *In Cotton*, and it began in 2011 with the help of a grant from the USC Provost's Creative and Performing Arts program. At an estimated 1800 clicks of the shutter, the project is still going strong. Robbins's process is not a quick one, and she adopts a slow but steady pace which allows the work to unfurl in a more organic fashion. It's fitting that a body of work about a place with such a deep history would be a lengthy and time-consuming story to tell.

Likewise, when someone is telling a particularly *good* story, we don't ever really want it to end. "I worked on the *Flatland* project for 7+ years and amassed hundreds of rolls of E-6/ transparency film. No idea how many exactly- but it's a lot," Robbins remarks in reference to a series of photographs entitled *Into the Flatland*, a body of work that will never truly end as long as the photographer is still photographing her family. *Into the Flatland* is about that realization we all have at some point, when we fully comprehend that we've left home for good, and there is no going back, really. We may physically revisit these places, but life has changed

for better or worse, and we are left with a sense of nostalgia for the way things were. Robbins insists it's more than just nostalgia, however. It's an ancient memory-- a cellular memory, perhaps-- passed from generation to generation. While a moment has passed, in that way, it is forever a part of you.

In our minds, we carry with us forlorn snapshots from our past, visual imprints of memories that have stayed with us despite their seeming unimportance. Maybe it was the light that day, or the angle of our glance that made this mundane moment different from all the other countless moments. Robbins describes her work as "muddy, stark, and familial." There is also the strong sense that we may well be seeing the artist's own memories projected onto photographic paper. The images *are* stark, but they're also reverent, and rich with implied history and warmth.

Robbins's work will be on display at Rebekah Jacob Gallery in Charleston from March-May, and at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, also in Charleston, in a two person exhibition with Yaakov Israel, tentatively set for August 22- October 11, 2014. USC Press is publishing *Into the Flatland* in book form and it will be available for purchase in 2015.







# CURTAIN CALL

W O R K S H O P ' S L E A D I N G L A D I E S L O O K B A C K

BY AUGUST KRICKEL

"All we are trying to do is to present good theatre." So said unnamed "leaders" of Workshop Theatre, in a 1968 newspaper article which assessed their first season and promoted the second. It's almost impossible to imagine that the group often referred to the upstart or breakaway theatre, founded by rebels or young Turks, is nearing the half-century mark, and harder still to imagine that soon the curtain will fall on their familiar location at Bull and Gervais Streets. Still, audiences know that a second act always follows that curtain, and that a theatre is far more than a building, however beloved that building may be. In keeping with this issue's theme of women artists, we thought it only appropriate to consider all that Workshop has meant to so many people over the years, and to tell its story through the eyes, ears and memories of some - only a handful out of dozens, hundreds even - of its most distinguished leading ladies.

Everyone recalls the founding differently. Many active on stage in the '60s were students of Columbia College professor Mary Lou Kramer, who directed the children's theatre program at Town Theatre, and gave lessons and produced shows at her home. Mary Jeffcoat says "the forever most important person was Mary Lou. She trained so many of us. Always when I act in anything, I hear her voice: 'Little Folk, it's Magic Time!' And it always was. It always is." Ann Dreher credits Town Theatre, where her parents met while doing a show, as "having more to do with (Workshop's origin) than we are willing to admit to ourselves," because young actors learned their craft there. Alluding to the myth of Athena, she says "They gathered us together, and we grew out of their heads."

Mary Arnold Garvin was heavily involved as a volunteer at Town, along with contemporaries Bette Herring, Pam Inabinet, Lou Kaplan, Jim E. Quick, and Cynthia Gilliam. The resident director, Robert Harrison, "was asked to come up with a season that was novel, and he did. I mean he really did," Garvin laughs, including works by Moliere, Pirandello, and an allegorical dark comedy called *The Firebugs*. Ticket sales suffered, and his contract was not renewed. "They were going from Cheerios to high-fiber, and some of them just couldn't digest it," Gilliam jokes. Garvin also recalls that Harrison "appalled people by wearing a sportcoat rather than a tuxedo on opening night." It was the 60s," she continues. "New ideas were coming in, wonderful new plays were being written, so partly in protest, and partly in the spirit of the 60s, we decided 'Let's just leave and do our own theatre.'"

That spirit was already at work in Gilliam and Quick, who were producing dinner theatre shows at the Laurel Hill Supper Club. "We were on fire back in the day," Gilliam remembers. "There were no limits - we could do whatever we pleased. Youth is brave, and fearless, and oh my Lord, so naive." When the cost of meals proved too high, Quick and Gilliam joined what Kay Thigpen, Kaplan's daughter, describes as "a groundswell to form a director's theatre." In the spring of 1967, more than 50 theatre supporters held a series of meetings, and agreed on a name: The Workshop Theatre of South Carolina ("The" was always included in its official title in early years, as was the spelling "theater.") A steering committee comprised 13 people: Mr. and Mrs. W. Croft Jennings, Jr., David Bagwell, Mr. and Mrs. Spruce Mc-

Cain, J.B. Bagwell, Mr. and Mrs. William Hilyer, Mrs. Phyllis Giese, Mrs. William Ashe, Mrs. William M. Pettit III, plus Herring and Garvin. The combination of actors, backstage volunteers, and community leaders felt that "the governing board of the new organization should be comprised of people active in theatre production," according to newspaper accounts. Drucilla Brookshire, who played the lead in *Shirley Valentine* and Mrs. Clackett in Gilliam's production of *Noises Off*, also served five terms on Workshop's board including several as president. She recalls "there were people who not only wanted to have a place to direct, but also a say in choosing the plays." A fund-raising revue, called *A Taste of Theatre*, was organized, featuring excerpts from popular musicals. Kay Thigpen stage-managed, and the show was co-directed by Jim E. Quick, Bette Herring, and Thom Jones. A full season followed in 1968, with Kramer directing Gilliam and Quick in *Dylan*, followed by Quick directing Inabinet in *Peter Pan*, Gilliam directing Garvin and Malie Heider as Blanche and Stella in *Streetcar Named Desire*, and Gilliam directing Quick in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Shows were presented at Ft. Jackson, and *Forum* featured Columbia's first racially diverse cast, although not by any plan or intent; Gilliam cast an African-American actress, recalling that "she was beautiful, had a beautiful voice, and didn't mind wearing a string bikini." Women directing was something new too, and Garvin says "That's part of the 60's - women were emerging more." Memberships were sold, and programs were filled with advertisements; a direct mail piece designed by Gilliam won an advertising industry award. "We had wonderful commu-





ABOVE AND BELOW, *STEEL MAGNOLIAS*, 1989. PICTURED FROM LEFT-TO-RIGHT ABOVE LIBBY CAMPBELL, HI BEDFORD-ROBERSON, JENNIFER PELUSO, BARBARA LOWRANCE HUGHES, BETH BURNSIDE, AND JANE BRUTTO.



nity support," Garvin says; "furniture stores would lend us whole sets."

Adger Brown, whose coverage in the newspaper was key in attracting attention to the new group, wrote that "In spite of the newness of the Workshop Theatre, its productions have been marked with a singularly professional stamp - both from the standpoint of directing, and performances." He noted the common expectation for the new theatre to be experimental, when it in fact offered a quite traditional season. "They called us guerilla theatre," Garvin laughs. Heider feels that Brown believed "the more theatre the better. Although he reviewed Workshop more stringently, because he held it to a higher theatrical standard."

Columbia Museum director Jack Craft was instrumental in the group's next stage, offering the Museum's small auditorium as another performance venue. "We had no stage, just platforms," Garvin says, and Gilliam adds "but we had great actors." Garvin feels that because seating was limited, "we became an 'in' thing. (Craft) said 'Take the old dance school on the corner, and do what you will with it.' And we demolished the inside, and made a theatre out of it. We still had only 99 people - that's all we could seat." Gilliam describes "renovating and adapting

the building for our needs. Guy White - an engineer and planner - led the charge. About twenty of us put ourselves to hard labor in stripping the building so carpenters and plumbers could go inside and convert it into a theatre! It was a thrilling adventure, and I have never worked so hard in my life nor, ever again engaged in such physical labor. Guy was an inspiration, and a brilliant and patient planner and construction boss. He leaned on his connections in the construction community to solicit free materials and expertise." By 1971 Workshop had a home.

Dreher was soon recruited by Heider; Garvin teases her, saying «You didn't get to paint the old ceiling like Malie and I did. We said one day when we're old, we'll say we painted this,» although that ceiling made way for a later expansion. Dreher joined the changing roster of directors along with Garvin, Quick and Gilliam, and recalls gritty and intense productions of *Oedipus* (with Greek-style masks) and *Macbeth* in a still-tiny theatre where those in the first row could rest their feet on the stage. Riskier shows were presented, including an acclaimed production of *Boys in the Band*. Directed by Quick and featuring Jim Thigpen in the cast, the script dealt with homosexuality; Burnside took Brookshire to a performance, and Brookshire knew "then that Workshop was where I wanted to be, and that was it." That season also included works by Simon, Coward and Williams, providing a balance of both serious and fun works. All concede that children's shows, most often directed by Herring, kept the theatre afloat with ticket sales.

Heider recalls "We didn't feel hostile to Town at all. Maybe one way to think of it was kids who love home, but when they grow up, they want to stretch their wings and try new things - maybe even shock their parents

a little. But they still like to go back home, which we did. Jim E., Bette, Milena (Herring, Bette's daughter) and I went back to do *The Lady's Not for Burning*, and there were lots of other exchanges." Dreher laughs, saying "And then we didn't speak to them for a month," prompting Gilliam to add "but only a month." Heider sums up the era's mindset: "Most of us were young, and there were lots of things that made the board at Town shudder, comparable to our parents -who often also shuddered at what we wanted to do. Many things were happening in the late '60s and early '70s that made people uncomfortable and needed representation onstage. And the best place to do that is in a shoestring theatre. Sometimes we had 20 people in the audience. That was not our dream, but it didn't put us out of business, because we weren't exactly running as a business. Which doesn't mean we didn't do crowd-pleasers, hilarious shows that send you home feeling wonderful."

By the mid-70's, newspapers reported a possible "eviction," as the Museum discussed the potential construction of a "cultural complex" on the block, that might include the future State Museum. Potential sites for a permanent facility were considered on Wheeler Hill, and in Dentsville and Forest Acres, but then-Councilman Kirkman Finlay convinced the board, led by President Jim Thigpen, to stay downtown at all costs. Plans changed, and the Museum, led by Chairman (and Workshop founder) Croft Jennings, agreed to a 40-year lease of the property. Workshop turned its resources to the construction of a larger, 199-seat space, with the old building becoming the current lobby, offices and dressing rooms. Outstanding seasons were presented for the next three decades, and shows and acting classes (taught by Herring, Jeffcoat, Dedra Daniels Mount, and many others) helped launch the careers of *Sex and the City's* Kristin Davis, *True Blood's* Anna Camp, and *High School Musical's* Monique Coleman. Jeffcoat feels "those classes trained a generation of theatre people with solid skills and a strong work ethic. Perhaps more importantly, they make up our loyal and discerning audiences."

Meanwhile, the Museum moved to Main Street, selling the property to the University. Fast forward to 2014, and the site has been chosen for a new Law School complex, meaning that Workshop will move at the end of the current season.

Any discussion of Workshop's history soon turns to two giants who have since passed away, Jim E. Quick and technical director Walter O'Rourke. Barbara Lowrance Hughes, who appeared with Stevenson and Brookshire in Gilliam's recent production of *The Dixie Swim Club* and played M'Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*, was directed by Quick in *Rumors*,







PICTURED FROM LEFT-TO-RIGHT WORKING UPWARD: ANN DREHER, DONNA MCKENNA, MARY JEFFCOAT, LEN MARINI, MALIE HEIDER, LEIGH STEVENSON, DRUCILLA BROOKSHIRE, BETH BURNSIDE AND MARY ARNOLD GARVIN

PHOTO BY JONATHAN SHARPE



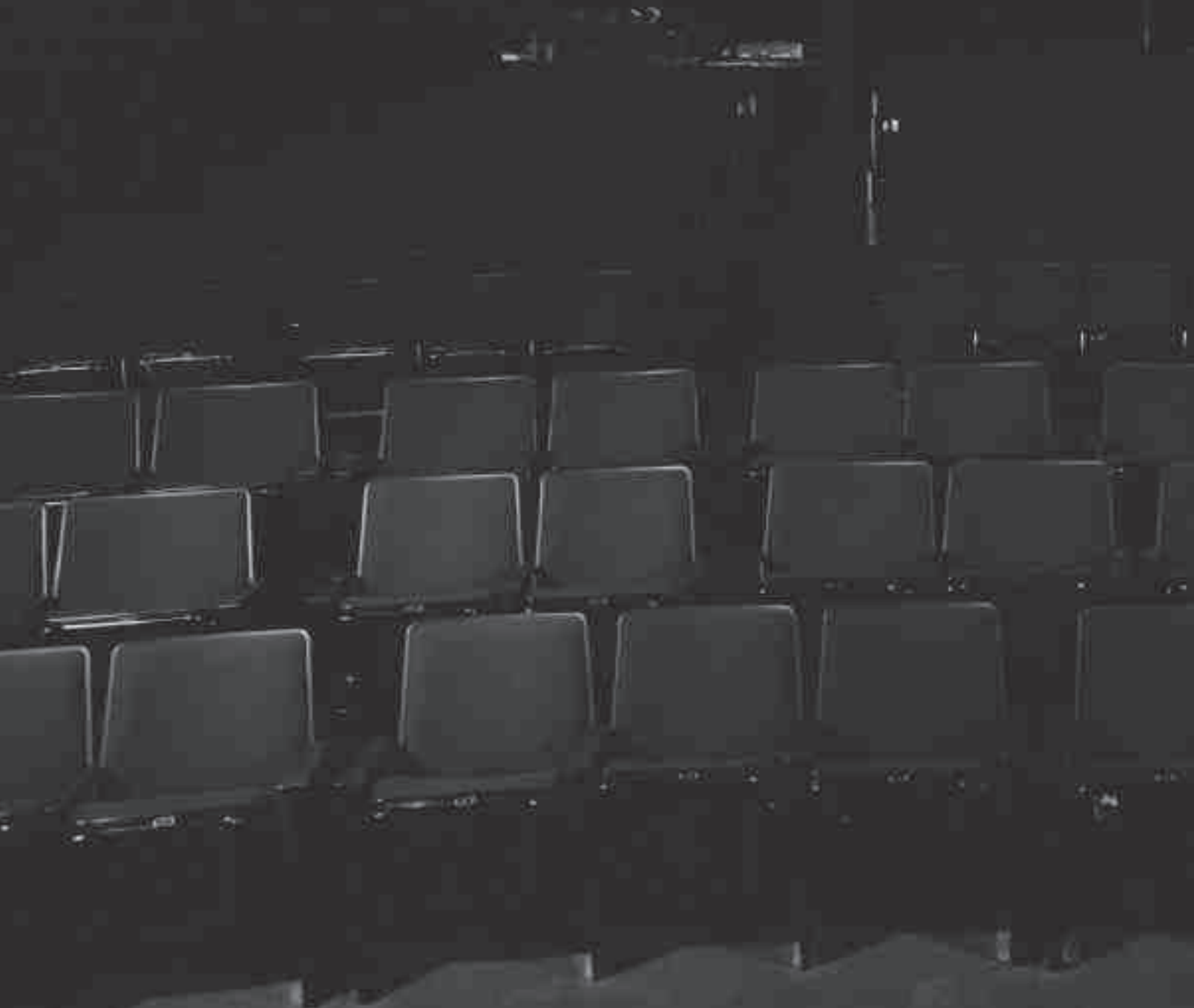
a show where O'Rourke's set got a round of applause as the curtain rose. "Walter and his partner, Randy Strange, were a fabulous set design team! Their sets were always beautiful, artistic, functional, workable, and safe, and they created an environment that helped to tell the play's story, just as surely as the actors and directors did." Donna McKenna, who directed *Dark at the Top of the Stairs* and headed A.C. Flora's Drama program for many years, calls O'Rourke "the wonderful curmudgeon we all loved." "Prior to Walter," Brookshire says, "directors were pretty much responsible for finding their own set designers. There were no stock flats, little if any inventory, and little continuity. When Walter came, everything changed." Jeffcoat agrees, saying "The chief magic maker was Walter; he and Randy could design, build, and execute any dream." Strange remains in

charge of Workshop's technical side today.

Quick holds the record for most shows directed at Workshop, followed closely by Herring, Gilliam, Cindy Flach, Dreher, David Avin, Jocelyn Sanders, and many others, over 80 in all. McKenna describes Quick as "funny, bright, gifted, genuine, a comic genius whose timing was beyond compare." Hughes says "I learned so much about comedy from Jim E." (The middle initial is always pronounced, like "Jimmy.") "He had a great eye, and his actor's notes were always spot on. Gilliam remembers that "He could do things with his *costumes* to make people laugh. I've never seen talent like that again in a comic actor." "He made it seem so effortless," says Garvin. Len Marini feels that "sharing a stage with Jim E. was an amazing experience. He had something fresh and wonderful and hysterically funny for every performance." Leigh

Stevenson notes that "Jim E. was probably one of the funniest people on the planet," while "Cynthia is an actor's actor and actor's director. Her ability to see and "feel" the play as a piece of art is legendary. Walter's sets were truly magical and transformed space." She describes all three as "not only groundbreaking artistically, but first-rate human beings." Quick's long-time partner Albert Little still regularly volunteers with set construction.

With a younger generation coming of age in the 60's, women were asserting themselves as actors and directors both locally and nationally, and by pursuing the best plays available, Workshop ensured plentiful opportunities for women. Kay Thigpen, who met future husband Jim there before going on to found Trustus Theatre, says that opportunities "were always there - all you had to do



was go for it." Libby Campbell, who starred as Margo in *Applause* and Truvy in *Steel Magnolias*, agrees. "I don't know that Workshop intentionally ended up with so many great women directors and female-centric shows; I think it just happened." Brookshire concurs: "Any director worth his or her salt is going to look for a play that speaks to him or her but is also castable from the talent pool. Directors like Cynthia knew that there was a wealth of female talent available in Columbia, so they looked for plays that had good roles for women." Hughes notes that "Workshop has always been a mecca for good, meaty roles for women, and has also encouraged and fostered women to take up the directing reins. Plays like *Steel Magnolias*, *The Dixie Swim Club*, and *Ladies of the Alamo* - all women-only shows - portray women's uniqueness, depth, and strength." Jeffcoat adds "Work-

shop always welcomed good directors and good plays. So many of the board members were also directors who shared your enthusiasm. Your gender didn't matter; your talent did. New directors were nurtured by more experienced ones." She points to productions of "classics, comedies, dark dramas, farce, tragedies, musicals, children's theatre...the only criterion seemed to be quality."

When asked why Workshop was and is important, emotions run strong. Jeffcoat realizes that "some of this I have never expressed, even to myself," and Heider says "I find that once I start thinking about it, the floodgates open." McKenna stresses that Workshop "was primarily family-friendly, without ignoring people's intellect. It was introduced to me as a director's theatre: we want good directors, and from that we will glean good performances, which was

a rather intriguing way to put it." Garvin observes how "each director would attract their own group, and that added to diversity, and each show was quite different." She knows that as a director, "you can't help but have certain things you love, and you put a stamp on," but with an ever-changing roster, variety "and the whole egalitarian approach" are encouraged. "It stimulates your imagination," McKenna continues, "You become better as a director, watching, and being directed by other people," and Gilliam adds "And you build better actors." Campbell agrees that "with a wider variety of directors, there was naturally a wider variety of actors," describing Workshop as sometimes cutting-edge, but invariably leading-edge. Heider marvels that "so many talented people wanted to direct! It was just amazing how many there were who were





PHOTO BY FORREST CLONTS

so good." Hughes feels that "Workshop has been an important creative and cultural outlet for all people in the community who love and appreciate good theatre--both old and young. Workshop fulfills a special and important niche in Columbia's theatre scene. (There is) an excellence in production values rarely seen in most community theatres. It is frightening to contemplate a Columbia without Workshop Theatre. We must save this theatre for the community and for future generations."

As they reminisce on the growth of a community theatre, these veterans also describe the creation of community *within* a theatre: volunteer actors, technicians and directors coming together to form something important, something special. Beth Burnside, who played Ouiser in *Steel Magnolias*, and appeared in many plays directed by Garvin and Herring, simply says "it was a great place to be. It was hard work - almost like a second job sometimes - and loads of fun. You could be working with secretaries, lawyers, bank presidents - it didn't matter. Everyone was there to make the show work as best they could." Jeffcoat describes the environment as "home - a place to feel supported and challenged, to be with people whose talent I admired and whose taste I trusted." Marini "served on the Board, took acting classes, performed in a number of productions, co-chaired the season selection committee, produced plays...many hours, none of which

I regret. I gained confidence as an actor from the support and camaraderie of Workshop friends and directors. I will always love Workshop for giving me that. There is no better thrill and energy than feeling an audience is enjoying what you are doing! And I have always loved the friends I have made through theatre. There is a special bonding between actors and production folks when you do a show. You become family. Workshop opened that world to me."

Looking to Workshop's future, Garvin worries that live theatre may no longer be able to compete in the electronic era. "Mankind has always told stories, but the vehicle for telling those stories is changing rapidly." Words like "hurt," "angry" and "heartbreaking" are used by all when discussion turns to the theatre's upcoming move. Heider points out that "a lot of arts groups start like Workshop: young people with ideas and ideals, trying to work them out on a shoestring, which is what young people can do, because they have great optimism, and they can stay up all night for long periods. As they get older they get more anxious about mortgages etc., and more fixed in their ideas about what is good. And they may be right, but they lose the flexibility and fearlessness that allows for experiments and being undaunted by failure. So then new young people come up with great new ideas and want to start over. I think Workshop took a spark that was ignited by Mary Lou Kramer and Town and then paid it forward, by send-

ing out other theatre artists to act, direct, design, stage manage, write plays, etc. and keep the (tradition) going not just in Columbia, but wherever they go."

As that next generation takes the reins, Workshop Theatre comes full circle. At the historic photo shoot for this article, board President Jack Jansen and Executive Director Jeni McCaughan previewed the 2014-15 season, which will be presented in temporary space, with most shows produced at 701 Whaley. Exactly as in the earliest years, a diverse line-up is planned: comedies (*Broadway Bound*, *Lend Me a Tenor*), a musical (*Five Guys Named Moe*), thought-provoking fare (A.R. Gurney's *The Dining Room*, Lydia Diamond's *Stick Fly*) and a children's show (Disney's *Little Mermaid*.) Rehearsals and classes will continue at Workshop's studio space near Logan School off Elmwood, and fund raising will support long-range relocation goals. One door opens as another closes. Adger Brown wrote in 1968: "Lack of a permanent home is regarded by its leaders as a serious difficulty." But he concluded with another quote from those leaders: "We are fortunate in one important thing, however. We feel that we have a highly talented and enthusiastic group of people working toward a common aim. All of them are willing to work - and if hard work will turn the trick, then we will be looking forward to many successful seasons."



A SAMPLING OF WORKSHOP THEATRE'S FORMER DIRECTORS AND CREW | PICTURED LEFT-TO-RIGHT

1ST ROW | BOBBY CRAFT, LEN MARINI, LEIGH STEVENSON, ELENA MARTINEZ-VIDAL, CYNTHIA GILLIAM, ROSEMARIE SACH, JENNIFER DOWDEN

2ND ROW | JACK JANSEN, DANIEL GAINNEY, BAKARI LEBBY, DEBRA LEOPARD, GLENN FARR, JOCELYN SANDERS, MARY JEFFCOAT, ANN DREHER ON THE FAR RIGHT

3RD ROW | SAMANTHA ELKINS, DAVID HUNTER, MARTHA BODE, JACQUELINE FINKLEA, MARY ARNOLD GARVIN, BETH BURNSIDE, CINDY FLACH, MALIE HEIDER

4TH ROW | JENI MCCAUGHAN, BARRY SPARKS, STEVE HARRINGTON, ALBERT LITTLE, PAM JOHNSON, RANDY STRANGE, ED SEXAUER, LARRY HEMBREE, LIBBY ADAMS

BACK ROW | DRUCILLA BROOKSHIRE, DEAN MCCAUGHAN





# Indie & Brit

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN SHARPE





# INDIE GRITS – CUE SETH GADSDEN

BY WADE SELLERS

The Indie Grits Film Festival returns for its eighth session this April 11<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> in Columbia. Hosted by the Nickelodeon Theater, South Carolina's oldest art house cinema, what started as an intimate local independent film festival has skyrocketed to become one of the what MovieMaker magazine named, one of the Top 25 Coolest Film Festivals in the World. Over the past seven years Indie Grits has established itself as the Southeast's premier film and culture festival by offering attendees a cross section of do-it-yourself media makers as well as annually expanding the festival to include elements of performance art, food, and music.

As the festival has expanded and tested new ideas every year, one thing has been constant—festival director Andy Smith overseeing the show. That title changes this year as Smith shares the festival director title with new Nickelodeon staffer Seth Gadsden. "This year saw the most submissions ever for the Indie Grits Film Festival. We've selected films that really embrace the experimental nature of film, as well as some great feature films that we're excited to show at the festival in April," says Gadsden.







Throughout the history of the festival, the core element has always been a focus on do-it-yourself filmmaking. The festival has served as a showcase for local, regional, and national filmmaking talent. "Attending a festival like this is how I got started," states Columbia based filmmaker Steve Daniels. Daniels has had many films programmed at Indie Grits through the years. "It still inspires me," he says. Over the years, other elements of creative performance have been added, such as the Spork in Hand Puppet Slam, featuring local and regional puppeteers and their creations. The Puppet Slam returns this year as well as Hip Hop Family Day, which heads back to Main Street, and the popular Slow Food event.

In addition to the beloved events of past festivals this year has found new areas to excite audiences. Possibly the most exciting event of which is Indie Bits. Indie Bits is a new video game showcase in collaboration with the USC Center for Digital Humanities. "It is putting a spotlight on a sub-culture that's not recognized in main stream arts festivals," states Gadsen. The festival will also feature Kindie Grits during both Saturdays. Kindie Grits will feature teaching sessions for kids from festival filmmakers. In addition to adding to festival programming, Indie Grits is shifting part of its focus to the surrounding community. The festival is showcasing

performances from Girls Rock Columbia, partnering with local business The Half and Half in hosting the live entertainment showcase Weekly Revue, and collaborating with the Nickelodeon Theater's Helen Hill Center for Media Education to send 2014 filmmakers to local high schools to share their experiences. Festival co-director Gadsen says, "to get the filmmakers more involved with the city of Columbia builds the community of filmmakers and enriches the city."

But at the heart of the program are the movies—the driving force of the festival since Year One. In competition and screening on Monday evening is Chelsea Wayant's documentary *Strength and Beauty*. The film features three dancers from the North Carolina School of the Arts as they divulge the details of their careers and life choices. They talk about their struggles with weight, motherhood, and the struggle to maintain personal relationships. It is a film about ballerinas, not ballet. "A lot of the stuff out there with dancers is not very honest and, since making this film, a lot of mothers have thanked me [for] the conversations that they have had with their daughters since watching [it]," Wayant says. Additional local films included are shorts from Daniels, Ryan Cockrell, and Charlotte, North Carolina filmmaker Matthew Nunn. His short film

*Locker 212* focuses on high school bullying. South Carolina filmmaker Ronnie Gunter presents his feature film *Lighter*, a dark comedy filmed in Blue Ridge, South Carolina.

Indie Grits is a cornerstone of Columbia's busy April arts events. Through its eight year growth in becoming one of the premiere independent film festivals in the country, it has achieved a rare feat, bringing different arts disciplines within the community enthusiastically together for a common event. According to Daniels, there are a few areas that he hopes will grow. "Everyone in Columbia who has a love for film should attend. Some people have a weird perception of what a film festival is; they think it is an elitist event. I wish people knew how much fun it is to get together with other film lovers," Daniels says. From the always popular opening party through announcement of festival award winners, Indie Grits promises the widest variety of offerings to indie film lovers it has ever offered. As the festival continues into its eighth installment it's easy to take the offerings for granted. But make no mistake; our community is host to a festival that has grown into one of the premier independent film events in the world. In front of us is an opportunity to be a part of its growth. Don't be shy, jump in.



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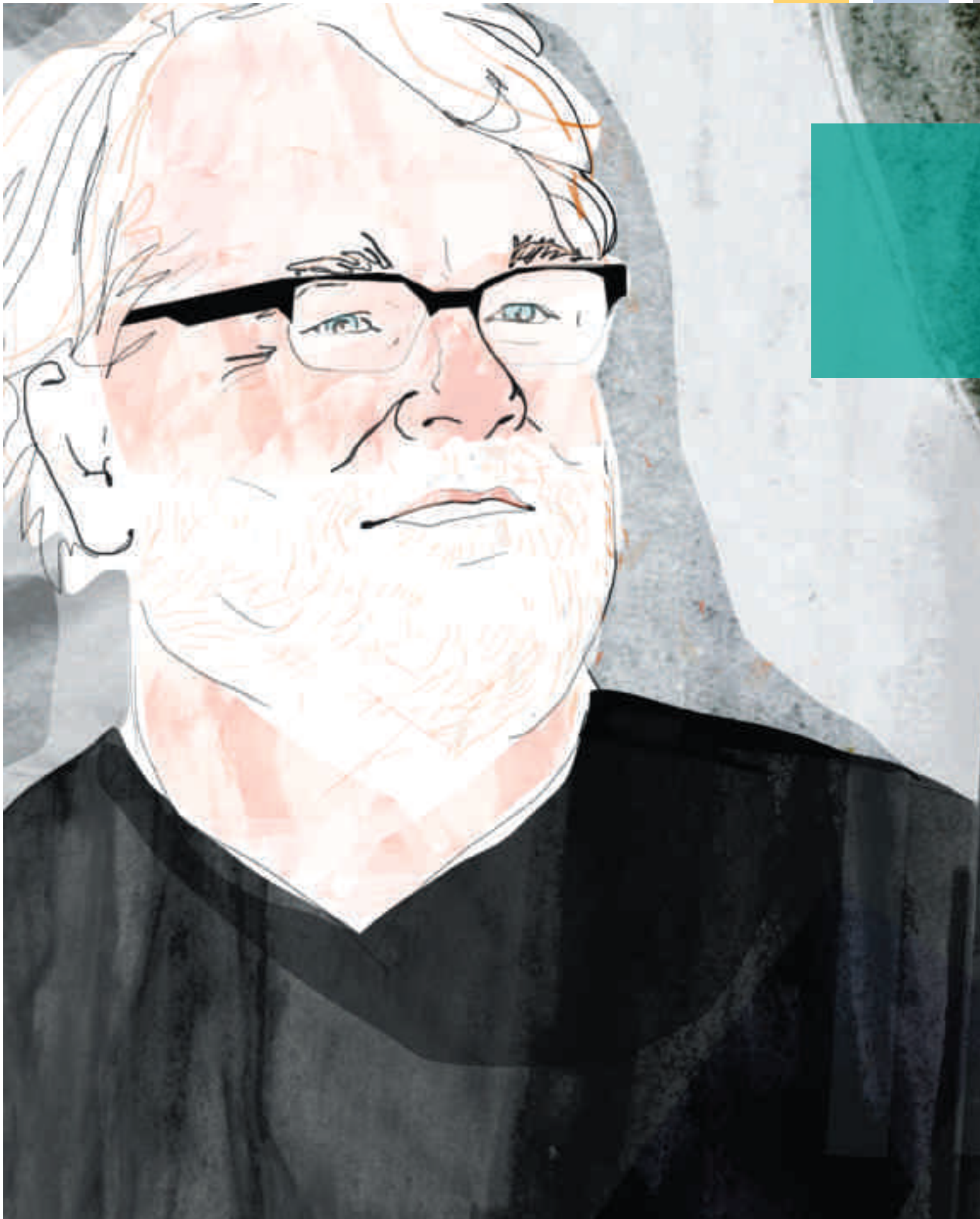


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PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN: AN 'UNCANNY' ACTOR OF STAGE AND SCREEN

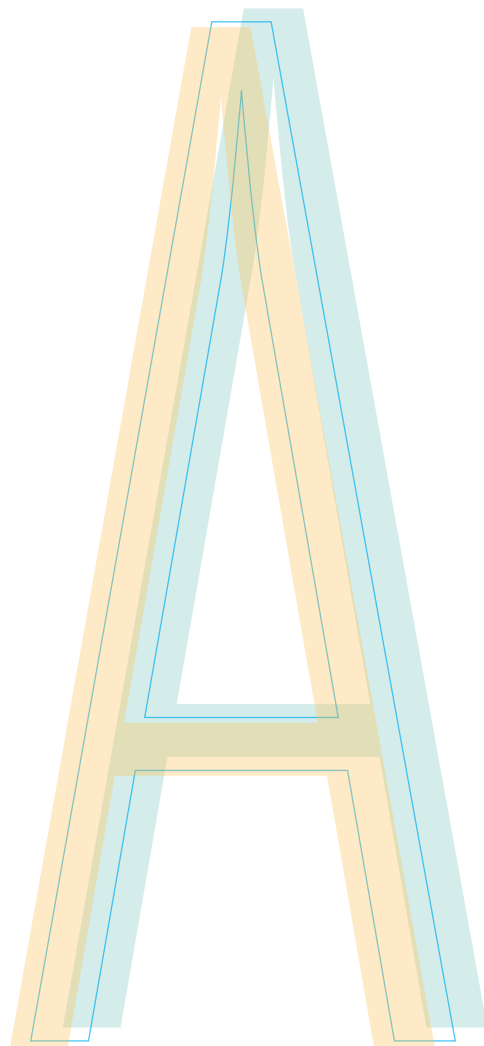




# Maria Fabrizio's WORDLESS NEWS



BY JOANNA SAVOLD



newspaper article detailing the death of a Pentecostal snake handler may not normally bring art to mind, but for Maria Fabrizio, the headline is one of many she's been inspired to transform into visual art. For the past year, the local Columbia artist has taken popular news stories and put them into simple digitized illustrations and posted them on her blog, Wordless News, "One headline per day, vowel and consonant free." The blog and its creator have garnered significant attention over the past few months. Though Fabrizio wouldn't name much of her own work 'art' in the classic sense, her creativity and talent are making waves in Columbia's art community and beyond.

Fabrizio recalls a love for art as early as her second Christmas when Santa Claus brought her a toddler-sized table, and she was immediately off and doodling. From toddler years to graduate school, art is something Fabrizio admits to always feeling passionate about. After receiving her BFA from the University of South Carolina, she went on to complete her Masters at Virginia Commonwealth University, with degrees in both Design and Visual Communication. She also attended South Carolina's Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities for high school, which, she says, provided her a better education in some ways even than her college degrees, equipping her with the basics so she could grow.

Back in Columbia and working as a graphic designer and illustrator now, Fabrizio has also taught classes at her alma mater in addition to doing extensive freelance work. Though she's a talented professional,

it's her blog—simple, digital illustrations—that is responsible for Fabrizio's most recent local and national attention; that, and an interview with National Public Radio in early January.

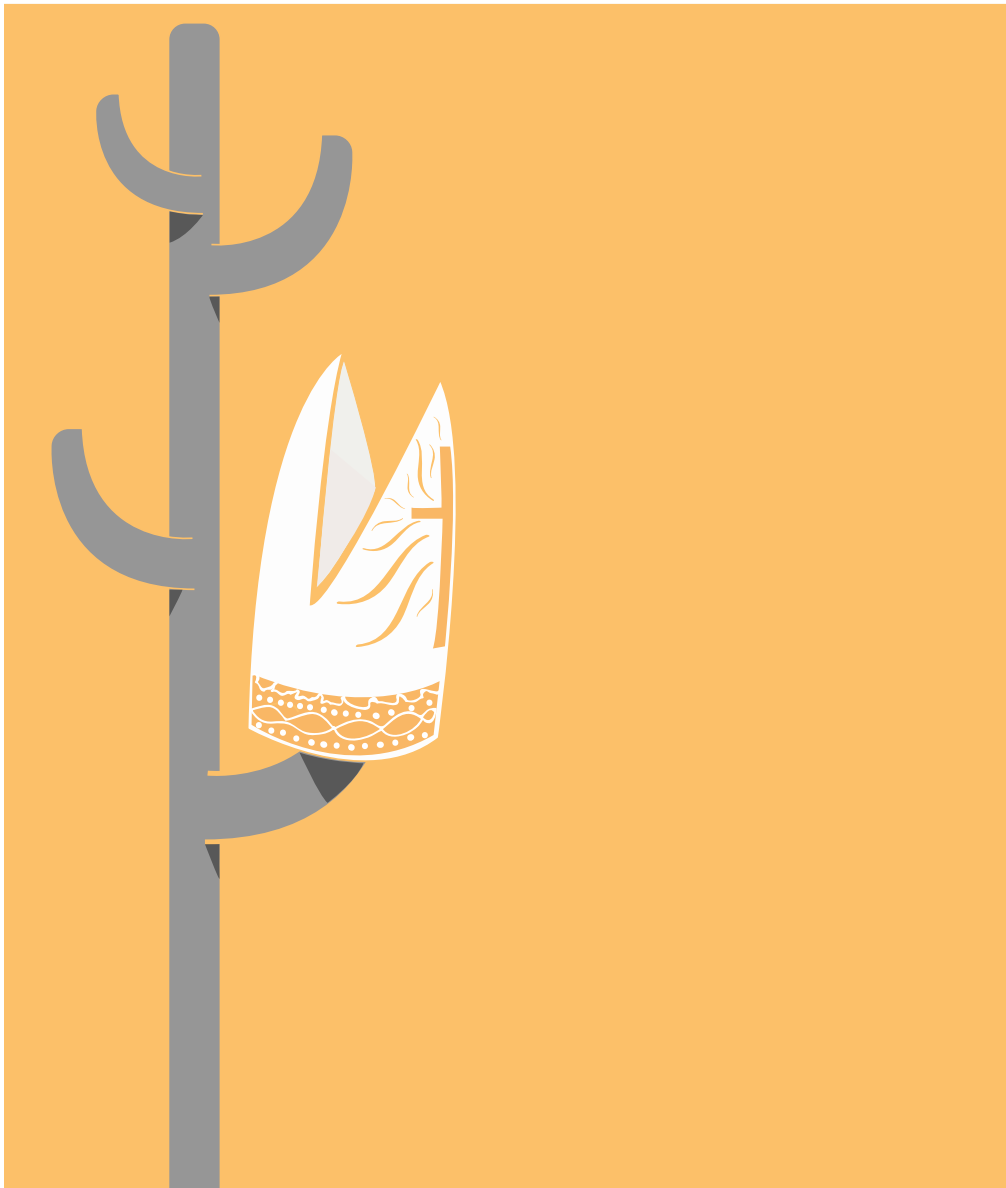
A friend had recommended her blog to the local station, which led to NPR's digital news manager Scott Montgomery reaching out to Fabrizio for an interview. She didn't expect a substantial outcome from the early morning talk about her daily drawings, but a few hours after it aired on January 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, her email in-box was flooded and her blog hits skyrocketed. Now, Wordless News has a growing audience of over 5,000 subscribers and 60,000 hits, while interview requests continue as well.

For a project that's causing such a stir, her process is fairly simple; Fabrizio gets up early in the morning and finds a headline that she can transform into a picture. Picking a subject or phrase that sparks her own interest is the first priority, but she also strives to include stories from different genres, balancing stories between funny and serious, science

and social news. News headline selected, she sketches her idea onto paper, then finishes the piece digitally, with color and texture, and uploads it onto Wordless News.

The morning ritual started over a year ago, and having hit its one year anniversary, Fabrizio hopes to continue Wordless News. In itself, it's a constructive exercise, she says, but also—with more followers every day—she now has more accountability to continue the blog. This undertaking comes with its own drawbacks, of course, especially as Wordless News' growing popularity means that its upkeep requires more time. Her goal is to find a way to monetize the blog while still keeping it free for readers. In the more distant future, she hopes the blog—and other illustration and editorial work—will take a bigger role in her career. She believes that work in illustration comes closer to her definition of art, something that inspires and encourages viewers. And with a book deal based on Wordless News in the making, Fabrizio is on her way to accomplishing all this and more

SUCCESSOR TO BENEDICT WILL LEAD A CHURCH AT A CROSSROADS







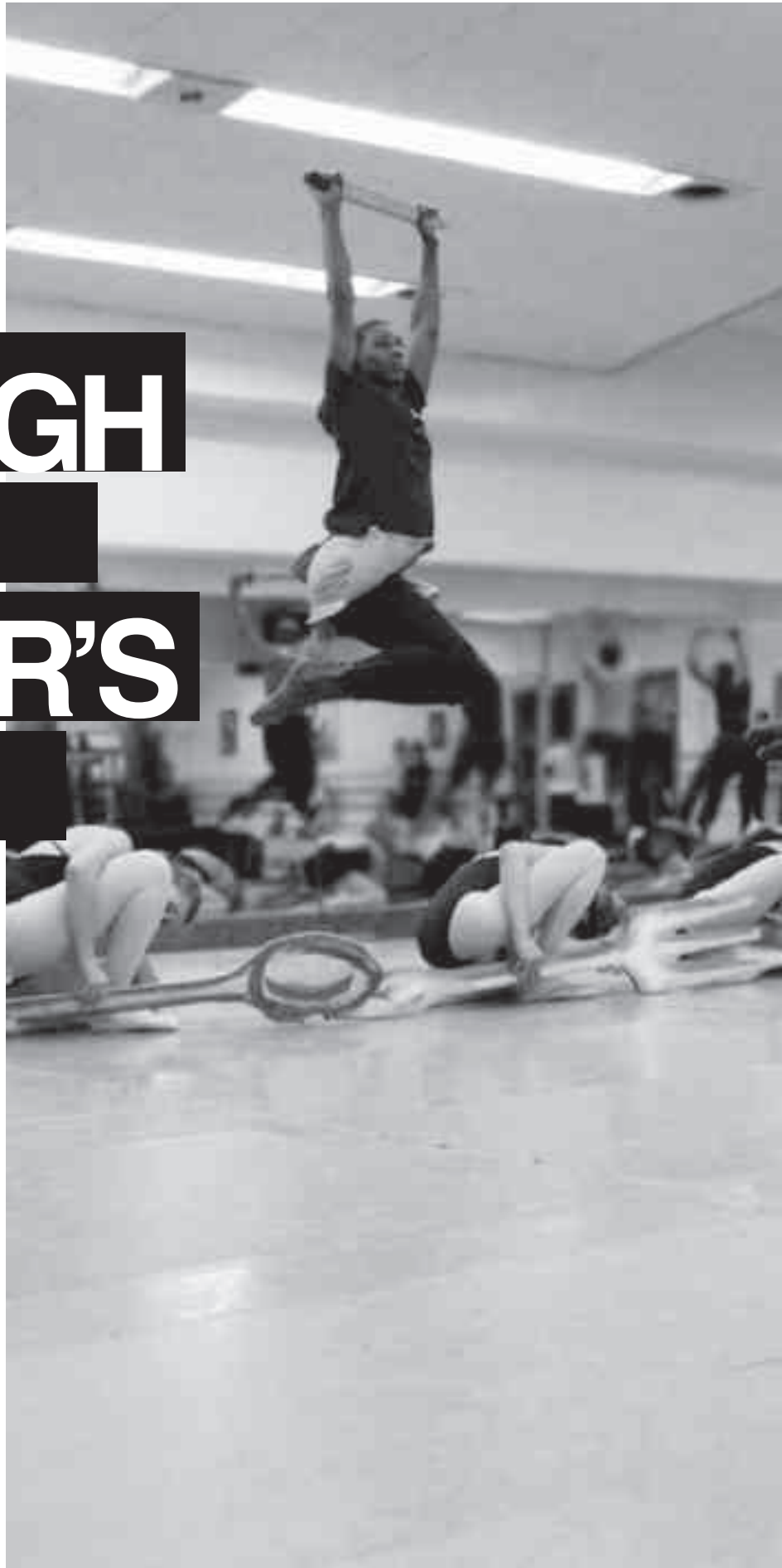
*Ashley Concannon —*

# THROUGH THE DANCER'S EYES

*By Bonnie Boiter-Jolley*

*a*ny given day finds 25-year-old Ashley Concannon crouching in the corner of the Columbia City Ballet studios between rehearsals. Usually she is sewing ribbons onto a pair of pointe shoes, taping her toes, stretching, exercising, or completing one of the many tasks demanded of her by her profession, but when she can find the time she sneaks behind the lens of her Canon Rebel T3i to capture a glimpse of life in the dance studio from another artistic perspective—that of a photographer.

Concannon, a native of New Jersey, introduced herself to the world of photography by way of her own modeling career which began several years ago. Having called Columbia home for the past five years while under contract with the Columbia City Ballet, she maintains a series of behind the scenes dance photographs entitled “Through the Dancer’s Eyes.” Concannon’s photographs capture a little seen side of the performance art of ballet. She witnesses to the trial and error of rehearsal, the effort, the down time, and the literal blood, sweat, and tears of the





grueling process of building a ballet. In early 2014, Concannon's photo of Finlay Park won the City of Columbia Photo Challenge and is now on display at the Gallery at City Hall. Despite her talent for landscape photography Concannon is still primarily drawn to photographing dance and dancers.

The dancer in Concannon admires photographers who are able to play with lighting and accents and effectively capture movement in a frame, something she strives to do in her own photography. While studying with former American Ballet Theatre principal dancer Susan Jaffe in the mid-2000s, Concannon had the opportunity to experience a shoot with well-known dance photographer Rosalie O'Connor. O'Connor, who spent 15 years as a dancer with the American Ballet Theatre, retired in 2002 and is now the company photographer for Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, Boston Ballet, Ballet Arizona, and Tulsa Ballet, as well as an Associate Staff Photographer for the American Ballet Theatre. Concannon names O'Connor, along with Jae Man Joo, as two of her biggest inspirations to pursue photography as a parallel career. Joo, now the Associate Artistic Director of Complexions Contemporary Ballet, began working in photography during his off-time from dancing in 1999 and has achieved significant commercial success in the field. Concannon hopes to follow in Joo's and O'Connor's footsteps and is excited to shoot with another of her photography inspirations, Steve Vaccariello, in New York this summer.

Dance photography has its challenges

though—specifically mastering the timing that will allow her to capture both the dancer's body lines and the perfect lighting that will illuminate them. Add to that the fact that dance photographers are almost always operating in the less than ideal setting of a multi-mirrored dance studio. The human elements of an individual dancer's timing and skill level can also affect the way a photograph turns out. As a dancer, Concannon has the advantage of knowing movement patterns and general timing for the steps and can adjust her expectations accordingly. She explains that while she often approaches a shoot with a specific idea in mind, she is comfortable with it morphing into something else or changing altogether during the shoot or even in post production.

Concannon's photographic pursuits have affected her dancing as well. She says that since she started photographing primarily dance, she notices her own body lines more clearly and can focus on the aesthetic of what looks good or bad from a viewer's perspective. Though Concannon is proud of many of the photographs she has produced, she is far from complacent and continues to learn and develop her technique. She dreams someday of seeing the likes of Italian ballerina Alessandra Ferri or the Romanian Alina Cojocaru through her view finder, allowing her passion for photography to advance alongside her dance career. When asked to justify her preference for shooting dance and dancers over other subjects, Concannon explains "It's more relative to what my life is."

2014 CITY BALLET SOIREE:

# Louisville

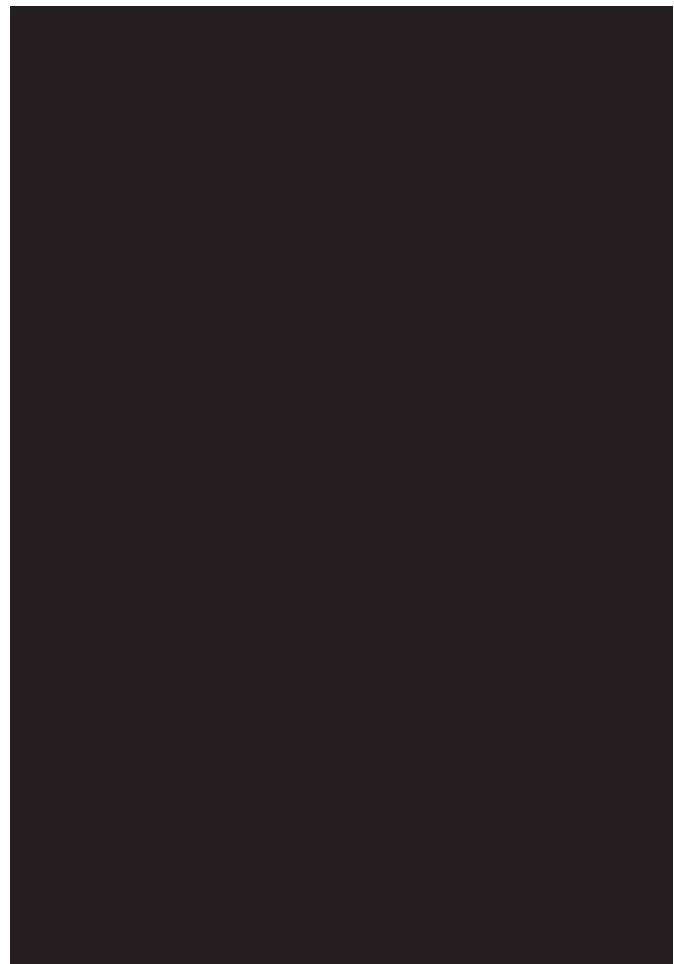
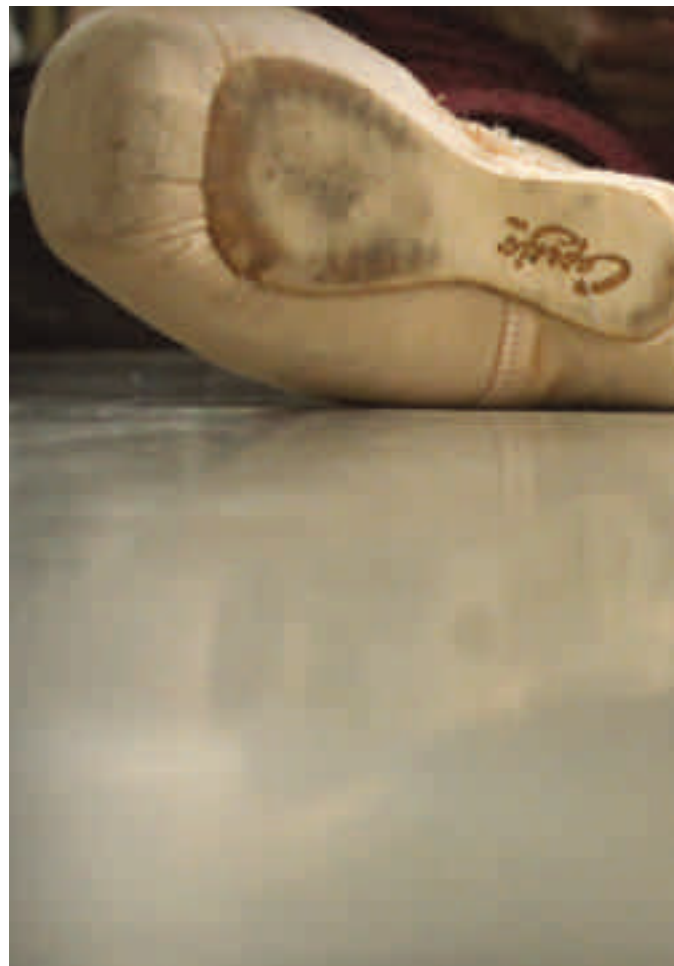
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# Motherboards + Matrixes:

*A Look at Runaway Runway designer Jesse Cody*

By Giesela Lubecke | Photos by Jeff Salter

**A**rtist, photographer, and veteran Runaway Runway designer Jesse Cody, 23, knows who her favorite artist is: it depends on when you ask her. “Ask me when I wake up—it’s Rene Magritte,” says Cody, comfortable in a faded *Punisher* movie t-shirt. “Lunch time rolls around—it’s Ryan Murphy. The sun starts to go down—it’s Marilyn Manson.”

“But, you know, I can’t say that I can think of any one artist that has influenced this work,” says Cody, motioning toward the remnants of her Runaway Runway 2012 design. “I believe it is, like most of my work, the love child of any and all artists in my mind, including myself.”

Cody first heard about Runaway Runway, the annual recycled fashion show organized by the Columbia Design League, in her sophomore year at Columbia College. “My framing instructor, Jackie Adams, came to one of my other classes recruiting volunteers for the event,” says Cody. Adams, a board member of the Columbia Design League in 2011, showed Cody and her fellow classmates some of the outfits made for previous Runaway Runways, including one dress cut from empty Pepsi cans. “She explained what it was and brought some outfits from previous

years in, and I fell completely in love,” says Cody. Cody immediately volunteered as a stage hand for Runaway Runway 2011. Later, in autumn, she began working on her own Runaway Runway entry.

“I think actually finding useful materials was the most time consuming part,” says Cody. She initially struggled to collect a sufficient amount of raw materials for her outfit until just before Thanksgiving, when she began salvaging obsolete computer parts from Columbia College’s Library and Information Technology department. After receiving permission from the college’s IT department, Cody raided their storage space, an empty house across the street from the campus. The storage space, according to the designer, was almost entirely filled with old computers and electronics. Some of these electronics were broken. Most of them were fully functional, yet too obsolete to sell or donate, and too expensive to properly dispose of due to the high cost of recycling electronics. “I think my choice of computer parts for my first entry was a combination of utilizing a material I didn’t see much, one you wouldn’t consider an easy material for this project, and what was available to me at the time,” she says.

Cody filled the trunk of her diminutive

Dodge Caliber to the brim with old Dell computer towers and abandoned keyboards, hoarding the stash of computer trash in her dormitory room and Sumter home. Once she had the necessary material, she says, “The rest of the project was surprisingly simple and smooth-going.”

“I knew from the get-go that I wanted to use computer parts, but it took a little while longer to decide what I wanted my design to look like,” says Cody. “Once I chose my model, I thought about what kind of styles she liked, what looked good on her, and what she could potentially help with. Then—boom! It came to me: Lolita.”

Lolita fashion, a niche subculture not to be confused with the Nabokov novel, originated on the streets of Harajuku, Japan in the mid-1900s. Lolita fashion emulates European children’s clothing from the Rococo, Victorian, and Edwardian periods. The most distinctive features of the overtly feminine Lolita fashion are lace, voluminous hairstyles, puffed sleeves and—most importantly—a bell-shaped silhouette attained by fluffing up skirts and dresses with petticoats.

A popular shoe to wear with Lolita fashion are rocking horse shoes, which are made by attaching a wooden or foam platform to ballet flats. The platforms are rounded on







## ABOUT THE COLUMBIA DESIGN LEAGUE

The Columbia Design League is an affiliate group of the Columbia Museum of Art that works “to educate others about design excellence, [to] emphasize the importance of great design, and to broaden understanding of how good design affects nearly every facet of life,” according to the League’s official website.

The League sponsors lectures and discussions at the Columbia Museum of Art led by various artists and designers, such as Clemson University School of Architecture Chair Kate Schwensen. These meetings are funded by League member and fundraising events, which includes Runaway Runway.

A fashion runway competition, Runaway Runway features designs made from recycled post-consumer products. Last year’s Runaway Runway, according to the Columbia Design League, featured more than 50 designs and attracted a crowd of over 1,000 attendees. Start time and ticket prices for Runaway Runway 2014 TBA on the Columbia Design League’s official website at [columbiadesignleague.org](http://columbiadesignleague.org).

The Columbia Museum of Art will host a Runaway Runway: Meet the Designers event Tuesday, March 25th, beginning at 6 p.m. Meet the Designer tickets are \$10 for general admission and free for Columbia Design League members. – G. L.



the sole near the toe so the wearer can lean forward without pain onto the tips of their toes, similar to a ballerina dancing en pointe. Cody finished the first piece of her Lolita-inspired outfit; an umbrella stripped of its cloth and replaced with keyboard matrixes, over Thanksgiving weekend. Throughout Christmas break and spring semester, Cody completed the rest of her "cyborg-Lolita" outfit. Cody pulled out rubber domes from keyboards, sewing them into a blouse, choker, and bell-skirt.

Armed with a Dremel saw, Cody cut computer motherboards into panels and joined the pieces together with hinges, creating an underbust corset. The leftover pieces of motherboard were fashioned into jagged shapes and hot-glued to white rocking horse shoes. A camera lens attached to a set of large, ancient headphones and a rave headpiece, consisting of electric green light-up mesh dreadlocks, completed the ensemble.

Cody estimates spending a collective total of 30 hours working on her outfit. The corset, according to Cody, was the most time-intensive piece in the getup, requiring seven combined hours of troubleshooting, preliminary research and Dremel cutting.

"I'm always excited to see the diverse creations in competitions, so I wasn't really looking around at the other entries with a competitive mindset so much as a 'comrade-like' mindset," says Cody. "I got there early so I had the chance to look at other entries and talk to designers about their outfits on a friendly level."

Nancy Marine's entry, an "art-room warrior queen" alter-ego christened "Amortinka," particularly impressed Cody. "I know I was rooting for Nancy Marine's "Amortinka" entry just because she went all-out with the outfit and the character she created for it," says Cody. Cody had previous met Marine at a Meet the Designers event hosted by the Columbia Museum of Art.

Cody admits also unabashedly cheering for Filipino-American Ivy Sumayden-Bryan's entry, a corset and skirt constructed from rice bags and modeled by Olga Nedorub. "They [Sumayden-Bryan and Nedorub] shared a dressing room with us and came out on the runway right after my entry," says Cody. "It was just so well done and on such a beautiful model I couldn't help but root for her when she took the stage."

Despite the friendliness of her foes, Cody regardless faced a grueling night: Runaway Runway 2012, the tenth anniversary of the recycled fashion show, featured more than 60 entries, and the show ran for more than three hours.

Cody's Cyborg-Lolita outfit made it to the semi-finals, but first place was awarded to Roxanne Lenzo's design; a ballroom outfit, complete with a tiara, made entirely from phonebook paper. "I do have to admit that I was disappointed when I didn't make the

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top ten," says Cody, "but, I mean, what can you do other than try again, right?"

Cody's fierce fashion comeback had to wait. The art student placed her next Runaway Runway foray on the back burner, focusing instead on her senior show at Columbia College. This year however, Cody, having earned her B.A. in studio art, is fully focused on Runaway Runway.

Cody's Runaway Runway 2014 entry will be made from salvaged car parts. "I've seen this

particular material used before," says Cody, noting one Runaway Runway 2012 contestant who prowled the catwalk in a tire rubber tube top and miniskirt decorated with a Cadillac belt buckle.

"It doesn't really bother me, because it was never used like I plan to use it," says Cody. "I don't want to spoil the surprise, but I can say that I don't think anyone will expect the combination of style and material I plan to create this year."

## Susan Lenz *Threads: Gathering My Thoughts*



Images are both details of *Gathering My Thoughts*

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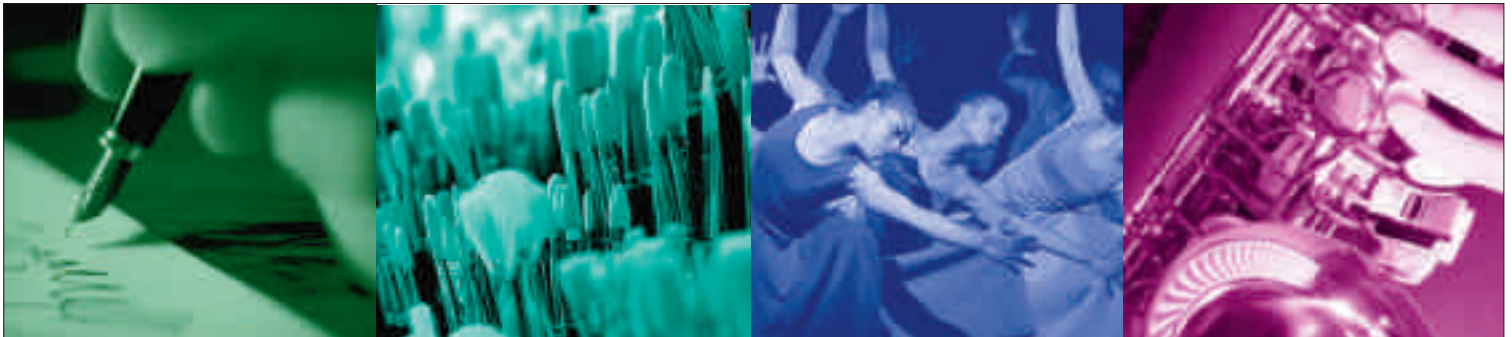
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*Camon chef and owner Shigeru Kobayashi was born in Tokyo in 1951. He began his cooking career there, working in a ryokan, a food-focused traditional Japanese inn. He also worked at the original Benihana restaurant in Tokyo, training under chef Yunosuki Aoki, before moving to the US. Chef Kobayashi opened Camon on Assembly Street in May 1985,*

*making it not only one of Columbia's first Japanese restaurants, but also one of the city's longest-running restaurants in any category.*

*Jasper sat down with Chef Kobayashi and his son, Shigeharu Kobayashi, who translated our conversation, which has been edited for length.*

*When you're composing a new dish, which do you envision first: how it will look, or how it will taste?*

We don't create a lot of new dishes here, but when we do it usually comes from suggestions by customers. We start with the ingredients and flavors people ask for, then figure out the balance of flavors and proportions that would work well. With sushi, people usually order a number of pieces a la carte and they get assembled on a plate, so it's important to be flexible, visually. A lot of threads are coming together at the same time.

We also think in terms of how those ingredients and the byproducts of those ingredients will be incorporated across the whole menu. Our menu, the way it is now and the way folks have ordered over time, is very streamlined and balanced so that we're not creating too much or too little. We throw very little away. With eel, for example, we buy it whole and use the meat for sushi and then the rest of it to make the stock for our eel sauce. It's interesting to balance ingredients on a plate, but then to consider the balance of a meal, and the balance of how the whole shop is run.

# the ART of the MEAL

w/ jonathan sharpe





*Have you changed the way you prepare the items on your menu over the years?*

---

We adjust them according to the season. Our sushi rice, for example, is different during the summer and winter. During the summer it's a hot time, and people are sweating a lot and losing salt, so to replenish that we add a little more salt to the sushi rice. In winter, it's slightly sweeter.

*Sushi can be mysterious. It looks simple, but what are some of the hidden steps before it arrives on a plate?*

---

Every type of fish we serve has a different process to be on display in the neta case. We control each step in that process, from when we receive the fish to when it is presented at the table. With tuna, for example, we tend to receive it in quarters. South Carolina

DHEC laws require any fish you serve to be frozen for a certain amount of time and at certain temperatures. We follow those laws, but we don't just freeze and defrost the fish. There is flavor and texture to consider. There are considerations called nekaseru for when you cut the individual portions for maximum flavor, and how to cut each fish. Each has a different knife technique, based on the grain.

*What's the key to keeping a restaurant in business?*

---

It's important to really put an emphasis on the quality of your food.



ROSETTE OF SQUID SASHIMI AND GUNKANMAKI, OR BATTLESHIP-STYLE SUSHI AT CAMON



# BOITER RECEIVES 2014 VERNER AWARD

By Ed Madden

The staff of *Jasper* congratulates *Jasper* editor Cindi Boiter, who has been selected to receive a 2014 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award, presented annually by the South Carolina Arts Commission. The award will be presented at a special ceremony at the South Carolina Statehouse on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

In the announcement, the Arts Commission notes, "Writer, editor, publisher, donor, patron, organizer and arts advocate, Cindi Boiter has had a remarkable and continuing impact on the arts community in South Carolina."

The Verner awards honor South Carolina arts organizations, patrons, artists, members of the business community, and government entities who maximize their roles as innovators, supporters and advocates of the arts. The awards, which recognize outstanding achievement and contributions to the arts in the state, are the highest honor the state gives in the arts. In 1980, the Verner Awards took on a special significance with their designation as the official "Governor's Awards for the Arts." A diverse committee, appointed by the SCAC Board of Commissioners and made up of members of the South Carolina community at large, reviews all nominations and makes recommendations to the Board for final approval.


In announcing Boiter's award, the Commission noted her work as a published writer herself and her tireless efforts as a donor and arts advocate for many Midlands arts organizations. Her work with *Jasper* and Muddy Ford Press, however, drew special attention. "It is as editor and publisher that Boiter has had a remarkable impact in the Midlands community and the broader cultural landscape of the state," the announcement notes. "She and her husband [Robert Jolley] founded Muddy Ford Press as a publication platform for South Carolina writers and artists. To date MFP has published fiction, poetry, nonfiction and books of visual art by South Carolina artists. The press also underwrites the publication of *Jasper: The Word on Columbia Arts*, a bimonthly arts magazine that premiered in September 2011 and regularly celebrates and spotlights local artists and their valuable presence in the community."




More than anything else, though, the award highlights her work in community and collaboration. "She has been insistent on connecting artists across disciplines," and in working to connect local artists with the public. "She promotes an interdisciplinary and collaborative aesthetic which she believes is essential to cultural growth, and she uses her position and the tools at her disposal to promote the Midlands and the state as centers of creativity and culture."

Boiter receives the award as an Individual. The other recipients this year are Edward Rice of North Augusta, in the category of Artist; the Beaufort County School District for Arts in Education; Elliott Davis, LLC, of Greenville for Business; and in the Government category, the City of Greenwood.

All will be honored at the Arts Commission's annual gala on May 7<sup>th</sup>, and the awards will be presented at special ceremony at the Statehouse on May 8<sup>th</sup>.



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# FOURTH OF JULY

Poem by Colena Corbett

Will always mean: golden neck ties  
the color of man's shirt  
His Father's Day party, he smiles  
here with his son there behind  
His brood on either side  
How to explain rain to a five-year-old  
How babies are made & when  
do they come out  
& why pop isn't coming back  
Like in this picture, our son asks

Each night you wake up  
a different man  
Floating from room to room  
You slept next to our son  
unbeknownst to him  
You were a red ballon

I walked with your mother  
on wet sand in August  
The stories of birds calm her  
When she was a girl  
they never went to the shore  
Her father didn't believe in danger  
for the argument  
She walked with her grandson  
as he chased the ebb  
Sea froth that washed his wiry ankles  
made thin sprays of sand  
on his chestnut legs  
Wandering near him an egret

---

Colena Corbett is writing about love for a change. She is a Callaloo Writers' Workshop fellow. Her work has appeared in *Folio Journal*, *The the Poetry*, and elsewhere. She lives in Charlotte, N.C.

# ENCAUSTIC

Poem by Nicola Waldron

Because the day opens  
without storm,

Because there is no flood,  
but yet a moon.

Because bees bounce  
on the goldenrod, and

doves sit coral-breasted  
on the line.

Because butter,  
because cream,

because  
breath and sinew.

Because painter,  
because paint –

because mind  
over sky:

no flood or clay, just  
the silver cut-out of a moon --

a mouth that calls out  
O.

---

Nicola Waldron is a native of England and graduate of Cambridge University and the Bennington Writing Seminars. Her recent poems and essays can be found in *Agni*, *Free State Review*, *A Sense of the Midlands*, and *The Common*. She teaches creative writing at the University of South Carolina.

# Columbia



# the World

By Chris Robinson



There are two art worlds in Columbia, the local art community and artists at the university—colloquially and sometimes disparagingly referred to as the Town and Gown divide. (Full disclosure, I try hard to participate in both worlds, but am on the faculty in the Department of Art at the University of South Carolina). While some may say that this magazine concentrates on the former, there is rich content in the latter, and I am inclined to risk characterizing each. The names in the local art community are probably more familiar and many seek a means of art making that allows sales and survival, thereby dictating and assuring a somewhat more conventional or conservative approach. Conversely, research university faculty artists are encouraged and obliged to create new content and establish national and international reputations, but are often unconnected and/or unknown in the local community. Their work is, by necessity, more exploratory, as a research institution's role is to create new information. However, they do live here in Columbia and have similar and common interests, and it seems unfortunate that there is not more healthy and productive interaction between the two.

It often surprises and disappoints me how little people, and artists themselves, actually look at art. Almost everyone says it is meaningful and that they care, but how many really do? Walk through a museum or gallery and see how much time most viewers dedicate to any individual image; often no more than a passing few seconds. Or compare the SC Arts Commission's, or any arts organization's, budget to one of football or business. A colleague notes, if you want to see who really cares about art, see who returns to look more carefully at the art after the social event of an opening. There is no intension of blame here, and I am equally guilty, but sadly the art often doesn't merit more time. I was educated in the 1970s and my fellow students and I couldn't wait to witness and see the many innovations taking place in art – minimalism, installations, earthworks, performance, and art and technology. We have lost that innovation and the related enthusiasm. Go to a great museum and you can still feel that sense of power and meaning, but it is mostly from the past.

I encourage trying a few uncommon venues, and hope to update and alert you to more through this forum. The Department of Art's Master of Fine Art project exhibitions run through April and early May. These are solo exhibitions of the culminating work of three years of concentrated graduate study in the visual arts, evidence of the work of a dedicated and focused project, and most often seen in the McMaster Gallery, but also increasingly at other local venues such as City Art and Gallery 80808. The work, while still maturing, is often more experimental and therefore challenging. Students wrestle with complicated issues, interesting elements of content, and functional problems often relating to appropriate spaces and viewer safety. A current candidate, for example, uses construction materials such as wire mesh in large installations, exploring entropy, and creating potential safety issues for the viewer. Another deals with volatile and hushed elements of race and ethnicity, and yet another uses clay in compelling and unexpected ways. It is exciting to be party to, watch, and see how these issues are resolved, as well as the resulting works of art. Call the Department of Art at the University of South Carolina, Benedict College, and others to get on the mailing lists for these and related events.

Somewhat locally, the southeastern exhibition, Artfields is opening for its second year in Lake City, a huge event featuring many Columbia and southeastern artists. It is a great spring drive through beautiful South Carolina country, old farms, swampland, and cotton fields to Lake City. More importantly, the exhibition raises interesting questions about how art functions in our culture today, what effect it can have on a community, what does and does not draw interest, what role money plays, what professional judges find important as opposed to popular interest, and is all well worth the time of a day trip or even two. (So often you learn things about artworks on a second or additional viewings.) It is about seeing, and there is plenty to see and do right here in Columbia and South Carolina. Good and interesting art often happens in unexpected places. For the university faculty, it may be Morocco, Tel Aviv, or Istanbul, but Columbia and Lake City may be just as exotic with careful consideration or when viewed from afar. See what you think.

Finally, if you haven't done so already, make sure you see the Columbia Museum of Art's current exhibit, *Japan and the Jazz Age*, running through April 20<sup>th</sup>. The show has a wonderful collection of beautiful objects.



# Imagine If: Envisioning a World without Violence

By Alexis Stratton



A few years ago, when I was volunteering at Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands (STSM), one of their staff members asked if I could write something for them about what a world without

sexual violence would look like. I was immediately drawn to this idea for a couple reasons. First, I was in the MFA in Creative Writing Program at USC, and I loved any excuse to write something new. Second, as a survivor of child sexual abuse, I'd often wondered how things would've been different for me if the abuse had never happened.

But as I began writing, the prompt broadened my vision even beyond that—it reminded me of the fear that our culture places on women by making rape an ever-present threat. It made me think of how the world might be different for my friends and acquaintances who had also experienced sexual violence. It made me remember the conversations I'd had with friends, loved ones, and romantic partners about what happened—and wishing that no one else would ever have to have a conversation like that. And, I wrote a poem. (far right column.)

The poem would come to my mind again after I took a full-time job at STSM doing prevention education work last year. I would think about it when middle and high school students disclosed their experiences of sexual abuse to me. I would think about it when I answered hotline calls from loved ones of survivors who didn't know how to help them. That bright world was always in my head, and I desperately wanted to find a way to get there.

The Imagine If project was an answer to that wish. STSM has long had a vision of ending sexual violence in our community, but to do so, we knew we needed the community to be able to envision an end to violence, too—and to believe in its possibility. Thus, starting last fall, the education program at STSM initiated a new arts and anti-violence initiative called the Imagine If project, in which we invited community members to imagine a world without violence and show us what it would look like through any media and/or genre. Some pieces we received are from survivors of sexual and domestic violence, who offer heartbreaking insights into what a different world might mean for them. Others are full of inspiring images that promote a culture of equality and diversity. And now we have a myriad of representations of a world that is full of love, peace, recovery, change, and possibility.

We want to invite you to join us in celebrating these moving artistic visions. Works from the Imagine If project will be on display at Tapp's Arts Center throughout the month of April, Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), and we'll be hosting a SAAM kickoff event at Tapp's on April 3<sup>rd</sup> (6:00 - 9:00 p.m.) to launch the display. At this event, project participants and other local writers, artists, and performers will be speaking out about violence and its prevention while sharing their creative work (and learning from the works of others). Admission is free, but we can't promise you won't leave unchanged.

So come imagine what a world without violence might look like—and know that in doing so, you're one step closer to making it happen.

Oh, to not fear  
that—anything but  
that—the word, the force,  
the pain. I can take  
mugging, I can take  
a break-in, but to not  
be afraid of that—  
each day, pulling myself up tight,  
shoulders back, spine straight,  
“Look confident,” they say and  
Good thing I have short hair I think,  
remembering warnings about how easy  
it is to grab a ponytail, pull down, and—  
I wouldn't have to wonder *Would I bite it off  
if he shoved it in my face? or What if I  
get to know this guy, and then he—or  
You can never know. They say we should fear  
those we know more than strangers, but in this  
bright world, I wouldn't  
have to. And I wouldn't worry  
for my children—no, anything but—  
and I wouldn't think, Well, how do I  
tell him—find words—say, “This  
is what happened—”* because that cloud  
of fear, of darkness, it would be  
gone. Oh, bright world, beautiful,  
bright world—please come fast,  
and soon.

For more information about the Imagine If project and other SAAM events, please contact Alexis Stratton at [pec@stsm.org](mailto:pec@stsm.org) or visit STSM's website ([www.stsm.org](http://www.stsm.org)).

*Alexis Stratton is the Prevention Education Coordinator at Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, a local non-profit organization that supports survivors of sexual violence and educates the community to identify and prevent sexual violence. She also teaches as an adjunct instructor for the Women's and Gender Studies Program at USC. A long-time advocate for sexual and domestic violence prevention, Alexis has spent years working in the Columbia community (and beyond) to raise awareness about these issues and to empower community members to change the world around them.*



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