

jasper

THE WORD ON COLUMBIA ARTS

MAR // APR 2012

VOL. 001 NO. 004





MAKE a SCENE

APRIL 19 - 29

at the

Columbia, SC

2012 INDIE GRITS FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY THE NICKELODEON THEATRE | INDIEGRITS.COM

**COLUMBIA SC**
FAMOUSLY HOT

**CULTURAL
COUNCIL**
OF RICHLAND & LEXINGTON COUNTIES

*Elizabeth
Slagsvol*

south
carolina
arts
commission





005

A MESSAGE FROM JASPER

006

JASPER FANCIES

014

JASPER TAKES NOTICE

Lindsay Wiggins has caught Jasper's attention

016

JASPER GAZES

Susan Lenz is the hardest working woman in South Carolina visual arts – we learn why in this story by Susan Levi Wallach

021

MUSINGS ON LOCAL MUSIC WITH KYLE PETERSEN

022

JASPER LISTENS

One of South Carolina's musical treasures, Danielle Howle brings music to the swamps of the low country

026

JASPER LISTENS

Jeffrey Day introduces us to cellist Claire Bryant

030

CENTERFOLD

Anastasia Chernoff was meant to play in clay

037

SPECIAL: BRUCE NELLSMITH WRITES ABOUT SIX OF COLUMBIA'S ARTS WOMEN

042

JASPER DANCES

Stacey Calvert is Columbia's dance connection to the New York City stage

045

CURTAIN UP WITH AUGUST KRICKEL

047

JASPER WATCHES

Jasper's new theatre editor August Krickel takes a look at 5 of Columbia's leading ladies

052

JASPER GAZES

In *Women Creating/Creating Women* Kristine Hartvigsen looks at the collaborative efforts of Kirkland Smith, Bonnie Goldberg, and Cassie Premo Steele

056

DAY JOBS

Jasper honors the work-a-day worlds of local artists

058

JASPER READS

Review of Carrie Allen McCray's *Ota Benga Under My Mother's Roof*

060

JASPER READS

Poetry by Alexis Stratton and Laurel Blossom

062

GUEST EDITORIAL

Artist and academician Virginia Scotchie reflects on women in the arts

063

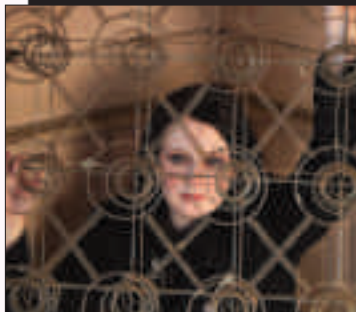
JASPER LIKES MIKE

jasper

CENTERFOLD // Anastasia Chernoff

**ON THE COVER**

"Time" (2012)
Found Art Assemblage by Susan Lenz

**052 JASPER TAKES NOTICE**

Zero in on this month's blossoming young visual artist

JASPER IS

Cynthia Boiter // editor

W. Heyward Sims // design editor

Kristine Hartvigsen // associate editor

Michael Miller // associate editor

August Krickel // theatre editor

Ed Madden // literary editor

Kyle Petersen // music editor

Mark Green // photography editor

Lenza Jolley // technology maven

Bonnie Boiter-Jolley // staff writer

CONTRIBUTORS

Becka Bralts

Susan Levi Wallach

Lenza Jolley

Alisha Hirne

Jeffrey Day

Max Kitchell

Bruce Nellsmith

Jonathan Sharpe

Forest Clonts

Celeste doaks

Alexis Stratton

Laurel Blossom

Virginia Scotchie

JASPER
ON THE WEB

jaspercolumbia.com
facebook.com/jaspercolumbia
twitter.com/jasperadvises
jaspercolumbia.net/blog

Dear Friends,

When our design editor Heyward Sims came up with the idea of making the cover of our first annual Women's Issue pink, I was hesitant at first. I'm not much of a pink person. In fact, I haven't worn the color much since I was pregnant and trying to will the universe to give me daughters – which, by the way, it did.

I was hesitant because, like all of us, I've been mercilessly exposed to the social construction that pink is for girls while blue is for boys, and through my day job as an adjunct instructor in sociology and gender studies at USC, I've learned all too well the ways in which the color-coding of gender can limit us as individuals. Just pay a visit to the toy department at a big box store, for example. Amidst the active and exciting toys of various colors that can build and go and create and destroy, there are always the Pepto Bismol pink aisles full of little pink brooms and stoves and sinks full of soon-to-be-dirty, little pink dishes – not to mention the little pink plastic dolls that can cry and crawl and pee and poop. Given the choice of playing at drudgery in pink or mastering the universe in blue, or black, or gunmetal gray, I'll take the more muted colors anytime.

But then I remembered what I always tell my students – that we socially construct the world we live in the very same way earlier cultures decided that pink was for girls. Ironically, Americans dressed their girls in blue and their boys in pink until sometime around the First World War. Pink was thought to be better suited for boys because of its close relationship to the color red, a hue that symbolized bravery and valor. And girls were dressed in blue primarily because baby blue has historically been the color most associated with Christianity's Virgin Mary. It's been less than a century since the color-coding of genders reversed itself, yet most of us act as if baby girls are born preferring pink and all the freedoms and limitations socially constructed to go along with it.

So if it is our job to construct the world we live in, which I firmly believe it to be – *I say, Let's Reclaim Pink!* Let's make pink stand for the kind of hard work that our cover artist Susan Lenz puts in to her dedication to her art. Let's have pink epitomize the passion and individuality we see in Centerfold Anastasia Chernoff's personality and work; the sense of camaraderie exhibited by the five leading ladies of Columbia theatre that August Krickel writes about; the integrity and professionalism artist Bruce Nellsmith discovered in his story on six arts women in Columbia; and the mutual respect Kristine Hartvigsen found when she interviewed and wrote about visual artists Kirkland Smith, Bonnie Goldberg, and writer Cassie Premo Steele.

Pink can mean so much more than pretty and meek and mild. If pink exemplifies the more than three dozen women represented in this issue of *Jasper*, then pink means strong, brave, goal-directed, compassionate, brilliant, innovative, whimsical, multi-talented, studious, creative, outrageous, devoted, rational, truth-seeking, and more. And pink means valiant – because there is nothing more courageous than taking a piece of oneself – one's art – and presenting it to the world like these women, and all artists (male and female alike) do every day.

Pink means power – and here's to the women in *Jasper*, and women and men everywhere who stand for art and the important role it plays in the culture we create. More power to us all!

Cheers,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Jasper'.

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

Jasper Magazine – www.jaspercolumbia.com – is dedicated to the promotion and support of Columbia, SC artists and arts lovers. Jasper Magazine is copyrighted and may not be reproduced in any manner without the publisher's written consent. Jasper Magazine is a division of Muddy Ford Press, 1009 Muddy Ford Road, Chapin, SC 29036.

Lowcountry (and Commuter) Poets



We love those Lowcountry poets. Atsuro Riley's *Romey's Order*, which came out in 2010, is one of the best books of poetry we've ever read (as well as one of the most inventive and sonically rich). And we love the poems of Susan Meyers, who won the inaugural South Carolina Poetry Book Prize for *Keep and Give Away* back in 2005. And there's

that wonderfully strange little book *Lucktown* by Bryan Penberthy (and its quirky geographies of Doubtown and Sicktown and Lovetown and Crazytown), as well as the deeply elegiac voice of Linda Annas Ferguson, whose recently published *Dirt Sandwich* is a rich serving of the love of broken things.

Two collections by Lowcountry poets recently showed up in *Jasper's* mailbox: Sue Flaster's *Experimental Primate* (Asphodel Press) and Jerri Chaplin's *Vertically Coastal* (Planet Media Books). Both poets are more commuter poets than Lowcountry poets, with Flaster and her husband commuting between Charleston and Säter, Sweden, and Chaplin dividing her time between Charleston and Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Both books reflect that commuter impulse, not just through somewhat expected poems about travel and destinations but also by always seeing one place through another—what Chaplin's editor calls “the art of bi-location.”

Flaster's work is quiet, almost flat, but deceptively so. The book opens with “The recorded voice of Jussi Björling / (without which this is neither possible / nor necessary,)” as if to suggest a kind of operatic tenor subtends the work—but the voice of the book is neither operatic nor, exactly, musical. It is, however, remarkable in its precision. She writes midway through the book, “There's no shortage / of surprises here,” but she acknowledges that answers don't come in “tidy declarations / cut from

some familiar grammar.” No, the surprises almost always seem to lurk below the surface of a poem's free verse narrative. “I've never felt so far adrift,” she says, noting that her husband spares her a smile as he moves between the bookcase and the desk while “revising [his] revisions,” but all she can do is sit on the sofa nearby and “chew my lip / and wonder what comes next.” The ambiguity here—is she talking about her writing or the relationship?—thickens the poem.

In “August,” one of several fine poems about the concessions and delights of a long-term relationship, the speaker admits, “These practiced solitudes / are what we've built / instead of compromise.” And in “Survivor Syndrome” (a clunky title for what is one of the best poems in the book), she describes with wounding accuracy a year of multiple losses, when “premature past-tense / pops into the room / like the wrong end of a telescope.” The poem ends with the speaker remembering “how simple last week was, / before your unexpected self / was added to the list / of this year's dead and dying.”

Chaplin is a certified poetry therapist, and we expected to see more poems like Flaster's in her book, but she sets aside the therapeutic or the psychological for mostly poems of culture and place. The book is divided into three sections, the first on Charleston, the third on the Berkshires and Massachusetts, the middle section only the title poem, “Vertically Coastal,” and its locational sections, “Here” and “There.” (The book includes an annoying and condescending 15-page introduction by the publisher, who wants to teach us how to read poetry and explain why poems should be printed ragged right margin. Really? Skip these pages and just read the poems.)

One of the best poems of place in Chaplin's book is a playful poem called “Carolina Kayaking,” in which “A mullet jumps flapsmacking the air of June's last day” and moves “lazily into July, Gershwin-esque.” Too often, Southern poetry can lapse into the cliché—and Chaplin does have her requisite magnolias and camellias, her canopies of Spanish moss, her seagrass baskets and “Pat Conroy, patron saint”—so it's nice when a mullet “flapsmacks” the air or when she describes her Southern family as “full of cousins and rainclouds,” or when “Small towns hitch on to one another / to make enough kids to need a school.”

There are some tonal missteps, as when Gullah is described in “The Official Language” as “something wonderful brought to us on slave ships” —though the next poem gives a punchy little history of “The Official Color,” Charleston green, the black paint donated by Yankees after the war brightened slightly with “Rebel yellow,” so that it’s now the signature color of benches and shutters, “latched salvation, we hope, / if a hurricane happens.”

Ironically, in a book so focused on place, it’s the poems about history that are among the most interesting. “Swamp Angels, Hill Women,” for example, includes a monologue in the voice of Annie Shaw, widow of Col. Robert Gould Shaw, who led the historic 54th Regiment of African-American soldiers against Fort Wagner in South Carolina. Actress Fanny Kemble and poet Edna St. Vincent Millay also make appearances. At times the book feels too long, but there are some real gems in this, poems of surprising wit and poignancy. In “Birds,” a poem dedicated to a friend whose deceased father built birdhouses, Chaplin says that her own father once appeared to her on what would have been his 90th birthday “in the brightest red / and sat on the edge of the birdbath.” She wisecracks, “You go up a Jew and come back a Cardinal.” That moment of levity is absolutely pitch-perfect, so when she later says, “He comes often and stays long, / usually when I need him most,” we are with her. And we stay with her as she assures her friend, “Your heart will soften with a lining of feathers / and become both / high-flying and grounded.” Maybe that’s “the art of bi-location” at its best. // *EM*

Casual Art Gatherings with Booze, Snacks, & Crafts

Something is happening at the Columbia Museum of Art, and it has little to do with snooty patrons or elitist art snobs. People from all walks of life — some with body ink and piercings and others with knitting needles and yarn — are visiting the galleries and public spaces, acting as if they have every right to be there. And at least four women on the museum staff — Shannon Burke, Sarah Kennedy, Leslie Pierce, and Joelle Ryan-Cook — would have it no other way.

Encouraged by the success of their Arts and Draughts events — evenings of museum fun accompanied by some of Columbia’s best local bands and delicious craft beer — Ryan-Cook, who is deputy director of the art

museum and director of external affairs, says the staff began to look for other ways to use the museum space “after dark” and bring both members and non-members into the museum on a more regular basis. According to Pierce, who is associate director of public programs and community relations, the idea for a Craft Bar Happy Hour seemed like a perfect fit.

The premise for the gathering is that crafters and crafter wannabes can gather around tables and cozy up in comfy chairs and spend time working on the unique craft of their choice in the company of other happy crafters. For those without a project, local artist Kara Gunter always has the supplies on hand for a selected project for purchase, and she’ll even lead you through the crafting process. And there’s a bonus — beer, wine, soft drinks, and snacks.

“We were looking for something to do with art that would be more casual,” says Burke, who is the public programs coordinator at CMA. “We had done something like this once at Joelle’s house and it was a lot of fun, so we decided to give it a try on a larger scale.” It’s been quite successful.

On one particular winter evening, local photographer Molly Harrell attached pompoms to a lamp shade, and writer Jenny Maxwell worked on a red-and-grey skirt sewing project she had found in the *Alabama Stitch Book*, while visual artist Pat Callahan worked on jewelry. “There is a physicality to doing this that I enjoy,” says Callahan, a long time attendee to the events. “And I like to come out and see what other women are working on — I take inspiration from it.”

Kennedy, who is the manager of visitor services and technology at CMA, points out that it’s not only women who attend the Craft Bar Happy Hours, although they do make up the majority. The first event took place in June of last year, and the number of attendees has varied from 25 to 50 or more.

The next Craft Bar Happy Hour is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20, at 6 p.m. Crafters will have the opportunity to learn about the making of paints. Members pay \$8 and non-members \$12. And if just one night of communal crafting won’t cut it for you, make plans to attend the Craft Bar Happy Weekend on Friday and Saturday, June 1 and 2, for a full weekend of demonstrations, activities, and workshops, as well as a public market where you can purchase artisanal goodies handmade by some of the best crafters and artists in the Southeast. For more information, visit columbiamuseum.org. // *CB*

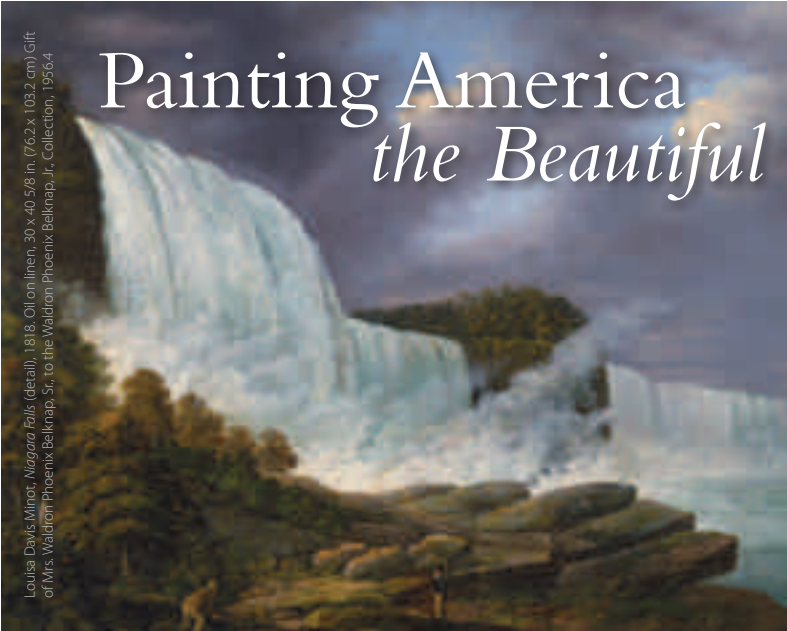
Dressing 52 Windows

When Marcy Coster-Schulz and her husband decided to renovate their Columbia home, they knew that their windows would be the first things to go – all 52 of them. But Coster-Schulz is not a woman prone to waste, and the thought of that many windows going to the landfill troubled her.

“I really thought that something special could be done with them,” says the Palmetto Heath Baptist clinical nurse specialist who also sits on the board of directors for Mental Illness Recovery Center, Inc. (MIRCI), a non-profit organization with the mission of providing community-based services to Midlands-area folks recovering from severe mental illness or emotional disorders. The wheels in Coster-Schulz’s head started spinning, and soon she had solicited the help of her compatriots, MIRCI Executive Director Julie Ann Avin and Director of Operations Liz Norris. Together they conspired to create an event in which the windows not only would be salvaged but transformed into works of art.

52 Windows – An Evening of Art to Benefit MIRCI challenges each of 52 different Midlands-area artists with repurposing one of Coster-Schulz’s windows into something people will look at, rather than looking through. Once the windows have been recreated, they will be auctioned off at the gala event May 10 from 6 to 9 p.m. at 701 Whaley. There will be live music, an open bar, and heavy hors d’oeuvres courtesy of Jack Brantley of Aberdeen Catering. Artists will collect 50 percent of the auction price for their windows, with the other 50 percent going to benefit MIRCI’s housing and homeless programs for Midlands residents suffering from chronic mental illness.

Artists are free to use the medium of their choice as they remake their windows into art, and while most likely will fashion their windows into objects that go on walls instead of in them, not everyone will go that route. Jasper cover artist Susan Lenz, for example, who has a reputation for always lending a helping hand to charity organizations in



Louisa Davis Minor, *Niagara Falls* (detail), 1818. Oil on linen, 30 x 40 5/8 in. (76.2 x 103.2 cm) Gift of Mrs. Waldron Phoenix Belknap, Sr. to the Waldron Phoenix Belknap, Jr. Collection, 1956.4

Painting America *the Beautiful*

**Nature and the Grand American Vision:
Masterpieces of the Hudson River School Painters**
Organized by the New-York Historical Society.
Supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Special Exhibition Presented by the Blanchard Family

Last Chance!
Exhibition Closes April 1

Columbia Museum of Art

In downtown Columbia | 803.799.2810 | columbiamuseum.org

need, took a different approach with her window. Lenz fashioned the raw materials she was given into a one-of-a-kind coffee table, complete with lettering salvaged from the old South Carolina State Hospital on Bull Street. One message reads, “There but for the grace of God go I.”

Other artists participating in the cause include Mike Williams, Steven Jordan, Toni Elkins, Laurie McIntosh, Alicia Leeke, Jan Swanson, Walton Selig, Suzy Shealy, Bill Davis, Ernest Lee, and more. It’s not too late for other interested artists to get involved. The final deadline for completion of a project is Tuesday, May 1. Artists who drop off work Friday, April 27, from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. or Saturday, April 28, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., may have their work selected for exhibition during the First Thursday Art Walk on Main Street on May 3, prior to the *52 Windows* gala. Each artist will receive two complimentary tickets to the gala. To make arrangements to pick up a window for refurbishment, call Avin at the MIRCI office, (803) 786-1844, ext. 110, or email javin@mirci.org.

Admission to the gala is \$75 per person or \$125 per couple. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit www.mirci.org. // CB

Artful Counseling



Lyssa Harvey Ed.S

Lyssa Harvey knows exactly how making art can change a life. Every day, using tools like clay, paints, and a Zen sandbox manned by Kewpie dolls, plastic alligators, and smooth, black river stones, she helps children, adolescents, and families work through challenges – from the small to the profound. A licensed professional counselor

and owner of The Art and Play Therapy Center of South Carolina, Harvey is also an accomplished fine artist.

Like other art therapy centers, Harvey's practice utilizes special techniques to provide counseling and healing to her clients, which in turn help foster communication. During a tour of her comfortable, multi-room practice on Forest Drive in Columbia, Harvey gushes like a proud parent over paintings one of her clients recently has made, and she introduces me to a play room with shelves of children's books, baskets of dolls, and a child's sandbox used for an art therapy method called sand play.

"Making art is very spiritual to me," she explains. "When I help people, it feels like the perfect match." Harvey describes herself as a teacher first, a therapist second, and finally an artist. "I'm okay with being all three things, but I have chosen the path of helping people. I am happiest with a job to do when I know it makes a difference in another life or that it brings beauty to the world."

Upon visiting Palmetto Heath Children's Hospital, she proudly shows off art hanging in the hallways from the Children's Chance program she created. Although it has been years since she founded the program for children with cancer, staff still call out: "Hi Miss Lyssa! It's so good to see you!" She says her goal is to create a living legacy for individuals (particularly children) battling illness. "Everyone deserves a legacy," she insists.

Harvey's impact in the community looms large. She has organized displays at the Children's Museum. She created the "Caring Colors" program for adults with dementia, and in Spring 2012, she is not only leading "Creative



"Bird Waiting" by Randy Jones

Counseling," two six-week programs in conjunction with Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, but she is serving on the host committee for the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Mid-Carolina Chapter 5K walk on May 19, 2012, as well.

Though she has always loved art, Harvey chose to focus on education in her undergraduate years before earning her Masters in Art Therapy at The Hertsfordshire University in England. Finally, she received her Ed.S in Counseling from the University of South Carolina. Art is just one method Harvey uses to engage in talk therapy with her clients. Her practice focuses on children with social, emotional, and behavioral issues. Harvey notes: "Art therapy is a way for individuals, particularly children, to express themselves and tell their story in a non-threatening way."

Each piece of art Harvey's clients create has a story to tell. Some are simple; some are long, but the thing they all have in common is their power to heal. In quoting Frank Lloyd Wright, Harvey says, "If you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life." This is exactly what Harvey is trying to achieve.

To find Lyssa Harvey's studio during 701 CCA Columbia Open Studios April 21-22, visit <http://www.701cca.org>. NAMIWalks will be held at the West Columbia Riverwalk on May 19, 2012. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/NAMIWalks2012> // Becka Bralts



Dark Whimsy

What if Lilly Munster took over the design of Raggedy Ann dolls? The result might be something like the whimsical handiwork of Jennifer Hill, aka the craft and performance artist known as Jenny Mae. And would you believe she actually has a niece named Tabitha Stephens? Not surprising for this delightfully bewitching mistress of many darkly amusing arts.

Raised in a relatively normal suburban upbringing in peaceful Chapin, SC, Jenny Mae missed a lot of school as a child, and spent the better part of some days lying in bed daydreaming, due to severe migraines caused by a disorder called TMJ, and she feels this helped to develop her vivid imagination. She recalls an early fascination with movies like Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice*, and horror movies introduced to her by older brothers when she was far too young. "I definitely felt like Wednesday Addams at times when I was growing up, except without the confidence she has. I actually feel more like Wednesday Addams now!"

Having performed her own one-girl shows in her room for years by middle school, children's theatre seemed like a natural choice when her mom picked up a flyer for Chapin Community Theatre's summer program. Under the guidance of teacher/director Jeff Jordan, Jenny Mae "totally fell in love with theatre and performing," and "for the next five years I would spend the majority of my free time in that theater. It felt like a second home." She was a member of the Trustus Apprentice Company in junior and senior years of high school, and performed in school plays and at CCT. Lander University's drama program was her intended destination after graduation, except for one problem: "In high school, I felt the most confident and the most like myself in the Theater room. One time I got in trouble for not going to school all day, but then showing up for my last period Drama class. I actually skipped school so much my senior year, that even though I had passed all my classes, they wouldn't hand over my diploma until I spent 10 days at the beginning of the summer, working with the janitors at the school. I did my time, scraped gum off the bottoms of a lot of desks, and then they handed over my diploma."

THE WHIG
 Main Street's basement since 2005




happy hour mon-fri 4-7
kitchen open til midnite or later daily
931-8852 thewhig.org

Not surprisingly, Jenny Mae thrived at Lander on stage, but not so much with the college aspect. Restless, she interned with the Marin Shakespeare Company in California, then returned home to take a job at The Columbia Marionette Theater, and play lead roles at Chapin in productions of *Crimes of the Heart* and *Agnes of God*. "I had never done puppetry before. I performed the in-house and traveling shows, recorded character voices, worked in the office, and helped out backstage." She also met her future husband, artist/film maker Lyon Hill, now the organization's Artistic Director. "This is when my visual art skills started forming. I had always been 'artistic' and 'crafty' - Lyon encouraged me to take those skills more seriously, and nurture them. It changed my life forever."

She started by making small, handmade collaged books for Lyon when they first dated. Then came the various rag dolls. Sock Oddities are traditional sock monkeys, adapted to suit her own unique style. "The idea of a Voodoo Doll had fascinated me as a kid; I think there was one in a Scooby Doo cartoon. Most of the things I make relate back to my childhood in some way. Like Naughty Nymphs are sort of my take on the Care Bears. I would one day like to make a more direct interpretation and call them the I Don't Care Bears. I like misfits: pirates, punks, strippers, freaks, etc."


You see a pig.



We see

SUGAR-CURED PORK
PORTERHOUSE,
HOUSE-SMOKED BACON,
COUNTRY PORK PATÉ,
MORTADELLA,
 and
BACON-INFUSED VODKA
BLOODY MARYS.

How's that for "house-made"?



Located at 920 Gervais Street
 in the Vista for more than 20 years.
motorsupplycobistro.com
803.256.6687



Columbia's Complete
Source for Art Supplies
Downtown on
Main Street!!



April Artist: Cedric Umoja

Featuring art exhibitions
from local artists each
month as part of
First Thursdays on Main!



2nd Annual Silent Auction
Fundraiser for the
SCDMH Art of Recovery
Saturday, July 21st 2012

1633 Main Street,
Columbia, SC 29201
(803) 661-9700
Open Mon-Sat 10 am-5:30 pm
www.SandSartSupply.com

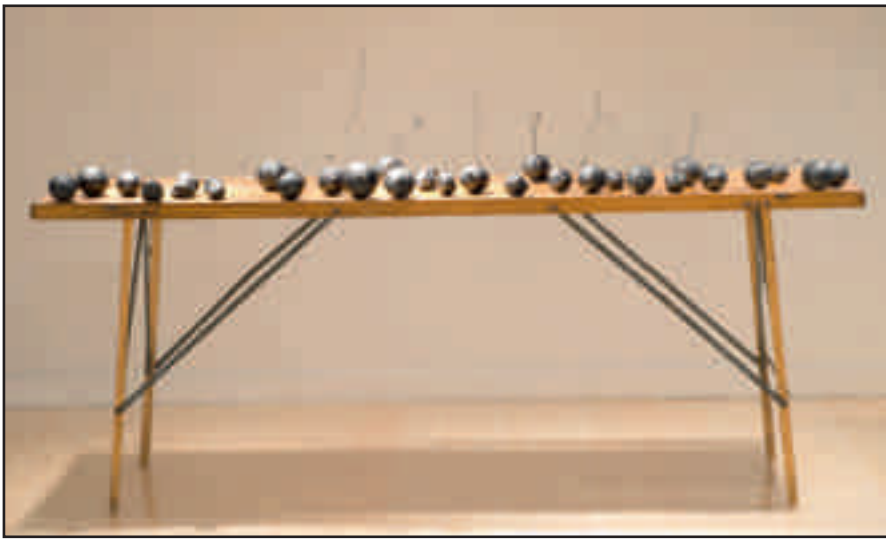
An ad in the *Free Times* looking for artists to feature led her to Brenda Schwarz and the Idyll Wild Art Gallery on State Street. "I was very nervous. I couldn't believe someone would actually want to display the weird stuff I made. I then did several shows at the old Art Garage off Rosewood. Lyon was going in to show the owner his work and I tagged along with a box of my weirdness. It was a great place for me to try things out and see what the reaction was." Positive feedback led to the creation of a website, which in turned was linked from other sites and blogs. In 2006, the producers of the Natalie Portman-Dustin Hoffman movie *Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium* found her "by surfing plush art sites," and ordered dozens of deliciously demented dollies to be used in the background of the film's magical toy shop. *The State* and other publications "started writing really nice things about my work," the Art Museum arranged a trunk show for her, and soon she was featured at a half-dozen venues around town (including Frame of Mind, Anastasia and Friends and The Artists' Basement) as well as being shown in galleries in Atlanta, New York, Portland, Orlando, England, and Italy.

Jenny Mae hasn't given up live performance, though. You may have seen her modeling in character for Dr. Sketchy, or as a living statue at Vista Lights, Carpe Noctem, or Mingle and Jingle on Main. "For me it's more about the moment the stranger and the statue have, the exchange they share. As of right now, I have three different characters: The Ghost Bride, The Dark Dolly, and Madame Katrina. I basically think of a character I really want to be, and then build an interactive concept around it."

She also does professional training courses via role-play for USC's School of Medicine, the Assessment Resource Center, the National Advocacy Center, and the FBI. "I play a teen prostitute, a teenage cyber crime victim, and a sexually abused child for the FBI course. I've traveled to Washington, DC, Seattle, LA, Denver, Montana, Albuquerque and South Dakota."

Her favorite roles are that of mom to son Oliver, who turns three in May, and supportive spouse to Lyon, whose short film *Junk Palace* won the Audience Choice Award at the Indie Grits Film Festival last year. "He's currently working on his second film, *Supine*. It's based on a nightmare I had."

Jenny Mae will be turning up all over the Midlands in the next few months. She's a frequent participant at the Columbia Museum of Art's Craft Bar Happy Hour and she'll have a booth at the annual Crafty Feast, the indie crafts festival held this year on April 28th in conjunction with Indie Grits. She will be the featured artist on display in the bar gallery at Trustus Theatre during the run of the Tony Award-winning musical *Avenue Q*, running June 15 through July 21. Also in June, she's excited about taking part in a show at Anastasia and Friends, which opens as part of the First Thursdays on Main event that month; each artist will be paired with a child for an inter-generational collaboration. Her likeness is seen frequently in her husband's work, although often as a puppet, ghost or succubus. And you can always find her creations at the Columbia Museum of Art gift shop, online at <http://www.jennymae.com/>, plus she's available for commissions, if you have the perfect gift in mind for that certain someone who needs just a dash of the surreal, the gothic, or the darkly whimsical. // AK



VIRGINIA SCOTCHIE

CONTACT:
virginiascotchie@hotmail.com
virginiascotchie.com

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS:

Thomas Hunter Project Room
Hunter University
"Seven Deadly Sins"
New York, NY
May 15- June 25, 2012
hunterenvoy.com

Penland Gallery
"New Works by Gallery Artists"
Penland, NC
May-Sept. 2012
penland.org

University of Tulsa
Juror for National Exhibition/Visiting Artist
"Red Heat"
Tulsa, Oklahoma
May-August 2012
cas.utulsa.edu/art



10 WOMEN IN CLAY

Thursday
March 22
5-8PM

Isabelle Caskey Frieda Dean
Hayley Douglas Katherine Radomsky
Laura VanCamp Emily Russell
Virginia Scotchie Brittany Jeffcoat
Allison Brown Kristina Stafford

SHOW RUNS:
MAR 22 - APR 19



631-D Harden Street
Columbia, SC 29205

HOURS:
10AM-5PM

Lindsay Wiggins

The artist **Lindsay Wiggins** could just as easily be found on *Jasper's* Day Jobs page since, in addition to being an artist, she also works full time as a histologist – someone who studies the microscopic anatomy of cells and tissues in plants and animals. And that intimate knowledge of the infinitesimal is clearly evident when Wiggins, who is also a photographer, takes paintbrush in hand. “Some of the patterns and symbols in my work come from my love of the microscopic world,” she says, citing her landscapes “where the neurons become trees, or is it vice-versa?”

A native of Montgomery, Alabama, Wiggins moved to Atlanta when she was 17 and attended the Atlanta College of Art, but her interest and proficiency in visual arts began much earlier. As a student at a magnet arts high school in Alabama, Wiggins studied college level courses in photography and, in her senior year, won Scholastic’s Art and Writing Gold Award for a photograph of her father that was displayed at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC. Though she left college after a year to pursue a career in histology, she returned seven years later and, in May 2011, earned her BA in studio art from Columbia College.



Wiggins lists several female surrealists as major influences on her art. “After seeing Frida Kahlo’s work in Berlin a couple of years ago, I have been heavily influenced by her,” she says, also naming Dorothea Tanning and Leonora Carrington as artistic role models. “Since high school I have always surrounded myself with artists and musicians and writers. When I was at Columbia College, Mary Gilkerson was my painting professor and Stephen Nevitt taught me printmaking.”

Nevitt, who is a professor of Art at the school, says that Wiggins “came to Columbia College as a gifted photographer with a wonderful eye and a highly sensitive approach to personal expression, along with rich but sometimes difficult life experiences.



Lindsay eventually moved to drawing, then printmaking, and now painting, always applying a constant and unrelenting work ethic to get the most out of each new medium she mastered. Her focus is always on concept and message while making the viewer an essential participant in the process."

Threads of family and a unique and atomic look at the universe run through almost all of Wiggins' work. "The idea that intrigues me is how nature echoes itself from an aerial perspective to a microscopic view. The bottom of the ocean contains creatures that resemble histological components seen in the human body." Wiggins' grandfather, the only other artist in her family, was also a horticulturalist who raised orchids and bromeliads. "These plants are a repeated symbol in my work that represents my blood's identity and the impact of my family lineage," she says.

In addition to the Corcoran, Wiggins work has been seen locally at Art + Cayce, Anastasia and FRIENDS, the Goodall Gallery on the campus of Columbia College, the Columbia Museum of Art, and as part of the Painted Violin exhibitions in 2008 and 2007. Her photographic work has garnered several first place awards in the professional division at the South Carolina State Fair. Jasper has no doubt that we'll be seeing more of Wiggins' work and witnessing her continued growth as an artist.

Jasper is watching you, Lindsay.
No pressure.

Page Left: Artist Lindsay Wiggins
Photo by Mark Green

Photo Left: "Horse" by Lindsay Wiggins

Susan Lenz Aims to Leave the Art World in Stitches. Really.

By Susan Levi Wallach

At 5 o'clock on an evening in December, Susan Lenz is in Mouse House going through framing options with a customer. Their conversation moves quickly through a range of topics, then segues into a discussion of a work on display, which the woman admires. Like many of the pieces for sale in the Park Street frame store and gallery, the piece – an elaborate multicolored textile that manages to resemble stained glass, a disintegrating quilt, and an intricately tatted bit of lace all at the same time – is an original Lenz. And there you have the sometimes dueling strands of Lenz's life: textile and mixed-media artist but also business owner and framer. Despite her increasing renown, even Lenz has a day job.

With the new year weeks away, Lenz already is planning for about a dozen 2012 exhibits and residencies. Her inventory fills several rooms in the apartment she and her husband, Steve Dingman, share above Mouse House's main floor (their elder son, a soloist with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, lives in the UK, their younger son lives in Columbia). The two-dimensional pieces hang on the walls; three-dimensional works dangle from the ceilings and stands on the floors. On this day, sixty-some-odd *Last Words* art quilts lie stacked in crates ready to ship to the Imperial Center in Rocky Mount, where they will hang till May 13 in a solo show. Her *Doors and Keys* balance on the floor of one room. Other works lean in bins, line shelves. Fragments, found objects, and stitched spools wrapped in wool fill what Lenz calls her "processing room," waiting to be completed or incorporated into works yet to come. You'd think you were examining the lifetime work of a mid-career artist. But though Lenz is 53, she's just beginning. Life, she'll say, began on Bastille Day in 2001. "By that point I was thinking maybe I could be an artist with stitching. And it was never going to happen unless I made it happen. I downsized a still-growing business, and I got a studio at Gallery 80808 and I went to work."

Not bad for someone who set out to be a museum curator, then spent years dithering about whether textiles and fiber and thread were a calling or an indulgence.

You never know what is going to change your life. For Lenz it was a one-woman embroidery exhibit at a senior citizens' complex in Columbus, Ohio, where her husband was completing his PhD in Civil Engineering (both are diploma-carrying Buckeyes). She had already started stitching – repeatedly checking out the *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Needlework* from her local library and making kits and patterns, her serious efforts limited to a single week each year at an out-of-town stitching seminar. Like any good grad-school wife, she had a paying job. Being Lenz, it wasn't your typical grad-school wife gig: for four and a half years, she delivered singing and dancing telegrams – \$75 to a g-string, \$110 to bare. Pretty good for fifteen minutes in the 1980s. "I didn't need to be the poor graduate student," she says. "It was a good job. It also was one you knew very quickly was going to have a short life expectancy. By twenty-six, you're already an older woman. the most popular occasion: the fortieth birthday party, bought by the wife. The day Steve turned forty it was shocking. I had imagined that by the time we were forty we would have a house, perfect kids, everything was going to be solved, and we wouldn't have to worry about what bill was coming in the mail – we would we able to afford it times three. Life throws curve balls at us all."

The curve ball arrived in 2001, when Lenz realized that she had her priorities reversed. "By that point I was struggling – wanting to stitch all the time and not wanting to wait for my one week a year," she says. "And it was never going to happen." Then it did: having fired her head mat cutter at the Mouse House, Lenz had a decision to make: hire another one and let life continue status quo, or downsize her still-growing business and get to work. As Lenz puts it, "I celebrate Bastille Day."

If there is a god of things serendipitous, Lenz clearly has dibs on his mojo.



"Life throws curveballs at us all."



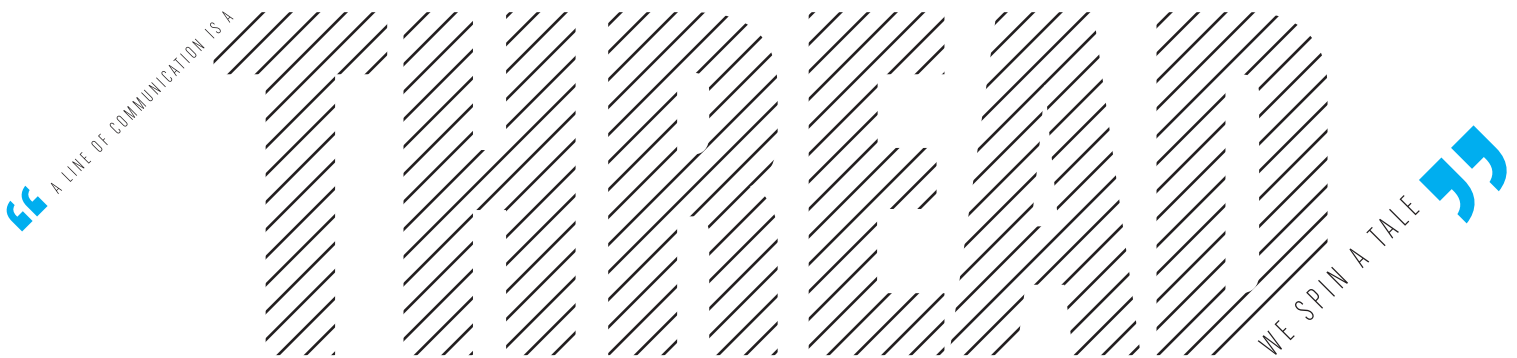


A little more than a year later, she had the studio at Gallery 80808. She also had a different name: at her husband's suggestion, she signed her family name on her work. It was a matter of establishing a new identity to mark her life's new direction. But Lenz is as mindful of the feminist aspect, as she is that as a female artist whose medium is textiles, discrimination can be a double whammy. "It still makes me mad that women are often considered second-class artists," she says, "especially those working in fibers."

If people who put gender ahead of artistic merit be damned then, in Lenz's book, those who say that textiles and stitching are less fine art than they are craft or, worse yet, "women's work," be damned twice. "I stitch because I love the feel of fabric," she says. "I stitch because it is how I express my ideas and concerns. I stitch because it is *art* and I am an artist. I love text and fabric because they speak to people. They are my means for communication.

annual contemporary crafts exhibition in Arizona. "We're talking ceramics, textiles, metalwork, glass – traditional craft media. But we're not talking craft-y anything."

Lenz has little patience with people who look at textiles and think, "Oh, DIY." She insists that what is sometimes dismissed as "only craft" can be as significant as any work coming out of the MFA programs that spawn artists like salmon spawn smolt. "People who write about art and art history – academics and people who have a vested interest in one or the other – proliferate these definitions and try to tell other people what is real art and what is craft, what is acceptable and what is not. When you go into your studio and you're engaged in the process of creation, you're not thinking is this art or is this craft? You're thinking about the next thing to do to get the result you're after. And it's the same whether you're brushing on paint or stitching with thread."



My work carries a message, and the finished work is more important than the chosen medium. I did *not* choose fiber and stitching in order to express my female point of view."

Nor, she might add, does the medium determine who is a fine artist and who is not. "It's an ongoing problem for an artist working in any craft-like medium, not just fiber," Lenz says, pointing out that many artists who work in clay call themselves ceramicists or clay artists as a defense against the perception of pottery as something that is functional, like a coffee mug or a vase. Not art but craft – which, depending on the intention of the creator, it still might be. "Where's the line between craft and art? And since when did craft become a dirty word?"

In Columbia, Lenz has had exhibits at Tapps Art Center, S&S Art Supplies, and Anastasia & FRIENDS, all within the past six months. Her work also has been in juried shows throughout the country, recently at the Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts and the Workhorse Arts Center, both in Virginia, and the Mesa Arts Center's 33rd

Nearly all Lenz's art incorporates thread, though not all has stitching. Her *Decisions* installation includes thread-wrapped rusted nails in a vintage ice-cream scoop. Her *Keys for the City*, which filled a window at Tapps last year, consisted of hanging keys, as does her *Wall of Keys*, a separate installation at Gallery 80808. The concept for these installations in turn grew out of the work that came before it: a mixed-media piece called *Personal Grounds* that began with doors covered in keys. "I was frustrated as a mother," she explains. "Where are the answers to all these questions. Where is the key to happiness? Where is the key to knowledge? How do you know what's behind door number one or door number two or door number three? I was going to be a museum curator. He was going to be an electrical engineer. There's so much about life that is mystery. It's one of the things that I think craft artists communicate through their work, where a lot of fine artists don't necessarily. I think that's because of the academic training. Fine artists are stating something. Craft artists often pose questions."

In both installations, some of the keys are framed, some aren't; some are tagged and accessible, some aren't tagged and aren't accessible. The accessible tags each have a word on them: freedom, happiness, success, money, failure – "failure is really big and right out there in the open," Lenz says. "You can get to it really easily."

In Lenz's world, one piece leads to another piece, one body of work to another or several. Such was the case three years ago, when Lenz surveyed the doors and keys of *Personal Grounds* in her studio. "The more I looked at the work, the more I realized that what it was missing were the people. There was this pristine gallery and the work, and it's so about decisions and options and which key you're going to take. But there were no figures. That's how I started my *Decision Portraits* series. I started with my sister, Wanda. Her decision is called *Five Years Sober* and the stitching on it is 'One day at a time.'

Then she got to exhibit all 107 of the portraits in Charleston at City Gallery at Waterfront Park – and came to a realization: "The portraits were bigger than the doors. The keys had gotten very small. So I went back into the keys and I decided I needed a whole wall of these keys, which has been exhibited without the portraits. It was the earlier work that inspired the portraits and the portraits that inspired the wall. It circles back to itself. One of the problems with a lot of these historians and academics is that they want to have a natural progression. Yeah, you could look at art this way, but things backtrack and overlap. It's not always a linear progression."

The *Last Words* art quilts on exhibit in Rocky Mount are a series of gravestone rubbings that Lenz got permission to take in the Circular Churchyard, one of Charleston's oldest cemeteries, using silk and Crayola Jumbos, then layered and stitched into. She describes them as dealing with memory, personal legacy, and mortality. "I look at it as what do you want to do with what time you've got left and how do you want to be remembered. How you are going to

COLUMBIA'S OLDEST GALLERY CRAWL

ARTISTAVISTA

THURSDAY
APRIL 26
5-9PM

CONTINUING DURING THE DAY
FRI & SAT
SEE WEBSITE FOR GALLERY HOURS

City Gallery
Carol Stairraris Gallery
Vista Studios/Gallery 80808
The Gallery at DuPre
McKissick Museum
Ellen Taylor Interiors
River Runner
Trustus Theatre
One Faced Cow Glass
SC State Museum

COLUMBIA SC FAMOUSLY HOT

Vista quilt

WWW.ARTISTAVISTA.COM FOR DETAILS

be remembered is how you lived. To me it's about life. Other people can look at it as death. They are grave rubbings. It's not like death isn't there." The silk, she added, is not very abrasive to the stone.

Like *Personal Grounds* and *Decision Portraits*, *Last Words* makes use of text as well as textile. And why not? "We often use words from textiles to suggest writing," Lenz points out. "A line of communication is a thread. We spin a tale. Text is very important in a lot of my work."

The stitched spools in the processing room have no text on them, but Lenz describes them as part of a narrative nonetheless. She has them piled in an old cradle – Lenz scours auctions and thrift stores – which with a giant canopy will be part of another installation. The canopy, which Lenz expects to fill the Gallery 80808 atrium, is stitched-together vintage crochet and needlework. "I'm working on a whole bunch of things that are three-dimensional, dealing with the concept of time," Lenz says. "The canopy bed is suggestive of those little girls we all once were. We all dreamed about canopy beds. We all dreamed about happily ever after." ♪

Why We Listen to Women

By Kyle Petersen



Photo by Lenza Jolley

I wanted this column to focus on the rather straightforward idea of why “listening to women musicians matters,” but I found my thoughts turned not so much to the particular (and rather fraught) challenges women performers in popular music have had to overcome over the years, but rather how identities in a more general sense figure into our consumption of the music or, for that matter, any artistic or cultural product in general. Jasper is, after all, a publication with its own self-imposed identity constrictions—we write about, encourage, and patronize artists in and around the greater Columbia area. This is our *raison d’être*—a belief that our community needs to recognize and celebrate the wonderful breath and quality of artists that live among us. What perhaps goes unsaid, though, is that such identity-driven purposes only seem to arise when the identity of an artist—be it “local,” “woman,” “gay,” “ethnic,” or some other dividing discourse—suggests an ulterior social or political purpose for patronage apart from pure aesthetic enjoyment.

This, of course, leads to the unfair but somewhat understandable assumption that being qualified as “local” or a “women” artist would imply something akin to affirmative action, where identity politics is in some way trumping quality or achievement in importance. This in turn seems to influence our ability to see these artists fairly and objectively in their larger fields. A particularly pertinent example is the story of singer/songwriter Joni Mitchell once walking away in irritation from a

super-excited fan who proclaimed that she was “one of the greatest female songwriters of all time.” Mitchell was miffed not because what the fan said was insulting or untrue, but because, by identifying her only among female songwriters, his praise seems to preclude her preeminence in the larger field of all songwriters.

There are two problems that arise from this situation, at least in my mind. One is that many if not most artistic disciplines are dominated by men, which suggests that there actually is important political work to be done in assuring women equal and fair treatment within those fields. This is a point that many may object to, but that doesn’t make it any less of a problem for a culture that is so often ruled by the tyranny of the majority. The second, of course, is to assume that there is something intrinsic imparted by a person’s art simply because of their gender, location, ethnicity, or anything else. All people, but artists in particular, are unique, quirky, and largely uncategorizable individuals. What makes them interesting, in fact, is how each is slightly, but fascinatingly, different from each other.

However, in asserting how the individuality and “difference” among artists is what makes them special, it is also equally important to recognize that artists do not create in a vacuum. “Women” or “local” artists, regardless of the degree to which they might identify with those terms, nonetheless have to grapple with the fact that others are going to identify them in those terms. Somebody who is identified as a woman artist is thus faced with responding to such an identification, thus becoming a part of “her” identity in that, whether the art directly responds to this identification, it nonetheless gets swept up in the discourse of how feminine artists are “othered,” or placed in frameworks that are at least suspected of having such “ulterior purposes.”

I mention all of this not so much to lecture the quite intelligent readership our magazine is lucky enough to have as to serve as a reminder and, hopefully, as an articulation in some respect of why we decide to listen, to support, and to write about the kind of artists we do. Hopefully this issue will succeed even where this column fails in making it evident why we, Jasper, do what we do.

[Apologies to Simone Beauvoir and Toril Moi, whose work greatly influenced my remarks here.] ♪

The Eclectic Path of Danielle Howle

By Kyle Petersen

There's a song that Danielle Howle has taken to playing live over the last few years – a song by another musician from Columbia, Chris Connor, who died a while back, called "Being Poor." It's a tough, blues-based number with the refrain lamenting "what a bitch it is to be poor." In June of 2011, members of the Jasper staff watched Howle play the song to less than two dozen people in the now-defunct listening room The White Mule. On New Year's Eve 2011, Howle played the song (with her new backing band Firework Show) to a crowd of nearly 20,000 people as the opening act for The Avett Brothers. This wild twist of fate is, really, the story of her life.

Since bringing the progressive rock act Lay Quiet Awhile to national and international attention in the early 1990s, Howle has recorded over a dozen full-length albums and EPs – often released by nationally recognized independent labels – and toured across the country with the likes of the Indigo Girls, Elliott Smith, and Ani DiFranco. She's opened for acts as prominent and diverse as Fugazi, Bob Dylan, and Hootie and the Blowfish. And, yet, despite her storied career, she also speaks matter-of-factly about having not been to a doctor in twelve years and struggling to make a living wage as a musician. She's always, seemingly, on the brink of something big. Currently Howle is poised to release an exciting two-disc compilation in support of Awendaw Green, where she is the artist-in-residence and where she has re-charged the more experimental rock and roller in herself. Still though, it has been a long, strange journey so far.

Born in Oklahoma to a military family which would move constantly, with time spent in Mississippi, Germany, and the Carolinas during her childhood, "most ... in the Columbia area," she says. Although she started playing in bands at 16, she's "been singing [her] whole life." After graduating Spring Valley High School, Howle came to town to attend Columbia College as a theater major. "That was the thing I loved [first]," she explains, and she credits her time there for helping her get more comfortable in her own skin. "I was really shy in a lot of ways, and it was a good place to not be ... scared."

Howle first emerged on the Columbia music scene singing at open mics with a pick-up group called the Blue Laws and quickly drew a buzz due to her powerful and inventive voice – an oddly beautiful instrument which doesn't really fit into any conventional categories despite drawing from country, folk, and jazz traditions. From the beginning, she was a singular performer with a nervous energy and an in-the-moment charisma that carried through in her often rambling, stream-of-consciousness style. It was then that she started writing songs.

"I wrote in journals from third to tenth grade, and maybe that theater training brought me out of my shell a little bit ... I was about 21, and I was like, 'I think this is what I wanted to do,'" she recalls. Howle started learning how to play guitar and piano to accompany her burgeoning songwriting desire, and before long she had built a strong reputation as a solo performer. What came next, though, is what shot Howle into national prominence.

Lay Quiet Awhile was the progressive rock outfit that brothers Phil and Dan Cook started back in 1986. The brothers had gone through various line-up changes and recorded two EPs, but didn't really find their stride until Howle entered into the scenario. With Howle's quirky sensibilities and stop-you-in-your tracks voice, the band was clearly going places. The inclusion of their song "Time Won't Help" on the 1992 WUSC fundraiser compilation *Please No Profanity*, (which featured, among others, Hootie & the Blowfish, In/Humanity, and Blightbody), lead to the tune becoming a staple in the station's rotation and building a bit of momentum for the group.

The group also would have a chance encounter with an unlikely supporter who would change the course of Howle's career – the Indigo Girls' singer/songwriter Amy Ray.

The band had picked up a last-minute gig opening for the Ellen James Society in Charleston, and, after they played, Ray, who also runs the well-respected independent label, Daemon Records, approached the group and said "I want to sign you, do you know what I'm saying?" and I said, 'No, I don't,'" Howle remembers.

Ray went on to release Lay Quiet Awhile's only full-length album, 1993's *Delicate Wire*, as well as many other subsequent Howle records, giving them great national exposure and an enhanced ability to tour nationally and in the UK. "I never would have been able to do anything without her. She's a great label boss and leader. She also trained me, by accident, to be a more socially conscious and politically conscious human being [as well], just by being who [she] was," Howle says. "She broadened my mind and horizons as a person, just with her awesome human being-ness."

After some lengthy touring, Lay Quiet Awhile called it quits – but Howle was just getting going. Soon after the group disbanded, Howle began collaborating with Blightobody guitarist John Furr on her solo record *About to Burst* (1996), beginning a musical relationship that would last well into the next decade. "John Furr is more talented and awesome than John Furr will ever realize," Howle says proudly. "[and he's] rather unjaded and innocent about it."

As Danielle Howle & the Tantrums, Howle and Furr, along with drummer Troy Tague and bassist Brian Williams, would record two albums together, *Do a Two Stable* (1997) and *Skorborealis* (2002), both on Daemon, and tour across the country over the course of eight years. It was with the Tantrums that Howle was allowed to be the most willfully eclectic, going from country and Americana to heavy progressive indie rock with seamless ease, while also mixing strong world and pop elements into her sound. During this time Howle also released two acoustic full-length albums, 1995's *Live at McKissick Stadium* (which featured acoustic versions of Tantrums songs) on Daemon and Catalog in 1999, which was released via the noted Pacific Northwest independent label Kill Rock Stars Records.

The Tantrums became more of a casual, in-town band after *Skorborealis* came out, but luckily Howle still had musician-friends to help keep her relentless spout of songs going out to the public. It was Hootie and the Blowfish's lead guitarist Mark Bryan who became her collaborator. Howle had known the band back when they were both



"Children know things that we don't know, and they are like mysterious creatures from outer space."

Photo by Alisha Hime

in school in Columbia in the early 1990s. She had first met Bryan as a WUSC DJ, and became friends with the entire band once they started playing live. "I used to hang out with Darius [Rucker] in his dorm room, just talking," she remembers, struck by how incongruous their fame and her memories are now. Of course, the band members were also great fans of her work, and in 2005 Bryan produced and played on much of Howle's full-length *Thank You, Mark*, which Howle named in his honor. Rucker also contributed, singing a duet with her on the Etta James cover "If I Can't Have You."



Photo by Alisha Hime

Despite all of her years of touring and fantastic support though, Howle was still living the life of a starving artist. While she is quick to point out that her financial difficulties have often been her own fault – “I’ve always put everything I made back into [my career],” she admits, with an edge of determination – it still seems shocking that one of the more famous musicians to emerge out of the Columbia scene over the last two decades still has a hard time getting by. Howle began doing various educational programming in 2001 as a way of making more money, implementing programs at Penn State, College of Charleston, and other schools throughout the Lowcountry and the South Carolina Midlands. In 2006, she even penned a tune for ETV called “Wash Hands,” which is perhaps the best example of how easily she relates to children.

“The educational programming is a challenge for me,” she says. “Children know things that we don’t know, and they are like mysterious creatures from outer space.”

Howle’s life took another fortuitous turn, when she was made the artist-in-residence at Awendaw Green – a position which gives her both a place to live and a place to promote South Carolina artists at the Sewanee Outpost’s weekly barn jams and at the solar-powered swamp house (and makeshift recording studio) along the Echaw Creek deep in the Frances Marion Forest. Howle got the gig through a friendship with Eddie Floyd, who volunteered the swamp house to Howle at the end of 2008 for recording purposes, the results of which Howle released in 2009 as *The Swamp Sessions*. It is a rough-hewn acoustic record that was originally intended to be just a set of demos. “I made it in about six hours,” she says almost apologetically. “It’s really rough, but in a good way, I think.”

That short, intimate experience sparked a much grander project that has become both Howle and Awendaw proprietor Eddie White’s biggest passions – the next iteration of *The Swamp Sessions*. Using Howle’s long list of connections and talented friends, the two

have orchestrated alchemic musical collaborations between an eclectic roster of South Carolina musicians, with enough songs recorded to fill out a 2-CD compilation. The long, impressive list of contributors includes, among others, Mark Bryan, Edwin McCain, Doug Jones, Cary Ann Hearst, and Josh Roberts, as well as such unlikely contributors as poet laureate Marjorie Wentworth, saxophonist Charlton Singleton, and instrumentalist Dustin Ashenfelder. Almost all of the recordings feature Howle in some capacity, as well as the rhythm section of Firework Show.

Jasper drove out to meet Howle at the Swamp House as various musicians were putting the finishing touches on their contributions to the upcoming record. We met up after driving over a seemingly endless set of dirt roads out in what seemed literally like the middle of nowhere. The rustic outpost sits on a bluff above the creek and gives off the magical feel of a dream-world clubhouse for musicians to come and play together. Outside of the range of cell phones and free from all but the most utilitarian of comforts, this is a place, it seems, where the most surprising of things can happen.

Talking to Howle is, in its own way, just as much of an experience as seeing her perform. She’s a wiry, free-spirited artist to her core, and she punctuates her conversations with whoops, laughs and (forgive the pun) howls. Her on-stage style of nervous, stream-of-conscious storytelling and stage banter that can bounce from brutally honest and tense to downright hilarious and joyous in a matter of minutes is clearly anything but an act. Howle is a live nerve of energy, emotion, and creativity, in a way that clearly explains where the unique way she views the world in her lyrics comes from. Our conversation bounces around from songwriting circles in Nashville and her recent show with the Avett Brothers to the recent protests over SOPA and wily and (sometimes) wicked world of the music business, while various musicians and engineers drive up or stop to ask a question or to give her a progress update.

What's perhaps most immediately noticeable after settling into this unique experience is how much Howle prefers talking about others – the talented musicians, engineers, and friends who have taught her so much and supported her in so many ways over the years – than herself. She almost can't help praising the broad swath of characters who have peppered her journey, and she often has comparatively little to say about her own role in her past.

The same cannot be said for her future, though. Howle is most excited when she talks about her new backing band, Firework Show, which plays on her newest full-length album of original material entitled New Years Revolutions. The Charleston band formed in 2005 and d built a reputation for their extended jams that mixed psychedelics, blues, and jazz in a way not unlike Howle herself. Consisting of Zach Bodtorf (guitar/vocals), Brandon Gallagher (drums), Casey Atwater (bass), and Braxton Brown (keys), the group comes across as a looser, more limber version of the Tantrums, and swings with the wild eclecticism as Howle's oeuvre.

With her new band behind her, Howle sees nothing but a bright, determined future ahead. "I see myself as more progressive now," she says. "I hope the young people can keep up with me!" In the past, she says, "music industry types have accused me of 'not knowing who you are, who your voice is,'" something which she no longer worries about. "I've decided that maybe my voice is a lot of things. Maybe it's okay to write country songs, and then write songs that would, like, freak out Wilco. There's no model anymore. It's just what do you like, who is gonna come follow you and come visit you, and you don't have to as huge as the Rolling Stones to make an impact in your community."

Howle feels that she is just now figuring out her own musical muse, and she plans on following it, "until I find the next beautiful thing," she says. "This is gonna make it really interesting next 20 years."

Her immediate plans, once The Swamp Sessions are finally released? "Time to put it in the van again. It's time to go back out." ♪



SPECIAL EVENTS PARTIES WEDDINGS

701 Whaley

For rates and information, visit us at 701Whaley.com.
Contact Tom Chinn at 771-9101 or 701whaley@gmail.com

Photo by Judy Kay Bryan www.photosbyjudy.com



Camden Native Claire Bryant Finds her Dream in New York City

By Jeffrey Day

Claire Bryant had a problem. Like many classically trained musicians, she wondered where her art form fit in 21st-century American life. “You’re trained and trained and trained to master your instrument. You play a concert and walk off the stage. What is a classical musician in this society? What is the value? How does our music tradition relate to the rest of the world? It’s a kind of a mystery we were facing together.”

The Camden-reared, New York-based cellist discovered answers close to home. For several years Bryant and musical colleagues from New York have performed music not just in the concert halls but in classrooms, community centers, and the occasional bar around Camden (as well as New York). Most are part of The Academy, a collaboration among the Juilliard School, Carnegie Hall, and the Weill

Music Institute for outstanding young musicians that aims to deliver classical music to non-traditional places and audiences. The Academy, Bryant says, “changed my whole way of thinking about what it means to be a classical musician.”

The box classical musicians find themselves in was blown apart the first time Academy members entered a school to do a residency. “It was the first or second week we’d been doing this, and I was playing (Edward) Elgar’s Cello Concerto,” she recalls. “This girl was sitting right in front of me and she just burst into tears. I didn’t know what to do. She told me ‘I just didn’t know music could make me feel this way.’

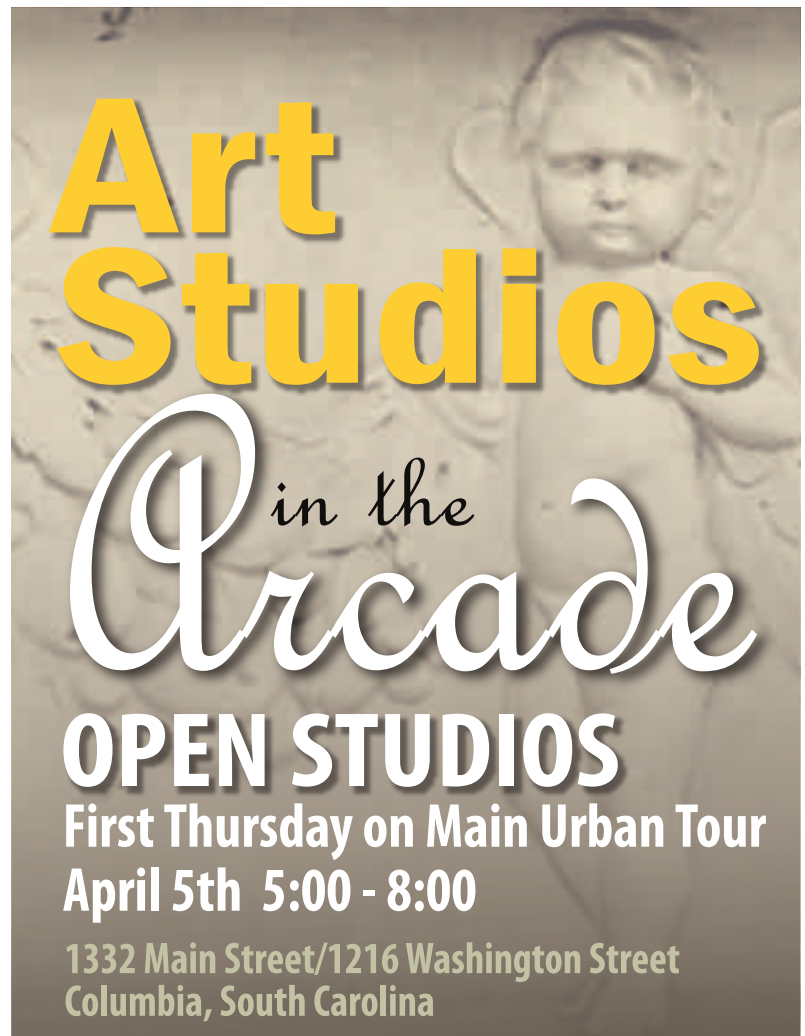
“I thought – ‘Wow I’m never going to forget this.’”

When Bryant and her fellow musicians perform at a rural South Carolina school or an inner-city one in New York, for a small audience of solid supporters at the Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County, or to a sophisticated city crowd, they toss out many of the conventions that clutter classical music. There's more talking than you'd find at most concerts. They may point out the visual images a work conjures up or talk about the "temperature" of the sound. At one school, they played an arrangement of Lady Gaga's *Poker Face*. In the middle of it, one of the musicians jumped up and said "We can't play that!" which launched a discussion about censorship. They don't dumb down the programming – there are Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann as well as often-prickly newer pieces. At a recent Camden concert, *280 Measures for Solo Clarinet* by Georges Aperghis was met with polite applause. They're not in a concert hall or classroom to provide distracting entertainment.

"We do just what we'd do if we were playing at Carnegie Hall," says Bryant, who was invited to The Academy during its first year in 2006.

In April, she and six other New York musicians, along with two sound and video artists from Found Sound Nation, will be back in South Carolina. In Camden, they'll do a concert and a residency during which they'll collaborate with 20 high school students to write, perform, and record a CD and stage a 'street studio' where community members can come and make music, even if they aren't musicians. They'll also perform the same concert of music by Bach, Stravinsky, Beethoven, and Isang Yun at the University of South Carolina School of Music in Columbia. At USC, they'll work with music composition students and chamber music groups that want to do an outreach program for veterans. They'll also play a gig at the Venue, a nightclub in Camden, and are looking for a cool spot in Columbia to do the same. For the concerts, they'll be joined by Columbia-based pianist Phillip Bush, who has quickly become an admirer of Bryant.

"I was impressed with her playing and what she was doing," says Bush, who along with a solo concert career played for many years with the Philip Glass and Steve Reich ensembles.



Art Studios
in the
Arcade
OPEN STUDIOS
First Thursday on Main Urban Tour
April 5th 5:00 - 8:00
1332 Main Street/1216 Washington Street
Columbia, South Carolina

"People I knew from New York who had worked with her thought highly of her and this talented younger generation of musicians."

Bush and Bryant finally met last summer when he invited her to perform and teach at the Chamber Music Conference and Composers Forum of the East in Vermont, where he is artistic director. "We played a fairly difficult piece by Harold Meltzer, and, from the first note, she was great," he says. "She's a really positive person to work with."

Violinist Owen Dalby, who has taken part in nearly all the South Carolina residencies, says of Bryant: "Claire rallies the troops like no one else."

Born in Greenville, Bryant began studying music at four. Her parents planned to sign her up for violin lessons, but she was tall enough and opted for the cello instead. The family (her father is a pediatrician, her mother a retired summer camp director, and she has a younger sister) moved to Camden when she was eight. Between ages 10 and 20 she studied with USC professor Robert Jesselson, with whom she remains close. (Her musical tastes also extended into rock—the first CD she bought was Pearl Jam's *Ten*. She became obsessed with Tom Waites in high school. She rocked out to Mr. Bungle



COR
columbia opportunity resource

Find your place to make a difference.

COR connects young, talented professionals in the greater Columbia area to diverse and meaningful networks for leadership, service and fun.

GET INVOLVED

- 4/6: Meet COR at the Fifth Annual Urban Tour on Main Street
- 4/11: Table for Six Networking Dinner
- 4/21: Volunteer with COR at the USMC Mud Run

CONNECT

www.ourcor.org | [@impactcolumbia](https://twitter.com/impactcolumbia) | 803.733.1123



and Fishbone at the Elbow Room.) She also got involved with the Camden Community Theatre at the Fine Arts Center, first cast as the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. She kept acting and also played in the band for musicals. She went to plays and concerts and art shows there and has done fund-raisers for the Center.

"I grew up at the Arts Center," Bryant says. "The reason what we do in Camden has been successful is that I'm from there; I know people. I can walk into a school and talk to a principal." Although obviously connected to the connected of Camden, Bryant is very down-home, friendly, and completely unpretentious. The visiting musicians stay with Bryant's parents and family or friends around Camden. Her mother cooks every single meal for them all when they're in town.

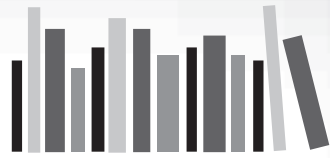
After a brief time at USC, Bryant earned a bachelor's degree in performance from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a master's in performance from Julliard. From 1998 to 2006, she served as assistant to chamber music master Charles Wadsworth at the Spoleto Festival USA, so she learned at the feet of the best. Wadsworth had a concert series that made stops at the Fine Arts Center, as well as in Columbia and Beaufort. However, after he retired a few years ago, the Fine Arts Center signed on for only two Wadsworth concerts annually. Bryant and her friends were enlisted to fill the other concert slots and brought with them the intensive school residencies.

"It was an opportunity to shake things up," says Kristin Cobb, executive director of the Center. Arts education is a big part of the Center's mission, and that was a big part of Bryant's proposal. "It was a much broader scope than what we'd been doing, and it's also a way to support artists who are from here."

Bryant's concerts and residencies, for which she won the 2010 McGraw-Hill Companies Robert Sherman Award for Arts Education and Community Outreach, take up a big part of her life, but she says: "I pretty much run the operation on the subway with my iPhone." She also works as a professor's assistant at Julliard, teaches at a public school twice a week, and performs frequently, mostly in the Northeast. Not long ago, she wouldn't have imagined having such a varied musical life in the vanguard of redefining the role of a classical musician.

"When I came to Julliard eight years ago, my dream was that I'd be a cellist in a string quartet and have an agent who'd set everything up," Bryant says. "I was in a quartet that I was serious with that had just broken up, and I felt a little defeated. At The Academy, this whole new world opened up with this little family of musicians. My dreams have changed. I've found my dream through this." ♪

Save the Date



SC **BOOK FESTIVAL**

May 18–20, 2012

**Columbia Metropolitan
Convention Center**

1101 Lincoln St., Columbia, SC

Free Admission

Saturday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Sunday 12 noon – 4 p.m.

.....
SPECIAL TICKETED EVENTS - *Register Online*

Friday, May 18

Writing Classes

Opening Night Reception

Saturday, May 19

The Literary Vine @ RCPL

Hosted by the Friends of RCPL
myrcpl.com/friends/literary-vine

Promoting literary excellence since 1997

For more information, visit www.scbookfestival.org.



803-788-6966
www.solsticekitchen.com

Serving lunch again
Tuesday-Friday
from 11:30-2:00 pm



803-343-3303 2001-C
Greene Street
Columbia, SC 29205



MR. FRIENDLY'S
NEW SOUTHERN CAFE

2001 A Greene St
803-254-7828
www.mrfriendlys.com



Anastasia Chernoff // Pleasant Personality and Independent Artist

By Cynthia Boiter

Anastasia Chernoff's artistic journey has not been paved with the sunshine and daffodils the artist's exceedingly pleasant personality suggests. But it may be the hardships she underwent that have led this fairly new artist to the place she is now and the priority she places on treating people as kindly as she would like to be treated herself. The daughter of Ann Smith Hankins, a single mother who escaped from a bad marriage with her baby and a huge tub of crayons in tow, Chernoff lived alone with her mother from the time she was a toddler until Hankins

remarried when Chernoff was 19. "My mom was a good role model for me in terms of teaching me how to be independent," she reflects. And despite the fact that she almost constantly surrounds herself with people she loves, Chernoff's independence of spirit is reflected nowhere more than in the art she creates as a sculptor.

Chernoff can trace her love of the malleability of clay back to her earliest days of childhood when her grandmother would give her a spoon and a plastic container to play



Page Left: Photo by Mark Green Above: "Sensual Bling" Porcelain with Oxides

with in the dirt at her West Columbia home. "I would come home from school and stay with my grandmother and grandfather while my mom worked," she says. At the end of the workday, when her mother picked her up to go home, the home they went to was in a subsidized housing project in which her mother deemed it unsafe for Chernoff to play. "We lived in the projects for one year," Chernoff recalls, as well as in apartments in the Saint Andrews area of Columbia, as well as other places, until Hankins saved enough money to buy the pair their own home. "Being able to play outside in the dirt and clay at my grandmother's was like heaven to me."

Born to a mother who was only 17-years-old, Chernoff doesn't talk much about her father, though she has memories, some more painful than others, of him cropping up throughout her childhood. The experience of spending one particularly unsettling summer with her father, whom she recalls as "extremely creative, but fucked up," forced the girl to grow up too soon and changed her forever in both negative and positive ways. Chernoff, who values empathy and compassion in herself and others, is adept at putting difficult times behind her, though. "People have reasons for things. I don't believe people set out to hurt other people. Sometimes it just happens," she says matter-of-factly and, with that, she moves on to another topic.

Chernoff describes herself in her teen years as a "smart, but wild child" who began working summers and after school as soon as she was old enough. She and her best friend from first grade, Holly, worked together in the shoe department of the J. B. White department store where the girls shared a locker and almost everything else in life. In one of the most anguished moments in her early adulthood, Chernoff recalls her junior year of high school and the loss of her friend to suicide after Holly had been caught cheating on a test. "Getting caught meant that Holly was going to lose everything," Chernoff remembers. "And she came to me for sympathy but instead, I was so angry with her that I didn't show her the compassion I should have.

She told me she loved me then she took an overdose of aspirin and died." To this day, Chernoff readily expresses her feelings of love and appreciation to almost everyone in her life.

After graduating from high school in 1985, Chernoff attended Winthrop University "for about 20 minutes," she says, and entered into a relationship with a man that, though destined for failure, resulted in two of the best things to ever happen to her – she learned needed coping skills and she gave birth to a beautiful red-headed baby girl, Lauren Meads. At about the same age her mother was when she left Chernoff's father, Chernoff also left her daughter's father and began the struggle to provide for her child as a single parent herself. From operating her own typing service to doing advertising sales for a local radio station to helping a long-term boyfriend with his restaurant and real estate endeavors, Chernoff worked steadily, having little time to pursue the art that she knew was inside her.

"Anytime I could I would go back to working with the soil," she says, always recalling her time as a child at her grandparents' home. "It was there that I felt the connection to the earth with my hands as I dug into the top white sandy layer to reveal the dark earth below. As I dug deeper and deeper, the color of the soil would change ... I can still remember how the cool moist dirt smelled." She continues, "My Granny was passionate about her garden and she instilled her passion in me. The older I got the more she shared





Anastasia
Chernoff



"Early Bird" Stoneware, oxides and porcelain

with me to the point that I became obsessed with landscape design and architecture as an adult."

Chernoff's affinity for working with the soil and living things eventually lead her to starting a floral business of her own specializing in unique cultivars and interesting, if not bizarre, designs. "I was 31-years-old and slowly, slowly, I finally pulled myself out of debt," she says. It was at her floral shop on Gervais Street that one day in the year 2000 an older gentleman walked in and ordered flowers for an ex-lady-friend. "He was more than twice my age but he was just so adorable that I couldn't resist him. He asked me out on a date and I said yes."

Within a year, Anastasia and Marvin Chernoff were married, but Anastasia, who suffers with a variety of respiratory infirmities, including asthma, had undergone additional pulmonary damage while working in the floral industry. She made the difficult decision to leave her floral business behind. "Also," she says, "Marvin was working part time then and we started traveling. Argentina, Uruguay twice, Chile, Italy, and eventually Africa."

It was on a trip to Botswana and South Africa, including Robben Island where past President of South Africa and Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela was imprisoned during apartheid that Chernoff first felt the inspiration to sculpt. "When I first started sculpting a world renowned artist and very wise woman told me that she didn't start creating her greatest work until she completely abandoned her ego," Chernoff remembers, equating this sage advice with the lessons she learned from her visit to the places where Mandela had made such tremendous sacrifices for his cause.

"I started in concrete and moved to porcelain," Chernoff says, remembering the early days of her large format art and working with concrete, rebar, and chicken wire. She credits artist Britta Cruz and the time Cruz spent mentoring her with her move to a lighter and more malleable medium. "I am also indebted to some amazing women who encouraged me," she says listing Lee Ann Kornegay and Heidi Darr-Hope as early inspirations.

"I'm fascinated more so by the journey of the creative process than the outcome," Chernoff admits. "Once I've finished a piece, I usually have very little attachment to it and am ready to move on to another art experience. I really don't know what I'm doing and, when I first started creating, thought that it was important that I

did. After driving myself a little crazy for a while, I decided it was okay not to know. ... Inevitably, it's going to change throughout the process and, if I've already labeled it, I can be thrown off with my process which creates frustration in me."

Chernoff also says that hypnosis has allowed her a greater degree of spontaneity in her medium.

"Artistically, I was a real freak for the first year and a half or so, but Marvin was so supportive," Chernoff says, noting that the couple has since divorced, but remain very close. "He is still part of my family," she continues. "He will always be in my life. I was so unsure of myself at the start, but Marvin believed in me and that helped me to fulfill what I really believe to be my life's calling. I'm still not totally comfortable but I feel secure putting my work out there now and not worrying what people think."

A person with a strong appreciation for smooth round forms and a bent toward the sensual, Chernoff began sculpting torsos and female nude forms early on – some of her earliest shows focused on a number of small female derrieres in assorted shapes and colors. "The human body consistently turns up in my emotional playground, which results in much of my work being figurative. I never know what will manifest itself, which creates a surprising, sometimes humorous, and always enlightening outcome."

Her first big solo show was called Extrusions and was held in an upscale restaurant space on Main Street in November 2009. "I was so excited to get this show. I spent all my time getting ready for it and installing it. It was such a wonderful experience and I was thrilled once I had it up and people began arriving to see my work," she recalls. The problem came immediately after the event when the manager of the space asked her when she would be picking up her work. "Picking up my work? I thought – I just finished installing it!" she says, remembering her shock that she was meant to take her art out of the space on the same night she moved it in.



"Surreal High Heels" Porcelain and Acrylic

Luckily, Chernoff had been in previous negotiations with The Free Times to curate an exhibit for the upcoming Mingle and Jingle party, an art and commerce event celebrating the Christmas holidays, in the weekly newspaper's open space in the front of their building. "So we moved the Extrusions show to the space at Free Times and, at that show, I was asked to permanently take over curating the space for the monthly First Thursday art crawls on Main Street."

In that, the gallery Anastasia and FRIENDS was born.

Chernoff doesn't take for granted the unique opportunity she has been given – such prominent gallery space and curation responsibilities are exceedingly rare for an artist without formal training in studio art or art history who only recent entered the field. "Anastasia and FRIENDS has been a tremendous opportunity and experience for me," she says. "I'm very fortunate that the folks at Free Times have given me a chance to organize, curate, and present the monthly exhibitions on Main Street. It's a lot of work, more than I initially anticipated, but I have some help now. It's hugely exciting to be on the forefront of it for me. It's like the Wild West on Main Street and we're all pioneers."

"Showing great new artists gives me a huge charge," she continues. "I like to host layered art openings and include a couple of shows a year that are interactive. Last year, we had the Etched in Stone show in January and the REBUS show in June. The more involved folks become with the art, the more significant the art becomes in the community which creates more support for the artists involved."

Citing her early mentors as Cruz, Iona Royce Smithkin, and Steve Hewitt, the former director of City Studios on Calhoun Street, Chernoff also identifies some ceramicist idols, including Sergei Isupov and Doug Jeck. "Although he isn't a ceramicist, figuratively speaking and from a realist standpoint, Ron Mueck also takes the cake. Mueck takes the human form and creates something so realistic and, sometimes horrendous, by over or under sizing it and placing it in an environment that is relatable to us on an everyday basis. Sergei creates an abstract form and creates a human experience out of it through his incredible narrative illustrations and paintings," she says. "And Jeck takes conditions like autism and makes us stare at them rather than looking away, showing us the intrigue and beauty in them."

It isn't difficult to see the influence of all these artists in Chernoff's work, and her life, for that matter. "I make art because I have chosen to live my life in the happiest place I could possibly be. Art is a huge form of exploration and enlightenment for me. I had no choice but to be an artist. I wouldn't care if I had to live off of food scraps, I wouldn't change my profession," she says. "I feel like the career choices I made leading up to becoming a full time artist were the ones that were subconsciously chosen based on their creative components. The ability to mesh both my mind and hands gives me a sense of individuality, independence, and challenge."

And while not always giving her sunshine and daffodils, the work rewards the artist and, clearly, the community is similarly rewarded with the art and personality of Anastasia Chernoff. ♣

www.CityCenterColumbia.sc



URBAN TOUR

Thursday, April 5, 2012 ■ 5:00 – 8:00pm ■ Main Street, Columbia

An evening of entertainment, prizes, food, drink, and fun!

For more information: la@cartertodd.com



Artist Bruce Nellsmith Writes About Six Women Who Make a Difference in Columbia Arts

As I am about to settle into the luxurious comfort of one of her couches, artist Toni Elkins returns from her kitchen with a glass of wine in her hand and plops down on the floor. She has a warm and inviting personality, is generous with her time, energy, and resources, and has a talent for making nearly anyone feel as though they are her best friend.

An internationally award-winning artist, a philanthropist, and options trader in the stock market, Elkins was a superintendent for the South Carolina State Fair Arts Department, organizing the annual exhibit, recruiting volunteers, and raising funds for awards when I first met her. She was the first artist from South Carolina to be elected into the Watercolor USA Honor Society and has received the Nautilus Fellowship from the International Society of Experimental Artists.

From modest efforts like supporting the Literature and Arts Festival of the Richland Two Education Foundation or the Columbia Jewish Day School to more visionary endeavors, such as creating Muses at Trustus Theater and helping to found Women in Philanthropy and the Palmetto Health Foundation’s Women’s Leadership Circle, Elkins often can be found at the heart of what matters. Coralee Harris, a fellow philanthropist who has served on several arts and humanities boards with Elkins, says: “She has a huge heart and is very sensitive to the people issues that oftentimes present themselves when a committee tries to resolve an issue. She is effective at separating the people from the task to reach resolution; she does so with creativity and purpose. Toni has served as President of the SC Watercolor Society and Fine Arts Consultant for the State Fair. This past year, she also served as Honorary Chair for Women in Philanthropy’s Power of the Purse Event. In addition, she has received the Elizabeth O’Neil Verner Award, given by the governor, for her contributions to the arts community in South Carolina.”

Elkins’ advice to other artists? “Be yourself, go your own direction; if you lose yourself you have lost what’s most valuable.”

Knowing that I had just interviewed Karen Brosius for this article, City Art Gallery Owner and Director Wendyth Wells asks me during a recent gallery visit what I thought of the Executive Director of the Columbia Museum of Art. “Didn’t you think she has a way of making everyone feel as though they are a friend?” Wells queries. Simply put: yes. One of the first topics of my conversation with Brosius was her mission to make the museum feel like “Columbia’s living room ... a place for people to gather with friends, a place you want to be.”

Prior to taking her position at CMA, Brosius worked for 21 years with the Altria Group – the parent company of Kraft Foods and Phillip Morris – where she served as a senior philanthropic, arts, and communications executive, working on the exhibitions and major retrospectives of artists including Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg,



Toni Elkins

Photo by Jonathan Sharpe



Karen Brosius

Jacob Lawrence, Louise Bourgeois, Frida Kahlo, and more. Already during her tenure at CMA, she arranged for the "Turner to Cezanne" exhibit, which included works never before shown in the United States, with CMA serving as the first stop on the exhibit's national tour. Prior to that, Brosius borrowed two paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir from the Art Institute of Chicago for six months, which was the first time a Renoir had been on public view anywhere in South Carolina, she recalls. Crediting the contributions of dedicated donors and board members who help to sponsor such high-caliber exhibitions, Joe and Melissa Blanchard, and the Contemporaries who raise money to support purchases, Brosius proposes that the CMA is poised to be the State's Museum.

Others in the know when it comes to Columbia arts agree. According to Stephen Nevitt, Professor of Art at Columbia College, "Karen's contributions to the arts in the Midlands have been profound." Jeffrey Day, former arts editor for The State newspaper, puts it most succinctly. "The museum has been transformed – in a good way – since Karen Brosius arrived," he says. "She certainly hasn't done it alone; the museum has an amazing, hard-working, and creative staff, but she's the boss and hired many of them. The museum has finally become the museum we deserve under her leadership".



Heidi Darr-Hope



Heidi Darr-Hope has invited a lot of people into her dreams over the past 12 years – people in need of finding something within themselves that can promote healing. The Columbia artist uses art to help cancer patients unleash creative ways of harnessing a deeper understanding of what they are going through and, more important, realize hope in a journey toward recovery and self-discovery.

Having taught in Palmetto Health's Psychosocial Oncology Program until it was discontinued in 1990, Darr-Hope soon afterwards established a non-profit

program called Healing Icons, which invites cancer patients to create works of art made from found objects, paint, and various collage elements to form an artwork that embodies and focuses the patient's fears, hopes, dreams, and misgivings. This visual and personal icon can lead the patient not only to a deeper understanding of their feelings as they navigate the complexities of cancer treatment, but, Darr-Hope points out, "it can help the patient to better communicate with families and friends some of the feelings they incur that they may be less than able to articulate through words."

Darr-Hope's studio has the feel of a curiosity shop, with apothecary-like drawers filled with bone fragments, insects, small stones, seeds, hair, feathers, you name it – this is her palette. Darr-Hope is best described as a sculptor working in found object combinations. Her own work is iconic, and she often combines objects in a shadow-box form in ways that, once their meanings are deciphered, form a kind of narrative that Darr-Hope says is often "pulled directly out of a dream."

While Darr-Hope says that her artwork stems from a trust in the "subconscious or unconscious," there is a formal side to her work, as well, stemming from her education. She holds a Master of Fine Arts degree as well as certification in Jungian dream analysis.

While trying to establish Healing Icons, Darr-Hope's says her biggest challenge was "to convince the right-brained, medical establishment that there was more to healing than medicine," she says, adding: "Trust me, I'm an artist."

essays and was a board member of the Alternative Museum in New York City.

Although she has spent much of her time at the SCAC raising funds to benefit artists, she says, "I don't think I would have the stomach for being an artist. ... There is the rejection. ... Honestly, I knew early on that I had no real talent, and I didn't have the temperament for it either." Nonetheless, Green takes a creative and innovative approach to her work as an arts administrator. As she presented me with various catalogues representing some of the exhibitions she has curated over the years, her pride in those accomplishments became evident, as so it should be.



Harriet Green

here's a rhythm to conversation with Harriet Green. It starts casual, then turns to the serious and sharply focused, and then to entertaining. The Visual Arts Director of the South Carolina Arts Commission (SCAC) for 24 years, Green hints at retirement, but it's hard to put the brakes on a bullet. From 1980-1988, Green was Registrar and Assistant Curator at the Columbia Museum of Art. Now she is the Curator of the SCAC State Art Collection. With an academic background in art history, she has written numerous exhibition catalogue

The best art may not always float to the top, but, regionally, it often does come to the attention of Wendyth Wells, owner and director of City Art Gallery. It is her business to gather what she deems to be some of the best professional and highest-quality original artwork into one place – her place. You will not find posters or giclees in her gallery, located in Columbia's Vista. Here, you will find only the paintings, artist's prints, drawings, and sculpture that came directly from the hand of the artist that produced them.

Karen Brosius: Photo by Jonathan Sharpe
Heidi Darr-Hope: Photo by Mark Green
Harriet Green: Photo by Mark Green



Wendyth Wells

The roots of the City Art Gallery go back to 1977, when Wendyth Wells, having completed degrees in political science and art, moved to South Carolina to help her mother operate her crafts supply business, The Dutch Door, in the Boozer Shopping Center. Wells' contribution to the business was to offer a selection of fine art supplies. She soon began to sell work by local artists, making use of the storefront windows to display their work. "When we finally moved to the Vista," she says, "we kept our corporate name – Dutch Door, but changed the name of the gallery."

An artist with many awards and exhibitions under her belt, Wells is also an advocate for art ownership. "People who buy that first piece of real art continue to buy it, but you have to experience what it's like to own and live with that first piece," she says. "I mean, don't you think it's amazing that you can own something someone has put onto a canvas?" There is a reverence in Wells' statement that speaks to the respect and admiration she has for this community of artists and their struggle to accomplish and share with others.

M

ore often it is the art historian or arts educator that eventually finds herself in the position of arts administrator, not an actor. But when I asked Kristin Cobb, Executive Director of the Kershaw County Fine Arts Center in Camden, how she found herself in this role of an arts administrator, she had a simple answer: "Well, I was really supposed to be famous." Cobb's involvement in acting began when, as an eighth grader, she appeared on stage for the first time in one of Larry Hembree's productions in the Bassett Theater on the campus of the Kershaw County Fine Arts Center.

"Larry says that I probably hold the record for the number of appearances in his plays here at the Center," Cobb says. Who better to take the helm than someone who artistically grew up in the theater?



Kristin Cobb

Coming full circle, Cobb was shaped by the many outreach programs of the Kershaw County Fine Arts Center; now she is responsible for shaping the present and future of that same Center. Full of energy as we climb the steps to the 284-seat Bassett Theater, where a production of the musical "Chicago" is being readied, Cobb sings out, "Give 'em the ol' razzle-dazzle!"

Under Cobb's direction, the Center does just that for the residents of Camden, with a burgeoning schedule of events featuring nationally and regionally known artists and performers. But there is a lot more to the Center than a box office, theater, and gallery. It has an extensive outreach program into the area's public schools. Through the Center's Daniels Foundation, an artist-in-residence has been placed in every school in the district. In addition to the Bassett Theater and Gallery, the Center boasts numerous well-equipped classrooms and studios for dance, painting, drawing, clay arts, and music. During the summer months, as many as 120 children can be found on the campus.

"We have really seen the classes grow, and when I became the director, I thought that the diversity of what we have to offer would be key to our survival," she says. "I saw diverse programming as the way we would take things to the next level. You may not like chamber music, but you may attend a blues concert. You may not take a music class, but you may take a clay class." Cobb adds that she feels "fortunate to have a place to work like this." ♪

Stacey Calvert // Columbia's Dance Connection?

By Bonnie Boiter-Jolley

When Stacey Calvert was 15-years-old, she was one of a very few young dancers selected from literally thousands to attend the prestigious year-round program at the School of American Ballet in New York City. When her mother, Naomi Calvert, one half of the famed Calvert Brodie School of Dance in Columbia, South Carolina, told her she could not go, she quit. For nine months, the stubborn young Calvert was a cheerleader instead of a dancer. Needless to say, by the next summer, Calvert's boredom got the best of her and she returned to her pursuit of a career in ballet. One year later, she was bound for the metropolis she would call home for the next 20 years: New York City.

A talented and determined dancer, Calvert studied for three years at the School of American Ballet, the school that feeds directly to the corps of the New York City Ballet. In her second year at the school, Calvert was promised a contract by the company's director, legendary choreographer and "Father of American Ballet," George Balanchine. When asked about her experience with the legend, Calvert's intense blue eyes shine brighter as she describes the feeling of awe that comes with being in the presence of such artistic and historical greatness. Calvert also mentions this feeling in connection with other ballet legends she has had the good fortune to work with, including "Jerry," Jerome Robbins, five time Tony Award winner and recipient of the Academy Award for Best Director for the 1961 film version of *West Side Story*, and Stanley Williams, SAB instructor and renowned teacher to the likes of ballet stars Rudolf Nureyev, Gelsey Kirkland, and Peter Martins. Shortly after he tapped Calvert for the position, however, the great Balanchine passed away, on the day of her graduation performance, no less. Despite this speed bump, Calvert was again asked to join the company by the new director, Peter Martins, the following season.

Nine years into her career in New York, a dancer in the corps de ballet, and concerned that she was "not moving forward," Calvert took a leap and travelled to Frankfurt, Germany with choreographer and dancer Kevin O'Day, to work with another famed choreographic and improvisation innovator, William Forsythe. Unsure of what to expect from her new surroundings, Calvert

was thrown into a strange world of improvisation and deconstructed movement. Only a few months into her tenure in Frankfurt, Calvert suffered a broken arm during a rehearsal which resulted in a chipped bone that became lodged in a tendon and required surgery. When Calvert returned to NYC for the operation in December, she opted to stay put, and return from her leave of absence to rejoin the New York City Ballet. Calvert reflects while sipping coffee in Columbia's Vista that her short German adventure made all the difference. "Everything changed for me," she remembers. That season, an edgy new Calvert with cropped red hair was cast in five new works for NYCB's Diamond Project, a program of all new choreography for the company, and was promoted to soloist soon after.

Five years after rejoining NYCB, Calvert and then husband, Kevin O'Day, gave birth to a daughter, Ayla. In June of 2000, Calvert again left the New York City Ballet. Over the next two years, a newly single Calvert bounced between South Carolina and New York City with her young daughter, spending some time at home to be near her close knit family. By May of 2002, Calvert had done what for her was unthinkable, and settled back in her hometown of Columbia. Calvert turned down the opportunity to join the cast of Twyla Tharp's hit musical *Movin' Out*, and spent a year selling grills in South Carolina's capitol city. Now the Director of Curriculum at the University of South Carolina Dance Conservatory, and an Instructor of Ballet in the University's Dance program, it is hard to believe Calvert was once "scared of teaching." Teaching full time now and able to take a more intellectual approach to the art form, Calvert says she is "still discovering things," and often muses that she wishes she knew when she was dancing, all of the things she knows now.

Drawing from her own experiences and advice from teachers past, Calvert is able to hand down valuable knowledge from famed educators. She credits legendary NYC teacher, Maggie Black with teaching her to "stand up and turn out" and Stanley Williams with understanding the "genesis of movement." She recognizes Gyrotonic Expansion System creator Juliu Horvath, SAB instructor Suki Schorer, and teacher and mentor since 1981, Willy



Photo by Jonathan Sharpe



Photo by Jonathan Sharpe

Burmann, along with Jerry Robbins, Peter Martins, and all of the choreographers and ballet masters and mistresses she has worked with, for teaching her “what dancing is all about.” Calvert asserts that there are many aspects of dance to explore, from working in a corps de ballet and being able to follow, to learning the nuance of a solo and improving technique. “You’re always learning something,” she reflects.

In her time at USC, Calvert has made invaluable contributions to the program, not the least of which being the Ballet Stars of NY Gala. Now in its seventh iteration, the fundraiser gives high level university students the opportunity to perform alongside principle dancers from the New York City Ballet in works from The George Balanchine Trust. Key to Calvert is giving her students plenty of time on the stage. In many companies, expensive theatre rentals give dancers little to no time for exploration. There is hardly room to change, grow, or “let the material shape you.” In regards to dance in Columbia in general, Calvert encourages the existing diversity, “there should be many voices,” she urges, but acknowledges a dearth of funding.

While the University’s program continues to grow, experiencing the growing pains any organization does, 48-year-old Calvert isn’t slowing down any time soon either. On any given day, the reader might find the impossibly young looking Calvert rushing from studio to theater, to pick her daughter up from school, grabbing a bite at an organic market or an espresso from Starbucks to keep that spritely spring in her step. Wiry and fit with closely cut blonde hair and an energy similar to that of her strikingly similar 13-year-old daughter, Calvert knows what she wants and isn’t afraid to demand it. “We need a theater,” she says confidently. She elaborates that she wishes for the city a 500-750 seat theater where dance companies could sell packed houses for multiple evenings of performances, instead of the one or two evenings of partially filled houses that most companies are fighting to afford now. Calvert dreams of her own school and company on Main Street and the room, funding, and audience for all of the artistic voices that want to be heard.

Let’s hope her dreams come true, and rest assured, Stacey Calvert, the hardest working woman in Columbia ballet, won’t be satisfied until they do. ♪



Photo by Mark Green

Curtain Up

with August Krickel

Spring is traditionally a rich time for live theatre in the Greater Columbia area, with name-brand blockbusters and provocative new pieces premiering, all likely to lure audiences back for the upcoming fall season. Let's take a look at what's on the horizon for some of our Columbia area stages. Curtain Up!

Chapin Community Theatre is currently producing plays in the brand-new, state-of-the-art Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College. Their spring show is Neil Simon's *Rumors*, which marks a return to frothy, frantic farce for the acclaimed comic playwright. Four yuppie couples show up for a posh dinner event at the home of New York City's deputy mayor only to discover a potential scandal in the making, and a desperate need for "spin." The cast includes longtime Chapin favorites Jim DeFelice, Melinda Collins, Glenn Farr, and Tiffany Dinsmore. Jamie Carr Harrington directs, and the show runs through March 24th. Call 803-240-8544 for information, or go to <http://www.chapintheatre.org/>.

Town Theatre is producing the Tony-winning Alfred Hitchcock's *39 Steps*, which runs through Saturday, March 24th. Based on the vintage 1939 thriller, this version by Patrick Barlow is a farce, with the expansive plotline of international intrigue enacted live on stage by a cast of four. Allison McNeely directs Chad Forrister as the stalwart hero, and Shelby Sessler as assorted women he encounters, while Bill DeWitt (no stranger to multiple roles after appearing in *A Tuna Christmas*, also directed by McNeely, a few years back) and Frank Thompson (no stranger to screwball comedy after appearing with Forrester in *Harvey* and *The Drowsy Chaperone* at Town last year) play everyone - and everything - else. Their 93rd season closes with a blast of greased lightning as Jamie Carr Harrington zips back from Chapin to direct *Grease*, the long-running paean to teen music,

dance and romance in the 1950's. With book and music by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, this is the show that jump-started the careers of stars like Barry Bostwick and Adrienne Barbeau, and ran for a staggering 3,388 performances on Broadway. Town's production will run May 4 - 26; call the box office at 803-799-2510 or go to <http://www.towntheatre.com>.

Workshop Theatre presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, by Tennessee Williams, running from March 16-31, and directed by Amy Boyce Holtkamp. Samantha Elkins plays Maggie the Cat, an alluring young Southern wife beset by a troubled marriage (Jason Stokes plays her husband Brick) and a venal family that rejoices in "mendacity." Hunter Boyle, a mainstay of local theatre who has portrayed everyone in recent years from Peron in 2008's *Evita* at Trustus to Edna Turnblad in Workshop's *Hairspray* in 2011, is cast as family patriarch Big Daddy while Charlie Goodrich plays rival son Gooper. Elkins held her own on stage with a dozen or more alpha male Marines in Holtkamp's 2010 production of *A Few Good Men* at Workshop, and promises to be a worthy successor to the great stage and Maggies of yore, from Barbara Bel Geddes and Elizabeth Taylor, to Natalie Wood and Jessica Lange. Their season closes with Andrew Lipka's acclaimed musical *The Wild Party*, directed by Jocelyn Sanders (also featured in this issue) and running May 11 - 26. Call 803-799-4876, or go to <http://www.workshoptheatre.com/> for details.

Trustus Theatre rocks out with *Passing Strange*, a musical by Stew (the stage name of musician/songwriter Mark Stewart) and Heidi Rodewald. The show charts a young man's course of self-discovery and self-expression across assorted continents, time periods, and states of consciousness. The creative team from this winter's *Spring Awakening* (director Chad Henderson, musical director Tom Beard, and choreographer Terrance Henderson, who's also in the cast) reunite with several of that show's performers (Avery Bateman and Kendrick Marion) plus Samuel McWhite (*Crowns*) and Katrina Garvin (*Smokey Joe's Café*). The show runs March 23 - April 14, and is followed by Martin McDonagh's black comedy *A Behanding in Spokane*, directed by Daniel Bumgardner, and running in the Trustus Black Box April 19-28. It's described as "a hilarious roller coaster of love, hate, desperation and hope." Ellen Douglas Schlaefer will then direct Sarah Ruhl's *In the Next Room*, or *The Vibrator Play*, running on the main stage May 4 -26;

MEET ME AT TAPP'S

**NOW
AVAILABLE**

22,000 SQUARE FEET...

- **Artist Studios**
- **Gallery**
- **Event Space**
- **Performance Venue**

**RESERVE
YOUR SPACE TODAY**

803-988-0013

info@tappsartscenter.com



1644 MAIN ST. COLUMBIA, SC 29201

TAPPSARTSCENTER.COM

expect to see another who's who of local theatre talent in the cast: Steve Harley, Sumner Bender, Ellen Rodillo-Fowler, Stann Gwyn, and Elena Martinez-Vidal (profiled in this issue.) Call 803-254-9732 for details, or visit <http://trustus.org/>.

Tapp's Art Center will host a "Live and Undead" adaptation of the (infamous) Ed Wood film *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, directed by Shane Silman. Plenty of familiar faces will turn up on stage (Gerald Floyd, Nick Dunn, and Denise Pearman as evil aliens, Mandy Applegate as Vampira, Larry Hembree as Bela Lugosi, Chris Bickel as Criswell, and Nathan Dawson and Emily Meadows as the innocent hero and heroine) as well as some names not normally associated with local theatre behind the scenes: musician Bickel is designing sound, ReFashionista blogger Jillian Owens is designing costumes, Frame of Mind proprietor and First Thursday creator Mark Plessinger is designing sets, and Dre Lopez is handling poster design and artwork. The show runs one weekend only, March 29 - 31; details are at <http://plan9live.blogspot.com/>.

Columbia Children's Theatre performs in the upper level of Richland Mall. All shows are family-friendly; most run under an hour, with convenient weekend morning and matinee shows. Up next is a new musical version of *Rumpelstilzkin*, the tale of the evil imp who spins straw into gold, by Alyn Cardarelli & Steve Goers. It opens April 13th and runs through April 22nd; call 803-691-4548 for more information, or go to <http://columbiachildrenstheatre.com>.

The Lexington County Arts Association is producing a new adaptation of the timeless children's tale *Snow White* at the Village Square Theatre. Enchanted apples, an evil Queen, a magic mirror, kind woodland creatures and, of course, seven dwarfs will all turn up. The show runs April 26 - May 6; call 803-359-1436 or visit their site at <http://www.villagesquaretheatre.com/>.

USC's Theatre Department has an ambitious slate of classics scheduled for the spring. First up is *Broken Glass*, a play from late in Arthur Miller's illustrious career, directed by Lauren Koch in the Lab Theatre, and running March 29 through April 1st. Stephen Pearson then directs Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Hamilton Gym on Pendleton Street, April 11 -22, where eight grad students in the MFA program will also present solo works they have written and directed April 27 - 28. Over at Drayton Hall, Robert Richmond directs *Macbeth*, running April 14 - 22. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, directed by Mary Tilden, concludes the Lab Theatre season, running April 19 - 22. Info is available at <http://www.cas.sc.edu/thea/> or call 803-777-2551.

The SC Shakespeare Company traditionally performs a spring show outdoors in Finlay Park, and often Saluda Shoals Park too. Tentatively scheduled is *Lysistrata*, a bawdy satire of sex, war and politics from ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes, with veteran actor/director Scott Blanks at the helm. Check their site at <http://www.shakespearesc.com> or call 803-787-BARD. ♪

Columbia's Leading Ladies

By August Krickel

You've seen them in countless roles at every performance venue in the area. They've graced local stages over the last one, two, three decades or more. Between them there are well past 500 shows. All are adults, in the prime of their careers, but all have moved past playing ingénues. All studied theatre formally; all took at least tentative steps towards a career in theatre, and all still work in some aspect of the field. Often one or more is directed by another. As this issue goes to print, three have shows running currently, while the other two just finished runs. Not surprisingly, all are vocal and eloquent advocates for the arts. While there are dozens of talented women regularly shining in lead roles across the Midlands, these five are among the most prolific and most visible. (Note the word "among." Don't worry - this is just the beginning; we plan to profile more in upcoming issues.) Here then is a quick spotlight on five - the first five - of Columbia's leading ladies.

visiting director Rai Baillie, who inspired her to come study at Columbia College. Under his guidance, she became a theatre major, still focusing on behind-the-scenes tech and stagecraft, but doing occasional acting roles as part of her major, including playing a man in an all-female production of *A Comedy of Errors*.

Post-graduation Sanders worked the floor crews at ETV and WIS, including camera at the latter, then did lights for a Bette Herring show at Workshop Theatre, and briefly visited New York City with friend Brenda Pressley, realizing that there were far too many stage technicians looking for far too few jobs. Sanders ended up in the Educational Media Department at Lander College in Greenwood, taught as an adjunct instructor, and continued working in lighting design in the campus theatre and at the nearby Abbeville Opera House. Acting roles came more frequently, and continued after she relocated to New Hampshire to take a job as chair of their Educational Media Department. She returned to Columbia right after Trustus Theatre's relocation to the Vista, and was cast by old friend in *A Girl's Guide to Chaos*, although she notes that she still did lights for that show too. She taught theatre at Keenan and Dutch Fork, transitioning into primarily acting and then directing, and like many of her peers, lost count long ago of the number of shows she has done. In addition to Trustus and Workshop Theatres, she has performed with the South Carolina Shakespeare Company; by day, Sanders now manages Main Street's House of Fabrics, a popular destination for performers and designers in search of the right material for a costume.

Sanders feels that theatre's place is "certainly to entertain, but also to educate, and enlighten; if you approach it solely to entertain, you're not in it for the right reason. It can teach you how to be a better person, and a better citizen." When parents came and urged her to not encourage their children to be actors, she pointed out to them that acting "can help one develop confidence, poise, and your speaking voice. It can also change your opinion of things."

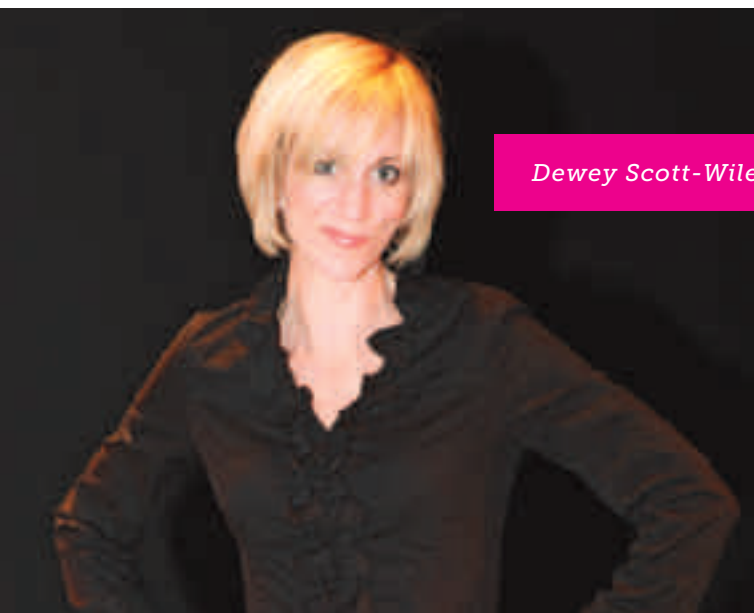


Jocelyn Sanders

Columbia native **Jocelyn Sanders** had her first childhood acting experience as Alice in Wonderland, in a school presentation for National Education Week, proclaiming why it is so important to read. Yet when she auditioned for a high school play, a teacher bluntly informed her that she had no talent, and should never think about setting foot on stage. Instead, as her voice matured and became quite deep, she set her sights on radio, perhaps becoming a disc jockey. At Eau Claire High School she did special effects and lighting on *Finian's Rainbow* for

Sanders sees local theatre at a crossroads, now, in fact a lot of them, including leadership changes, renovations, potential moves, and changing demographics. "All are at the intersection of 'Where do we go now?' All need to seriously consider their direction." All local performing groups "are pulling from the same pot for audiences, and you can't depend on the tried and true." She sees the irony of a family spending a hundred dollars or more for a night out at a movie with dinner beforehand, or for a touring show at the Township or the Koger Center, yet the movie isn't live, and a local performance may be of as good or better quality than the road show.

Sanders has enjoyed playing Rose in *Fences*, Alma in *Yellow Man*, and the many characters from the one-woman show *Fires in the Mirror* (all at Trustus.) She would love the chance to play more classical roles: Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* or Lady Macbeth, even Othello. She's aware these are not necessarily roles for women of color - or women. She agrees that there are still good roles for stage actresses as they mature, but there aren't as many roles for African-American women, and few directors do color-blind casting. She plans to continue both performing and directing, and has proposed a number of shows for the coming season. She is also developing her own one-woman show, featuring vignettes drawn from her life and interests, and she directs Andrew Lippa's *Wild Party* at Workshop Theatre in May.



Dewey Scott-Wiley

she played his character's daughter. Graduating from Pennsylvania's Susquehanna University with a double major in Communications and Theatre, she feels that her family "was disheartened when I abandoned a potential career in broadcasting for a low paying theatre gig, the summer after college." She spent the next four years making "a humble living as an actor" and occasional stage manager in summer stock, outdoor drama, touring dinner theatre, touring children's theatre, and a couple of Off-Broadway shows. Graduate school for an MFA in directing brought Scott-Wiley to USC, and soon she was on staff as both actor and director at Trustus Theatre, while teaching at USC-Aiken as an adjunct instructor. She joined their full-time faculty in 2000, where she is now an Associate Professor of Theatre. She has remained part of the Trustus Company, serving as Associate Artistic Director for the last five seasons. Favorite roles include eldest daughter Barbara in *August: Osage County* (just last fall at Trustus), Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (a role she has played twice), Harper in *Angels in America*, and Mo in *Parallel Lives: The Kathy and Mo Show*, in which she appeared opposite Elena Martinez-Vidal.

Scott-Wiley acknowledges the abundance and diversity of theatre in the Midlands in recent years, but realizes how the "tough economic and political climate has forced theatres to add a great deal of feel-good programming, in order to sell tickets. While this type of theatre is equally viable and valuable, I think audiences are starting to quietly clamor for theatre that provides a different experience ... People are longing for connection, and for their voices to be heard. The more homogenized society becomes, the more we long for something different. Something lasting. I think we are on the verge of a major shift in tone." She feels that "theatre has the ability to connect us with universal truths about ourselves, and open us up to new possibilities of thinking and feeling. The fact that we share the visceral experience with a group of people makes it more profound and lasting."

Scott-Wiley is not particularly worried about roles though. "I have almost always played older than I actually am, I guess because I am a 'character actress.' *August: Osage County* was one of the few times I played my actual age." Dream roles include leads in shows like *Wit* and *Doubt*. Scott-Wiley just finished directing Jocelyn Sanders in *Gem of the Ocean* at Trustus. Upcoming directing projects include *Intimate Apparel* at USC Aiken (April 18-22) followed by the world premiere of Jon Tuttle's *Palace of the Moorish Kings* at Trustus this summer, and beginning in the fall, she will also take the reins as Trustus Theatre's new Artistic Director.

Growing up in New Jersey, Dewey Scott-Wiley was exposed to performance at an early age. Both parents sang in local operettas, and at age 11, her father played Gaylord Ravenal in *Show Boat*, while



Kim Harne

Native Columbian Kim Harne was not successful in her first audition at Irmo High School, but was encouraged by her theatre teacher Marti Suber to try out again, and was finally cast as Emily in *Our Town*. "This got me hooked, and made me realize that not every part works for every actor."

Harne headed to college at Winthrop intending to major in French, but "that quickly fell by the wayside the second semester of my freshman year. I loved the entire process of theatre - and being good at something is a sure indicator that you'll enjoy it." She tried acting in regional theatre for a few years. "I loved the work, but not the circumstances of it; you usually get a contract of 4-8 weeks, so that means packing and moving every couple of months. It also means living with strangers, something at which I don't excel. When I decided to go to graduate school, I still got offers for about a year, so I guess I could've made a go of it if it hadn't been so tedious. Harne now works as an Assistant Program Director at the South Carolina Arts Commission, specializing in Arts in Education and the Artists' Ventures Initiative.

Harne sees a unique quality in live theatre, which "elicits a visceral reaction in the audience and the performers that doesn't exist in other mediums. I love that the reaction of the audience dictates the entire rhythm of a show, making it different each night. I think, despite our increasing disconnectedness, there is a trend toward more face-to-face interaction. She notes the important social aspect of "community" theatre. "There are few things more satisfying than hanging around with fellow audience members and cast members of a great live show you've just experienced." She is amazed that the main theatres locally can all do large-cast shows simultaneously, and still be able to cast great talent. She finds that local audiences are often willing to take a risk with a darker or lesser-known play.

Harne easily rattles off her favorite roles: Terri in *Side Man* and Meredith in *Bat Boy: The Musical*, both at Trustus. "Each show is wildly different, but was completely satisfying and fulfilling. Each show brought growth: I got stretched to nearly the apex of my abilities!"

Someday, Harne says she would love to "take a stab at Mama Rose in *Gypsy* and Sister Aloysius in *Doubt*." Harne has also performed with Columbia Children's Theatre, the Fine Arts Center of Kershaw County, and the South Carolina Shakespeare Company. Up next? Roles in *Rumpelstilzkin* at Columbia Children's Theatre, and the staged reading of Robbie Robertson's new *Satan in High Heels* at Trustus on March 26th.

Harne says that she looks forward to the parts a mature actress can play. "God, I got so bored playing the ingénue! I had a very, very young look for a long time - when I was in my twenties I looked like a teenager, and I still got carded well into my thirties. Most parts for young women involve singing pretty songs, wearing pretty dresses, and pining over some boy. Snore," she laughs, indicating that she far more enjoys "mother" roles. "In musicals, the 'mother' doesn't have to participate in ensemble numbers, so no harmonies to learn! Yay! And she doesn't have a lot to do except for a late-in-the-second-act show-stopping solo. Not bad work if you can get it," she laughs again. Harne feels that the good roles for older women outnumber the good roles for young women, but "there are still too few of them. Hopefully, as many of the established actresses of our generation continue to age and do great work, more roles will be created."



Elena Martinez-Vidal

Elena Martinez-Vidal was born in Ithaca, NY, but grew up in Pennsylvania. "I think I was born doing theatre, always putting on shows with my brother and sister," she recalls. "I just always liked theatre," but

felt that acting might be “a little frivolous, so I wasn’t sure if that was my future.” Double majoring in Theatre Arts and French at Dickinson College, she was cast in meaty dramas like *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *I Am a Camera*. “Great training in technique!” she says. Like Scott-Wiley, Martinez-Vidal was also drawn to Columbia for graduate school at USC, where she earned an MFA in Theatre with a specialty in acting. While she had some opportunities to pursue acting as a full-time career, “when I was younger I didn’t have much confidence,” she admits.

Instead, the young woman realized that she wanted to give back to younger generations by teaching. Martinez-Vidal was an adjunct instructor for 8 years at Midlands Technical College, and also did adjunct work at Columbia College, and then graduate assistant teaching in Public Speaking at USC while working on another Master’s degree. In 2000, she was hired full time at Midlands Tech, and now serves as the chair of their Humanities Department. As an actress, her favorite roles have included Kathy in *Parallel Lives: The Kathy and Mo Show*, and Maria Callas in *Master Class*.

In the class room, Martinez-Vidal especially enjoys teaching public speaking. As a director, she has enjoyed shows like *For Colored Girls...*, *Wait Until Dark*, and *12 Angry Jurors*. Like Sanders, she would love to play Martha in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* or Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (joking that it “won’t happen, but I can dream, right?”) Locally she has performed at Town, Workshop, Trustus, Act One, USC and Chapin, as well as with the improv group “We’re Not Your Mother’s Players,” which she found “very freeing and liberating.”

As a teacher, Martinez-Vidal feels that “theatre is a reflection of the times in which it is being written and performed. Its importance continues as it allows us many options: it can entertain; it can highlight current or past issues, particularly social and historical issues; it can allow us the opportunity to empathize with other viewpoints and ideas. It is also immediate and present which keeps the audience more emotionally engaged than television and film.”

Martinez-Vidal is aware that Columbia has “an incredibly large assortment of arts in which to participate, not just theatre. This really makes us culturally rich and hopefully enticing to visitors, retirees, students who come here for school and then stay, as well as anyone who wants to move here.” Still, she wishes for a more supportive political environment where both the cultural and economic impact of the arts is appreciated.

She has had no problem finding good parts, and relishes them, but realizes that “there are still not enough roles for women, period. To me, it almost seems as though we have ‘women’s plays’ in which an issue or story about women is portrayed with tons of women’s roles, yet it is not universally appealing. Or, we have more universally appealing plays, but with fewer women’s parts included. Hopefully more women will begin writing plays.” She commends several of the local theatre groups for producing compelling works by and about women, noting that she in fact is currently in the middle of writing just such a play, for mature women. “I love acting,” she reflects. “For me it’s like a meditation. The concentration needed to focus on what you are doing on stage, in the moment, does not allow the rest of the world, or any of your worries, to interfere. The more stressed I get, the more I want to do theatre!” Next on the horizon is a part in Ellen Schlaefler’s production of *In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play* at Trustus.



Vicky Saye Henderson

Vicky Saye Henderson was drawn to acting through supportive, encouraging high school teachers in her hometown of Athens, GA, who saw, and told her, that she had a gift. She very nearly turned down a scholarship to Newberry College in Drama, until her mother reminded her that she had four younger brothers, only a few years apart, all of whom would have tuition

pursuing the profession any further. Unexpectedly, the visiting lead actress advised her to “stay on this path,” telling her that she would be “doing the world a great disservice if you don’t stay in this profession, for the rest of your life.” Marrying soon after graduation, Henderson found herself in Orlando, FL, where she took classes at KVG Studios, a production and training facility for young actors to work on camera. There she discovered improvisation, which she says, “changed my relationship with my craft,” and sparked her passion as a teaching artist. Improv, she feels, “opens up new ways of working,” even for scripted material, enabling the performer to collaborate better, and discover more rich ways to unearth possibilities on stage. Directors appreciate strong collaborators, and began more and more to seek her out, especially after relocation to the Columbia area.

Like her fellow leading ladies, Henderson lost count long ago of the total number of shows on her resume, but knows that she just completed her 21st production at Trustus. She has also performed at Town, USC, and the Imperfect Theatre Company. When her marriage ended, the newly single mom – her son Cullen is now 12 – shifted her career into overdrive, and is now one of the few performers in the area who is truly a full-time, working actor. “Acting pursued me,” she concedes. “It chased me down, and



Dewey Scott-Wiley, Vicky Saye Henderson, Jocelyn Sanders, Elena Martinez-Vidal, and Kim Harne
Photos by Mark Green

grabbed me by the collar, and said ‘you will do this;’” adding that she is now a happily willing participant. Always a nurturer, she had been teaching workshops here and there, and took over teaching the Trustus Apprentice Company. She now directs Rewired, the Workshop Theatre improv group for young performers. She teaches a range of classes and seminars at both organizations, including individual and customized group instruction, workshops on auditioning skills, monologues, text analysis, and just about anything one might imagine, even if it’s just a refresher course in the basics, which she calls “The Actor’s Tune-Up.” An approved artist on the roster of the South Carolina Arts Commission, she often spends residencies at area schools, and has recently moved into “out-of-the-box” training opportunities for corporate clients, using theatre and improv skills to address goals in customer service, team-building and problem-solving. Henderson also regularly turns up in television and print advertisements for local businesses.

She realizes now that theatre is her calling, and sees acting as “a sacred task to reflect the human condition back to us.” She sees live theatre as “a good barometer check: how are we doing as human beings?” She’s excited about the many local opportunities for performers of all backgrounds, and has no worries about finding good roles. “Goodbye to one age range, and hello to another,” she jokes, adding that, “if you’re always honing your craft, and taking care of your instrument (i.e. an actor’s body) your age range will be broad.” Favorite roles include Doris in *Same Time, Next Year*, Janet in *The Rocky Horror Show*, (“because it was a gateway” to other uninhibited roles), Hannah in *Night of the Iguana*, and Lucy in *The Thing About Men*. She always writes a love letter to each character she plays on closing night, saying farewell to that part of her experience. Like any working performer, she is open to whichever role she is cast in next, but notes that a number of people have told her that she needs to play the lead in *Next to Normal*, a recent Broadway hit. She would also love the chance to play the sister of film actress Elizabeth Banks, since so many people see a strong resemblance. Up next, Henderson directs a 5-week Lenten drama series as part of a drama ministry at St. Andrews Lutheran Church, and continues in her regular role as teaching artist. A closet introvert, she welcomes acting, noting that “if left to myself, I’d be very lonely.”

Women Creating // Creating Women

By Kristine Hartvigsen



Three women's creative cycles will sync up for a new art show coming to Vista Studios Gallery 80808 in April. Titled "Women Creating Women," the show will bring together the works of painters Kirkland Smith and Bonnie Goldberg with the poetry of Cassie Premo Steele. The title concept, the brainchild of Premo Steele, has a double meaning, with "creating" being both a verb and an adjective.

There's no doubt these three creative women are close, but you won't find them finishing one another's sentences. Each is an individual unique to herself, and the show highlights their sometimes shared yet often contrasting interpretations of the same subjects. For this show, Smith and Goldberg are focusing on figure

works of the female form. It will combine the visual with the literary, as the event includes a reading by Premo Steele of poems composed in response to the visual works.

In a recent conversation infused with red wine and laughter, the women reflected on the joys and challenges of producing their art, as well as their creative processes. In researching a character for one of her books, Premo Steele modeled for the artists during a session of the group About Face, which meets in the basement of the Columbia Museum of Art every Tuesday evening to sketch live models. "What I love about your work," Premo Steele tells Smith and Goldberg, "is that, in the figures, you are present in the

Above: Kirkland Smith, Cassie Premo Steele, and Bonnie Goldberg Photo by Kristine Hartvigsen

world with the women, and you allow us to be present in the world with you. You allow us to go into that very deep, intimate place and come out connecting rather than come out isolating or judging. There is that openness of presence and awareness."

About Face is integral to this show because Smith and Goldberg are longtime regulars. And it was at the same About Face group show many years ago where both visual artists exhibited their work for the very first time. "In the beginning, it was a core group of about 15 people," Goldberg recalls. "Pat Callahan organized a group show at the old Weekend Gallery (on Bull Street next to Workshop Theatre). It was a tiny gallery. There were hundreds of people that just spilled out on to the sidewalk."

"Yes. I don't really remember being crammed together, just that we were really close," Smith says. "I remember what good friends we were and how close we were."

Seeing Goldberg and Smith produce stunning yet contrasting portraits of the same models in an About Face session, fellow artist Warren Brussee suggested they do a show together. "We can look at the same woman and come up with two completely different interpretations," Goldberg says. "The models often are very surprised by that. It's (varying visions of) one woman at the same moment in time."

Nevertheless, these three creative women share many experiences that have been nearly universal to women throughout history, including conflicts related to traditional gender roles and the challenges of finding time for themselves and their art amid the daily pressures of work and family. Premo Steele, for instance, rises at 4 a.m. so she can exercise and get some writing in before her young daughter wakes up. Smith, too, has sacrificed or postponed some of her creative ambitions to stay home with her four children and focus on family. "When I was busy with a newborn and my husband (SC House Representative James Smith) was in his first political campaign, it got too hard to go to About Face on Tuesday nights. I took a year off," Smith says. When she was ready to come back, Smith was excited to see that the group was still going strong. "I used to get a baby-sitter for two hours a week so I could write. I looked forward so much to those two hours. Words just poured out," Premo Steele reflects. "When you say you don't have time to do this, you can. Just do it a little bit at a time."

Smith remembers one woman who came to About Face once a week. That was the only time she had to pursue her art – just once a week. "But there was so much

growth in a year of working just once a week," Smith says. "A lot of the work I will have in the show will be work I have done in About Face. For me, it's the best thing I do for my art."

Goldberg began painting when her children were teenagers, so she had the opportunity to approach art full-time right away. "It went from something to do to who I was instantly," she says. She doesn't believe that male artists approach their work much differently from women. "From my personal relationships and what I do as a painter and an artist, I try to bring something of me into what I am doing," she says. "I don't think my men friends who paint do it any differently. I think the aesthetic is the same. I don't think the artists that I am close to who are men approach it any differently."

Smith and Goldberg note that "Women Creating Women" is deliberately about women but does not purposely exclude men. "Women are beautiful inside and out. Models have told me that being the subject for a piece of art is very empowering," Goldberg explains. "I want my work to focus on women because I think we have so much to offer, no matter how old we are or what color or nationality we are. We can stand in front of the world and be empowered by being proud of who we are."

Goldberg, Smith, and Premo Steele all, at some point, have been impacted by the popular book, *The Artist's Way*, by Julia Cameron. At a time when she was quite overwhelmed in her daily life, Smith knew that if she tried to read the book alone, she never would finish it. But Goldberg and others in About Face formed a group to read and digest the book's 12 chapters over six months.

"I have always known that I am an artist, and that is what I want to do," Smith says. "My husband is definitely my great supporter. But earlier in our marriage, he was very busy. I had to get babysitters to do anything. He was busy making a career. I did lose myself for a while in the mothering process. I had the About Face group once a week that I could do, but I was very focused on being a mother ... I think having a daughter changed the way I thought about myself. I had all these boys and, suddenly, had this little girl. I thought about what I wanted to model for her. The way to do that was to do what I wanted to do. I made choices and sacrifices to stay home and take care of the children. I am not sorry at all that I did that, but I didn't pursue my art. I had a portrait business. I sold everything I did. It was successful but very part-time. I took about five years off from art. I wanted to come back, and I was a little bit afraid. What if I couldn't do it anymore?" *The Artist's*



Way group provided strong encouragement and a creative stepping stone. "I think there is an artist part in all of us," she continues. "I think we have this creator God who made us to create. The gift we give back is our creation."

Premo Steele also found inspiration in the book and the idea of crossing creative genres to gain new perspective. One time when she was feeling impeded in her writing, Premo Steele picked up a paint brush. Later the paintings she created were displayed for a time at AMSA Yoga Studio, where she became friends with Columbia painter Philip Mullen, whose painting now graces the cover of her book of poetry, titled "This is How Honey Runs." She felt the benefit of so many connections and opportunities that seemed to appear like a domino event. "You open yourself to things you could never plan," she explains. "When we think about whether we could be a painter or a poet or anything else, we think we need a plan and a to-do list, but actually, you just need to start."

An essential lesson in Artist's Way is paying heed to one's personal and holistic needs. This hit home for Smith on a couple of levels. "I was doing everything for everyone else," Smith said. "I was the silent partner for my husband. I am very proud of him and all he has accomplished. That doesn't mean that I cannot be a whole person. There is a lot of strength that I bring to our relationship. I think women in general are very strong. ... And I need to learn to say no a little bit more."

To that, Goldberg chimed in: "Tish Lowe (Goldberg's neighbor in the art studios at The Arcade and the cover artist for *Jasper Magazine* Issue 3) once told me that saying no to someone else is saying yes to your self."

"I think self-care and self-nurturing as a creative person is your number one priority," adds Premo Steele. "Some days you don't answer the phone. Some days you say you can't go to that meeting. You learn to say no to yourself and other people. You become aware to the point where you know what your energy cycles are going to be, and you work with them."

On a trip to Africa earlier this year, Smith was struck by the resourcefulness of African families. "They use everything – bone, hides, ostrich shell," she explains. "I thought about egg shells in general. My family eats a lot of eggs, so I began saving the shells." Smith purposely bought white and brown eggs so she could expand her color palette. The result is a striking, mosaic-like depiction of a nude pregnant woman, using only the natural egg shells as "paint."

But don't come to this show expecting to see more of Smith's large post-consumer waste assemblage works that have received so much positive attention. She is still producing them, including commissions, but has returned to painting, her first and primary genre, for this show – with the exception of the one incredibly beautiful work referenced above.

All three artists are excited to bear witness to an arts renaissance in Columbia. Premo Steele hopes people are less intimidated by the arts, which are increasingly more approachable thanks to events such as First Thursdays on Main Street and Blue Jean nights at the SC Philharmonic Orchestra. "Art is not a thing. We think it is because we buy and sell it, and we buy and sell the earth, and we buy and sell women, and we buy and sell labor," she says. "We live in a world that makes living beings into things. Art is a living being, and humans are living beings. When we make it just a thing, we make ourselves just a thing. Part of the fear comes from a sense that we can't afford it or are not included." And Columbia is putting inclusion front and center.

"Women Creating Women" unquestionably embraces the living being and celebrates in particular those of the estrogen variety. "Over the course of history, men have defined women," Goldberg says. "Today, women are not defined by men. Modeling – clothed or nude – it's not really the point. I think we are creating the art, but these women (the figure models) are defining themselves. We are just drawing, painting, or writing what we see. That person standing there is defining who she is in that moment of time, and if I am lucky, I am able to capture that."

"There is a great challenge to painting the human figure or a portrait," Smith says. "I have always enjoyed painting people. I mostly like to work from life. The subject really isn't the woman; it's the light and how it falls on her skin and her form."

'Women Creating Women' opens on Thursday, April 12, 2012, with an evening reception at Gallery 80808. Premo Steele will give a special poetry reading in the gallery at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 15, and the show runs through April 17. For further details, visit www.vistastudios80808.com. ♪

DAY JOBS

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

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

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



MANDY APPEGATE // Vocalist / Dancer / Actor

DAY JOB // Skin Care Therapist

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

HERE'S TO ALL

24

HOURS

IN AN

ARTIST'S
DAY



ROBIN GOTTLIEB // Vocalist / Actor / Director

DAY JOB // Hairstylist

Review: Carrie Allen McCray's *Ota Benga Under My Mother's Roof*

(USC Press, 2012)

By celeste doaks

Indispensable history. Heartbreaking without being overly sentimental. Quiet beauty. These are the words and phrases that contextualize *Ota Benga Under My Mother's Roof* written by Carrie Allen McCray. This volume of narrative poetry is a posthumous publication after the author's passing in 2008, edited by Kevin Simmonds and published in the Palmetto Series from University of South Carolina Press, a series edited by former USC poet Kwame Dawes.

Before delving into this volume, McCray's own preface and poet Kevin Simmonds' introduction are mandatory reading. Both contain critical pieces of a legend that readers need in order to fully appreciate the volume. Ota Benga was a Congolese man taken from his homeland by Presbyterian minister and missionary Samuel Phillips Verner. Benga was brought back to the states to represent the race of Pygmies at the 1904 St. Louis World Fair. Sadly, almost a century after the ever-popular similar debacle with Sarah Baartman (aka the Venus Hottentot), scientists were still attempting to prove African peoples anthropologically inferior. While Ota Benga did not fully understand where he was going or why, he did develop a trust of Verner over the course of their time together. McCray's mother's first husband, Gregory Willis Hayes, minister and protestor of the exhibition of Benga at the Museum of Natural History, invited Benga to come and live with them and study at the nearby seminary. He stayed there for six months until Mr. Hayes's death and then was shipped back north to an orphanage in Brooklyn. Benga eventually requested to return to the Hayes family. Upon arriving he met McCray's mother's new husband William Patterson Allen, and stayed in Virginia until he committed suicide at the age of 33.

This volume will be of interest to many, primarily Southern historians, but also surprisingly to musicians, because McCray has interwoven many African American spirituals, Congolese work songs and lullabies into these poems. These musical interludes enliven the text and create a playful air around what would ordinarily be a heavy topic. Lines such as "Antelope, antelope,/ running so free,/ tomorrow tonight,/round the fire,/you're part of me" are not only

melodic but also illustrate Benga's deep and intrinsic connection with the natural world. McCray's use of African American secular slave spiritual "Hambone, Hambone, have you heard?" in "Ota's Virginia" is just one example of the call and response, a form of music that's commonplace in African Diasporic music.

Places where the book soars are when McCray takes a leap in form (which is usually narrative free verse) and persona. Two of my favorite poems in the book, "Lamentations" and "Blues Man Answers," move the book from a traditional historical account written in persona, to a volume that is contemporary and urgent. The "Lamentations" poem is visually exciting because it can be read vertically down the right or left hand side, or across both columns horizontally. Contemporary poets such as Patricia Smith in *Blood Dazzler* and Tyehimba Jess in *Leadbelly* have used this format. And "Blues Man Answers" is written in blues format that conjures poetic greats such as Sonia Sanchez and Langston Hughes.

Of course, this book does have some oversights. McCray does attempt to express Benga's own thoughts in some poems, but the book could include more poems that that reveal his point of view. In "Ota Crossing Big Watah" the narrator reveals Benga's ambivalence. "Ota wipes Verner's brow, looks over / once again into the deep, wondering / if he should have come." Readers will crave more of this considering some of McCray's most poignant work lies wrapped in poems that illustrate the complexity of Benga's relationship with Verner.

This engaging and essential piece of history, artfully told through poetry, is more than a volume of poems; it is a living testament to a complex past. This book falls in line with other southern historical books such as Natasha Trethewey's Pulitzer-winning *Native Guard*. It should not only be read, but more importantly should be taught in public schools across America. This literary work shows not only an unsavory chapter in America's racial history, but also highlights our shared humanity, both between and within races. And perhaps after reading *Ota Benga Under My Mother's Roof* readers might feel inspired to provide a home away from home for someone such as the noble Ota Benga. ♣

Poet and journalist celeste doaks has written for the *Village Voice*, *Time Out New York*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *San Pedro Poetry Review* and many other publications and literary magazines. Her most recent poetry can be found in *Home is Where: An Anthology of African American Poetry from the Carolinas*, edited by Kwame Dawes.

Passing Strange



WWW.TRUSTUS.ORG

This program is supported, in part, through a grant made possible by contributions to the Arts Fund of the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties, the City of Columbia, the Student Foundation, the Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Arts Commission, which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

SEX, DRUGS,
ROCK N ROLL
... & ART

LOCAL SINGER/SONWRITERS
PERFORM 30 MINUTES
PRIOR TO EVERY
EVENING PERFORMANCE!

FEATURING NEW PIECES FROM
COLUMBIA ARTISTS:
THOMAS CROUCH
MICHAEL KRAJEWSKI
PAUL KAUFMANN
WHITNEY LEJUNE
LINDSAY WIDDINS
CEDRIC UMOJA
DAVID WEST
ALEX SMITH
LUCAS SAMS
& LISA PURYEAR

BOOK AND LYRICS BY
STEW

MUSIC BY
STEW & HEIDI RODEWALD

CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH
ANNIE DORSEN

DIRECTED BY
CHAD HENDERSON

MUSIC DIRECTION BY
TOM BEARD

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
TERRANCE HENDERSON

MARCH 23 - APRIL 14, 2012

RESERVATIONS:
(803) 254-9732

TRUSTUS

520 LADY ST.
(IN THE VISTA)

Preparation

In the kitchen, we bundle roses
in groups of ten, crimson petals soft
like skin. "Watch the thorns,"
my grandmother says,
snapping off the prickly green and red-tipped spines
one at a time. My sister holds a bouquet
to her nose, closes her eyes. Nestled in the crook
of the counter, my aunt cuts
the ends of stems and cackles
like my grandmother
and mother.

We have many more bouquets
to make that day before that night
when my sister takes another name. But now,

I watch her smell the sweet bells of fragrance,
perfume of the night to come.

She opens her eyes. I look at the roses cupped
in my hands, watch my sister's fingers
wrap wire around my own cut,
thornless stems.

Alexis Stratton is a native of Illinois but has spent her life in many homes, from New Orleans to South Korea. She's currently enrolled in USC's MFA in Creative Writing program, and her work has most recently appeared in Breakwater Review, Earth's Daughters, Two Hawks Quarterly, and The Drum Literary Magazine.

Glee Club

For Stan (1941-1976)

You are the tenor singing inside me,
making a silence beside the song,
calling it harmony, making a charm
to hang on my jingling bracelet of longing.

Laurel Blossom is the author, most recently, of Degrees of Latitude, a book-length narrative poem. She lives in Edgefield, South Carolina, where she curates an occasional poetry and fiction reading series.

Guest Editorial

By Virginia Scotchie

Professor of Art, University of South Carolina



Photo by Mark Green

In 1992 I moved to Columbia from Indiana to serve as Head of the Ceramic Area Studio at USC. The tenure track position was very interesting to me for many reasons. First, it would give me the opportunity to develop an international program in the ceramic arts. Secondly, I grew up in Asheville so being closer to my family and the many artists I know in the Southeast was

a plus. During this period there was considerable concern about the lack of female faculty in the Department of Art at the University which was actually part of a national concern about the "invisible women artists" not only at institutions of higher learning but also in our National Museums and galleries.

Soon after I was hired our much beloved Department Chair, Dr. John O'Neil, was approached by a group of women known as The Gorilla Girls. Their mission, which is still on-going, is to recognize, promote, and bring women artists, (who historically have been ignored or over looked), to the forefront of the art world. Dr. O'Neil, who was a very amicable and pro-active Chair, duly recognized this as an important issue that needed attention.

As an educator in the arts I have had the honor and privileged to work with many talented young women. I am still very close to my first BFA student, Jelene Morris, who is working and living in Columbia as an artist. She supports her wonderful artwork through her international web site, which she designed and also works as a web designer for a local jewelry business. Her creative work is in collections all over the US and as far away as Australia. A recent BFA student, Brittany Kinnard, was the first BFA to have her solo exhibition at the Columbia

Museum of Art. She is now completing her MFA at the very prestigious RIT School for American Craft in New York. In the spring of this year two MFA women students in ceramics will be completing their degree with solo exhibitions at the McMaster Gallery in the Department of Art, Laura VanCamp and Frieda Dean. Other women graduates of the ceramics program have gone on to professional teaching or studio careers in Philadelphia, New York, Oregon, California, and North Carolina.

Being an artist is not an easy road to stay true to. There are few high paying jobs waiting for you when you graduate, teaching jobs are highly competitive, and funding for artists from government agencies is few and far between. Working as a studio artist can be challenging and expensive but at least with the growth of community art studios and galleries young artists now can find a tribe – a home base – and share in art events and collaborations as their careers develop.

Looking at the arts community in Columbia it is greatly satisfying to see the number of women who hold positions of leadership, including the Director of the Columbia Museum of Art, Karen Brosius; the new Director at the McKissick Museum on the USC Campus, Dr. Jane Przybysz; Mana Hewitt, who is the Director of the Department of Art Gallery at USC; and newly appointed Executive Director Brenda Schwartz of the Tapps Arts Center on Main Street. Galleries here in Columbia also have several women directors, many of whom have been long standing through good and bad economic times. Galleries such as Carol Saunders on Gervais Street established in 1984 and HOFP Gallery on Devine Street, directed by Alice Perritt, and in recent years, Art + Cayce, headed by Columbia Architect and art lover Maryellyn Cannizzaro, have exhibited many women artists.

Living in one place and basically developing your career as an artist has many advantages. I am happy to say that not only in my career as a ceramic artist but in the careers of many of my female artist friends there has been support for exhibiting, funding, and recognition for the art created by our talented artists working in a vast array of media in Columbia. This has not come easy and we still have much work to do to recognize, promote and value the women in the arts here in Columbia.

The women artists in this issue of Jasper embrace the making of Art and the hard work, joy, and beauty that comes from sharing their art with us all.



For the roses...

By Michael Miller



One afternoon 40 years ago, I was standing in front of the magazine rack at J.B.'s Drug Store in Dillon, South Carolina reading the record reviews in the back of the new Rolling Stone Magazine. The lead review was for an album called *For the Roses* by a singer/songwriter named Joni Mitchell. The headline indicated that it was, "Good for a Hole in the Heart." Apparently

it was Joni's break-up album for her recently ended affair with James Taylor. OK, I thought. I've heard of James Taylor. His songs are pretty cool. If they've got this record, I'll give it a try.

So I went over to the three bins of vinyl records between cosmetics and school supplies, started flipping through the selections and there it was. The album's cover had a hazy, aquamarine-tinted photo of a beautiful blonde woman sitting on a bluff overlooking a mountain lake. She was gazing directly at the camera. Her barely perceptible smile hinted at things a 17-year-old country boy could only dream about.

I paid the \$3.79 sticker price, took *For the Roses* home, and plopped it on the turntable. For the next 40 minutes, I sat enraptured by what I was hearing. The music was a mesmerizing mash-up of folk, rock, and jazz, but it was the lyrics that floored me. They flowed like poetry. It WAS poetry, more so than anything I'd heard from Dylan, Neil Young, or Lennon and McCartney.

I sat there in a puddle of conflicting emotions. The songs were beautiful and exhilarating. But they were also frank and uncomfortable. This woman is bearing her soul in these songs, I thought.

The critic for Rolling Stone, a guy named Stephen Davis, put it this way: "In *For the Roses*, Joni is unabashedly biased, a wronged and wronging lover, an open and forgiving loser at love's games. Of her relationships with men, she is candidly her own severest critic. In her songs she is sensible, chameleon, caustic, sorrowing, boisterous, judgmental, harsh and passionately understanding, occasionally passing deftly through this gauntlet of emotions in the course of one song."

It was almost more than I could take, but I listened to the album over and over and wondered if I could ever write songs so harrowingly openhearted.

For the Roses is still one of my favorite albums, and through the years it has been the benchmark by which I compare other songwriters who dare to tread into such an emotional minefield. Few artists have come close to capturing Joni's vibrant, heart-wrenching imagery, but when one does, it's usually a woman

Which got me thinking, do women do heartbreak better than men? (I can hear the exasperated sighs, 'course they do, fool!) More to the point, are women artists better at confronting and assimilating these emotions, and then expressing them creatively in their work? When it comes to songwriting, I'd have to say yes.

From Laura Nyro and Carole King, Patti Smith and Chrissie Hynde, to Lucinda Williams and Kathleen Edwards, women singer/songwriters through the years have tackled heartbreak head on, and in their very poetic way, helped men and other women deal with it.

So as Jasper celebrates women artists in this issue, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the women songwriters who've opened their hearts to me and revealed their insecurities, toughness, passion, and grace. You have given many people a better understanding of the game of love. ♪

From Joni Mitchell's 1972 song, "Lesson in Survival."

*I went to see a friend tonight
Was very late when I walked in
My talking as it rambled
Revealed suspicious reasoning
The visit seemed to darken him
I came in as bright
As a neon light
And I burned out
Right there before him
I told him these things
I'm telling you now
Watched them buckle up
In his brow
When you dig down deep
You lose good sleep
And it makes you
Heavy company
I will always love you
Hands alike
Magnet and iron
The souls*

701 CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

presents *Columbia*

OPEN STUDIOS

APRIL 21-22, 2012

Tour local Columbia SC artists' studios



official
partners with



Images: Forrest Chitts Studio 2011

**OPEN STUDIOS PREVIEW PARTY
& INDIE GRITS KICKOFF**

APRIL 19 • 7-11PM • 701 WHALEY • \$8/\$10 • ALL AGES
GRITS BAR • SOUL DJS • CASH BAR BY THE WHIG

**VISIT
701CCA.ORG**



Event
Sponsors:

