

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016 VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 5

KC STUDIO

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

SETTING THE
Agenda:

Meet KC's top new arts players



AND:
ROBERT TRUSSELL PREVIEWS THE 2016-17 THEATER SEASON
WYLLIAMS/HENRY TURNS 25
LINDA HALL LIBRARY HITS THE HIGHWAYS
STEVE PAUL ON SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART RENOVATION

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KC Studio covers the performing, visual, cinematic and literary arts, and the artists, organizations and patrons that make Kansas City a vibrant center for arts and culture. *KC Studio's* expanded arts coverage is made possible through generous support from the following

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EDITOR'S LETTER



PHOTO BY MARK BERNDT

“Art is a way to connect people,” says Jazz Museum Executive Director Cheptoo Kositany-Buckner in an interview in the current issue. Kositany-Buckner’s remarks are part of our lead story, “Setting the Agenda,” exploring the plans and ideas of eight luminaries who have assumed new or expanded roles at area arts organizations.

Kositany-Buckner’s observation of art’s power to connect strikes an especially important note at a time of fractious election rhetoric and a divided electorate.

The arts offer an antidote, and all of our interviewees seem determined to find ways to use the arts not just to enrich people’s lives, but to bring people together, with the arts serving as a kind of laboratory for strategies that might find application in the larger society.

“Art gets interesting,” says Amy Kligman, new executive/artistic director of the Charlotte Street Foundation, “when people who don’t normally share thoughts and space get together.”

Kligman’s plan to mix things up is part of a concerted move by KC’s arts organizations to broaden audiences and make their programs and exhibits accessible to all. “It’s a museum’s responsibility to make the most esoteric objects accessible to all kinds of audiences,” says Catherine Futter, recently named director of curatorial affairs at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

A striking similarity to emerge from our “Setting the Agenda” interviewees is how important their early experiences were in influencing their move to the arts. Kansas City Art Institute President Tony Jones was smitten when he first encountered Impressionism at the age of 12. The Kansas City Ballet’s new ballet master, Parrish Maynard, took his first dance classes at age nine to help improve his diving, but soon found himself hooked on the art form. Kansas City Symphony Assistant Conductor Jason Seber made his conducting debut at a school concert when he was in eighth grade. After that, he never wanted to do anything else.

Early exposure to arts is key to setting a life course, and not just for those who choose the arts. According to Harlan Brownlee, executive director of Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, “The children and young people who participate in the (Ailey) program ultimately learn life skills that will serve them their entire lives and help them to make smart life choices.”

Funding is critical if arts organizations are to fulfill their mission. “It’s a crime,” says Bruce W. Davis, president and CEO of ArtsKC, of the decision by the state of Kansas to defund the arts, a topic also raised by Susan Schmelzer in her column on arts policy.

On the Missouri side, a number of Kansas City’s arts organizations begin the fall arts season with big grants and gifts, including a \$2.7 million donation to the Kansas City Symphony from David Beals Charitable Trust, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee, to endow the symphony’s assistant conductor position. The Charlotte Street Foundation received its first National Endowment for the Arts grant ever: a \$15,000 award to support its Curatorial Residency Program. And talk about the power of connection — the Mid-America Arts Alliance was awarded a \$500,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for “Creativity Connects: National Demonstration Projects,” which seeks to help artists connect with the business and public sectors.

On the funding front, *KC Studio* also received some good news. In early summer, the Lighton Fund renewed our grant for online visual arts reviews — and increased it, with the stipulation that the additional funds be used to raise reviewer fees! In addition, an anonymous donor agreed to fund regular theater reviews by seasoned critic Robert Trussell, who has also joined the magazine as a contributing writer.

Trussell’s inaugural contribution to the print magazine is an opinionated overview of the 2016-17 season. With the September/October issue we also launch a new regular column on classical music, “Concert to Come,” by Libby Hanssen, offering an in-depth look at a noteworthy upcoming performance. The KC arts scene is bursting with news — new performance spaces, a museum renovation, an important painting acquisition, a phenomenal gift of artists’ books — and the talent — pianists, playwrights, dancers, performers, filmmakers — doesn’t stop.

Go to www.kcstudio.org (gallery reviews) for our online reviews of current exhibitions, including “Fresh: KCAI Alumni” at the Epsten Gallery, and “Margaret Evangeline: In beauty there is guilt” at Weinberger Fine Art. Click on “theater reviews” under the online reviews tag to read Trussell’s theater reviews.

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

Krista Lang Blackwood is an award-winning educator, performer and freelance writer. When she's not teaching or performing, she combs the greater Kansas City region for off-the-beaten-path arts and culture offerings, usually in the company of her husband and precocious, French-speaking son.



James Brinsfield was a regular contributor to *Downbeat* magazine. He is an artist who is represented by Haw Contemporary gallery in Kansas City.

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

Libby Hanssen lives over the state line with her jazz musician husband, lvesian little boy and star-bright baby girl. As a writer and poet, she is consistently impressed and inspired by Kansas City's artistic community.



Julius A. Karash is a freelance writer, editor and public relations person. He formerly was a business reporter for *The Kansas City Star* and executive editor of *KC Business* magazine. He devours business and economic news, and is keenly interested in the relationship between arts and economic development in the Kansas City area.

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Alexia Lang, a multimedia journalist from Olathe, Kan., holds a journalism degree from the University of Missouri. Lang has worked in newspapers, magazines, radio and blogs, producing award-winning content over the past 10 years.

James Martin is an independent consultant, curator, educator and writer based in the Kansas City area. Since 2001, he has focused on working with art located outside of typical art venues, such as public art and corporate and hospital art collections. In addition to his work with visual art, James Martin is a hobbyist bass player and sits on the Board of Directors for the UMKC Jazz Friends.



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

Steve Paul retired this year after a 40-year career at *The Kansas City Star*. He is currently writing a biography, *Hemingway at 18*, expected to be published in fall 2017.



Susan Schmelzer is a community activist who has served in leadership roles on several boards, currently including the Executive Committee of Missouri Citizens for the Arts, which advocates for state arts funding. Her devotion to the arts began as a vocal music major, while her professional background spans careers in higher education and nonprofit consulting.

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



Neil Thrun is a writer and artist living in Kansas City, Mo. He is a 2010 graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute and was a resident artist with the Charlotte Street Urban Culture Project in 2011 and 2012. He has written for *The Kansas City Star*, *Huffington Post* and various local arts journals.

Tom Toro is a cartoonist and writer whose work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Harvard Business Review* and *Audubon*, among others. Born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, he now lives in KCMO with his wife, Marissa Wolf, a theatre artist who is the Director of New Works at KC Rep.



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

Lucas Wetzel has published his poems and articles in multiple print and online publications. A graduate of KU who also studied at the Universities of Bonn and Hamburg in Germany, Wetzel is the founder with his wife, Jennifer, of the literary website, *Kawsmouth.com*.



Calvin Wilson is an arts writer at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. He is also host and creator of the jazz program, *Somethin' Else* on 107.3 FM and 96.3 HD2 in St. Louis.



Roger Shimomura, *American vs. Disney*, 2010, Acrylic on canvas, 54" x 54"

KNOCKOFFS, ICONS AND MASCOTS FILL FALL AT BELGER ARTS

By Tracy Noyer

Fall brings a new lineup to Belger, its 17th season. For most of 2016, the Belger galleries featured 10 exhibitions spanning more than 40 countries as part of the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) conference. Next up, both locations shift their focus with exhibitions highlighting three artists with regional ties and international acclaim.

This fall Belger focuses on a local hero — the legendary Roger Shimomura. In its first showing outside the Pacific Northwest, “An American Knockoff” opens Oct. 7 through Jan. 14, 2017. This exhibition features acrylic paintings of Shimomura with recognizable American icons such as Porky Pig, Goofy the Dog, and Uncle Sam.

In this series, the artist inserts himself into the work, battling or becoming stereotypes in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, to personify the Asian-American experience.

Shimomura, who taught at the University of Kansas from 1969 until his retirement in 2004, was born in Seattle to American-born parents. When Roger was three years old his family was relocated to an internment camp during World War II. For much of his career Shimomura has examined the themes of internment and what it means to be American, feeling that “Far too many American-born citizens of Asian descent continue to be accepted as only ‘American knockoffs.’”

In addition to an outstanding career as an educator, Shimomura has maintained a steady art studio practice and exhibited in more 130 exhibitions. He has won numerous awards throughout this career, including a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Other Belger exhibitions this fall include Dan



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Paolo Porelli, *Twilight Zone Granny*, 2015, white earthenware with under-glaze and over-glaze, 12.5" x 7.5" x 3.5"

Anderson of Edwardsville, Illinois and Paolo Porelli of Rome, Italy. Both exhibitions run Sept. 2 through Dec. 17.

Dan Anderson's solo show titled "Mascots, Hearts of Love, and Proposals" is exhibited at the Belger Crane Yard Studios, 2011 Tracy Avenue. Anderson tells us the "Mascots" in the show reference large midwestern structures such as water tanks and corn cribs, along with the graffiti that can be found on these rural landmarks. He has been fascinated with these edifices since he climbed his hometown's municipal water tank as a teen. Dan's work, inspired by these iconic structures, can be found in exhibitions and collections throughout the world. In addition to sculpture, Anderson plans to bring some of his signature teapots and tea sets to Kansas City.

Anderson taught at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville from 1970 to 2002 and has maintained an active clay practice since retirement. Dan completed

a residency in France over the summer where he created some of the works shown in this exhibition. A wood-fire enthusiast, his anagama wood-fired kiln in Edwardsville draws artists from far and wide for firings.

Paolo Porelli's exhibit, "Humankind: The Sublime and The Ridiculous" is exhibited at the Belger Arts Center, 2100 Walnut Street. Known for his figurative sculpture, this body of work is a hybrid of ideas culled from mythological imagery, pop-culture references, and contemporary society to articulate the human behaviors — both good and bad.

Paolo created many of the exhibition works last winter during his Fellowship Residency at Belger Crane Yard Studios. Porelli came to the studio from Italy, where he has been running his own ceramics studio since 1990. In more recent years he and his wife, Lori-Ann Touchette, have operated c.r.e.t.a. rome, an international art residency program.

The Belger Arts Center opened in March of 2000 and has welcomed more than 100,000 visitors from around the world. The Belger Crane Yard Studios joined the Belger Arts family tree in 2013 and provides galleries and studio space for more than 70 artists in the East Crossroads Arts District of Kansas City. For more information, check out the Belger Crane Yard Studios Facebook page, or visit www.belgerartscenter.org and craneyardstudios.org.

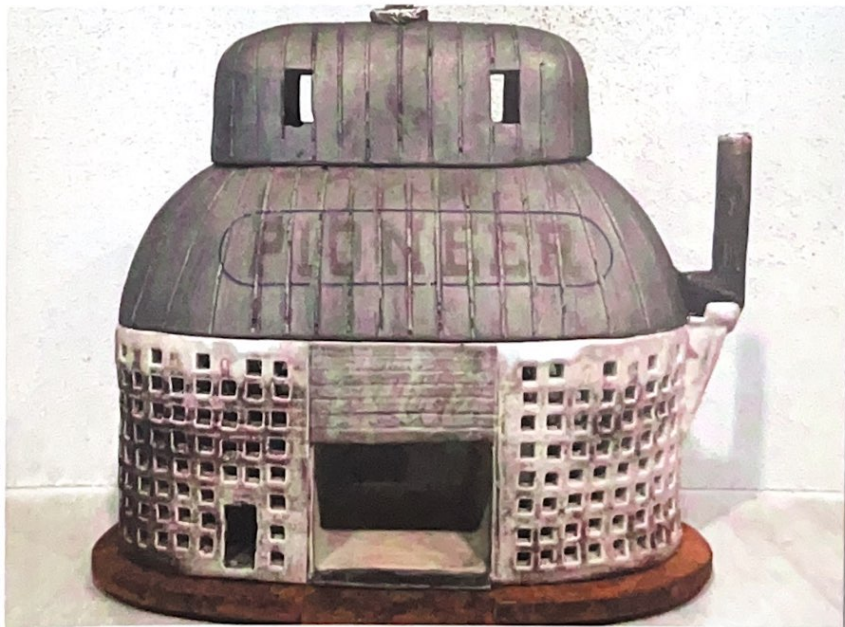


IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Dan Anderson, *PIONEER Corn Crib, (teapot)*, 2016, soda-fired stoneware with decals, 9.5" x 10.5" x 5"