



ART LIVES IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS



Central Illinois Artists Organization

# Art Lives in Central Illinois

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Clare Howard

Chris Tobin

Sharon and John Amdall

ArtsPartners of Central Illinois Inc.

Peoria, Illinois

Portraits © Doug Leunig

Artists Stories © Clare Howard

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Design: Chris Tobin, 809

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Funding graciously provided by Sharon and John Amdall.

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Printed in the United States

ISBN 978-0-615-68612-7

Published by ArtsPartners of Central Illinois Inc., 820 SW Adams, Peoria, Illinois 61602

# This book is dedicated to George W. Murray:

1937 - 2012

AN ICON IN PEORIA BUSINESS AND A TRUE FRIEND TO THE ARTS, HE WAS CONSISTENT IN HIS PATERNAL GUIDANCE OF LOCAL ARTISTS AND IN HIS WILLINGNESS TO MAKE A FAIR DEAL WITH THEM. CAT LOVER AND GREAT FAMILY MAN, GEORGE WILL BE MISSED ON THIS PLANET.

Almost everyone with roots in Peoria has a memory of the Murray Building on Walnut Street. George Murray was a local businessman who operated several concerns out of that building over the years. Perhaps the most memorable was Murray’s Jewelers and Distributors, a department store that was open during downtown’s retail heyday. Tough economic times and urban evacuation caused George to close the store in the mid-eighties, but he couldn’t retire. He saw potential for the four-story warehouse, and soon opened it up to young businesses needing affordable commercial space from which to operate. The new concern was named Peoria Business Incubator Center. An early tenant was the Illinois Antique Center. He couldn’t have known at the time, but his primary client base would become artists.

And the artists came. As George became familiar with their temperament, he would realize that in most cases the artists were first to improve the rental space, least likely to skip a rent payment, and often they would provide an ear upon which he loved to chew. Artists appreciated the building for the raw environment that lends so well to creativity. And everyone paid the same square foot rates. Over the last 10 years, he could frequently be heard saying, “It’s time to get another room ready.” Many studios were created, expanded, compressed, and turned around with his active management and participation. So many well known (and otherwise) artists of Peoria did some time “incubating” within the walls of what would be dubbed the Murray Center for the Arts.

George welcomed artists of every ilk. Gallery operators, arts educators and students, painters, sculptors, printmakers, writers, musicians, an entire ballet company, ceramic artists, fine art and other photographers, and some who defied classification, all enjoyed the comfort of the Murray Building. He worked hard to keep the structure operating and alive and would rarely pass the cost of physical improvements along to his tenants. He wore his enthusiasm for creative people on his sleeve and was so well loved for the opportunities that he provided. From those who received the benefit of his friendship, no tribute is fitting enough. George Murray sets a fine example of the artists’ best friend.



Photo courtesy JOURNAL STAR/FRED ZWICKY

George Murray (R) was one of the hosts when National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman visited Peoria to launch his national Art Works tour, November 2009.

JERRY MCNEIL

One of those lucky enough to have known George

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Foreword

Tremendous energy, innovation, and creativity power the artists who live and work in the Peoria area. And, in recent years, the arts of all kinds have gained visibility and credibility throughout the region.

This book introduces nearly 200 artists who live, work, and create in the communities throughout the Peoria region.

The new Peoria Riverfront Museum opened a priceless opportunity for the artists in our region to gain recognition for their work in an exhibit when the museum opens in October 2012, thanks to Jim Richerson, president and CEO. The Central Illinois Artists Organization (CIAO) created the “CIAO & Friends Invitational” and called for submissions (limited to the fine arts). The jury selected works from 75 artists for the exhibit at the Peoria Riverfront Museum. These artists deserve our congratulations for their fine work – and we can see their art from October 20, 2012, through March 3, 2013, in the Peoria Riverfront Museum and afterwards in the print catalog of their art that will accompany the exhibit.

Artists from the Peoria area submitted more than 500 works of art to be considered for this one exhibit. The quality, diversity, creativity, and energy of the art inspired a conversation to discover ways to introduce our communities to more of these works of art and, more importantly, to the artists who created them.

Doug and Eileen Leunig, the curators of the CIAO & Friends Invitational, began to look for opportunities to make this happen. A venue was found at the Prairie Center of the Arts Warehouse Gallery One to exhibit the works of all of the artists who chose to participate. The response was enthusiastic and, thus, the Vernissage was born. A “vernissage” (varnishing, from French) is a term used for



a preview of an art exhibition, often private, before the formal opening. The Vernissage precedes the CIAO & Friends Invitational by nearly a month.

This book specifically focuses on the artists themselves and includes many of the talented artists who submitted works for the CIAO & Friends Invitational, as well as member artists of CIAO. Through this book, we hope that our communities learn about the artists who live and work all around us.

The arts are vitally important to our communities. People who are attuned to the arts and culture readily appreciate the arts for the richness and enjoyment they add to our lives. Others should consider the benefits that the arts bring to our communities. The arts make our communities more attractive to new businesses and new people. The arts build our communities into better places to live and work. And the arts represent good business – bringing to the region economic benefits that exceed the costs.

Enjoy this book that introduces you to many of the artists who live and create in our communities throughout the Peoria area. Seek them out and get to know them. Our communities are better – more interesting, more vibrant – for the artists who live and work here.

SHARON AND JOHN AMDALL

The idea for Central Illinois Artists Organization was the result of a few artists in the community who believed that our area was ripe for a new form of exposure. The intent was to create a reliable monthly opportunity for local residents to become familiar with a scene that had long gone unrecognized. Clearly, there was plenty of enthusiasm to build an ongoing event to bring public feet into the local art studios. Our beginnings were modest. Eight like-minded artists sat down for a momentous couple of hours to kick around the idea in the spring of 2011.

In the end, we settled on regular studio tours that would become known as First Fridays. Trying to stay true to our ideals, we agreed that a non-exclusive approach was going to be best for the eight of us and all the artists who followed. A bit of promotion, and an insistence on regular participation, generated a lot of interest among the artists in the area. Soon our group expanded to over 50 artists in 10 or more venues. The response from the public was clear and encouraging. The First Fridays studio tours gained a bit of recognition, and we began planning extra events that included an all-member show at the newly renovated space in the Peoria Public Library downtown.

Almost immediately, we found that not only were independent artists interested in joining our ranks, but also the well-established arts organizations wanted to lend their authority to the cause. A benchmark example is the offer from the Peoria Riverfront Museum (PRM) to mount an unprecedented show of fine art exclusively by Tri-County talent to be shown as an inaugural exhibit in their new facility on Washington Street in Peoria.

Another show, Vernissage, at the Prairie Center of the Arts, was born from the enthusiasm of the hundreds of artists who created works as candidates for the PRM show. Just as CIAO itself became an institution, this autumn show may become an annual institution.

Additional evidence of support for artists in our region is the underwriting of this book. With great pride and humility, we present our work (ourselves) for your delight and edification.

JERRY MCNEIL  
Founding Member of CIAO

## Introduction

*Art Lives in Central Illinois* represents the collaboration of our arts community to celebrate the expression of the individual. Nearly 200 artists in the Tri-County area joined in the endeavor to share a part of their lives offered through their vision and by their hand.

The artists participating in *Art Lives in Central Illinois* were sent interview-style questions with the request to share a glimpse of their artistic expression and personality in 150 words or less. A difficult goal to achieve but, being artists, they creatively addressed the challenge and succeeded! Their answers, in their own words, provide a look into the creative process and, at the same time, teach us a little of why art matters to them. As a body of work, their compiled answers give insight into the universal theme of the human need to create.

In addition to the artists' own responses, award-winning writer Clare Howard interviewed 31 artists to delve a little deeper into their stories. These folks range from well-established artists to those just getting started. They are artists who make their living from their art and those who struggle to find time for their creative work.

All the artists in *Art Lives in Central Illinois* have in common a passion for creating. Even if they were denied a paintbrush, a lump of clay, a welding torch, or any other artistic tool, they would still find a way to be innovative and creative. Art is more than what hangs on the wall; it is a way of life. Art is an inner force that's grabbed hold of them and they have no choice but to create. The artists in this book share the same thought: The act of creation takes them to a place of wonder and euphoria where time stands still. Their works feed their spirit and nourish their soul. They desire to be artists until the day they die.

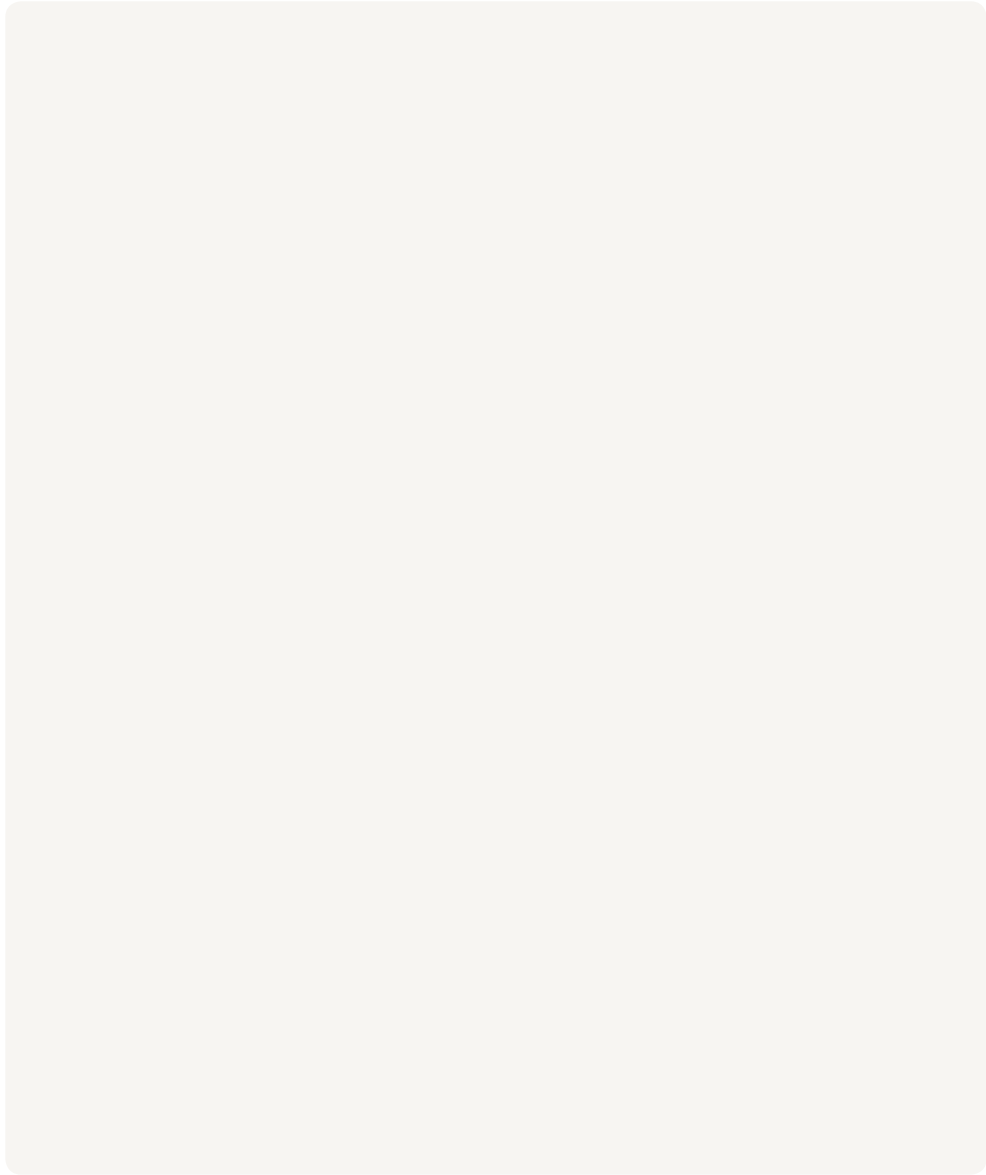
Throughout this book it is also apparent that words such as *dull*, *flat*, *uninteresting*, and *boring* do not enter into the artists' view of central Illinois. In our farmlands, artists revel in the repeating rhythm of a furrowed field. They are drawn out of a warm bed to stand in the early-morning fog along the banks of the Illinois River. They delight in the change of seasons. They pause in old alleys or parking lots to relish the craggy textures in concrete and brick. Whether an artist has always lived in central Illinois or moved from a place with grand vistas, each one sees the inherent beauty all around us.

The role of early exposure to art is also evident in the artists' answers. It is an established fact that children develop solutions and solve problems while they are creating art. It is known that art can build self-esteem and confidence in children. This book reinforces the idea that art isn't just a child's pastime; it is a seed planted young that continues to grow. Artists receive a lifetime of reward from the smallest of encouragement.

For all that artists share in common, their art is completely individualistic. Even for artists who have been influenced by other artists and artistic movements, their interpretation is uniquely their own. By bringing their imaginations to life, artists offer us the opportunity to see the world in a new light as we experience it through their eyes and hearts. The true beauty of art is where it takes us – emotionally, intellectually, spiritually. When we spend time with a work of art, we travel to a place without equal – a world of feelings inspired by vision that artists work so passionately to express.

All too often people think that opportunity is only offered by talented artists who flee the Midwest for the big cities on the Coasts. We are very grateful to Sharon and John Amdall for sharing in our dream of revealing the talent here. We thank them wholeheartedly for this gift is to us all. *Art Lives in Central Illinois* illustrates how we truly see our home and ourselves.

DOUG AND EILEEN LEUNIG



A graduate student working in James Pearce’s studio/shop calls him “The King of Wood.”

Pearce’s relationship with wood is lifelong, deep, and consensual. Any sentient tree would want to leave its earthly remains in the hands of this man. Up until about age 8, Pearce and his family lived in southern Arizona. He is the oldest of six children, and he remembers doing woodworking projects with his father and grandfather. He remembers his first sale, a lettered wooden hall pass his third grade teacher commissioned. His father was in telecommunications with the Civil Service and the family moved to England and Germany, always setting up a woodworking shop at home.

By the time Pearce was in high school in Germany, he met his first professional artist, the mother of a girl he was dating. She was a printmaker, and her influence on him was lasting. Though he enrolled in the military and was stationed in Korea, he was always making art.

After the military, he worked as a skilled craftsman. The leap from being an employee to a self-employed artist didn’t happen with a detailed budget projection, marketing plan, and resume. It happened by focusing on wood ... listening to the articulation of the shape, grains, textures, and colors.

“If you put art and the process first, the rest just works itself out,” said Pearce, 40.

Today he works out of an old warehouse near the Peoria riverfront. Some of his grandfather’s and great grandfather’s tools are within easy reach. Commissioned pieces are shipped from the studio to patrons coast to coast. His work area includes the loading dock and space on the east side of the building while his wife, the artist Carrie Pearce, works from her studio on the west side of the building.

The couple visit family in southern Arizona but expect to make Peoria home. They are active in the local art community. James Pearce is president of the group CIAO (Central Illinois Artists Organization) and hosts public open houses at artists’ studios on the first Friday of each month. He feels a responsibility to community that inevitably involves education.

“You can’t just put a piece on the wall and expect it to sell,” he said. “For my art to be worth something to the person looking at it or owning it, there has to be understanding of the process behind making it. Understanding that process means understanding the thought and intent behind creating a piece ... understanding the creative mind, the problem-solving mind. That link to the creative mind involves all learning.”



james pearce

Wood  
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PIANO STOOL

Walnut  
14” diameter, adjustable height 19”-24”

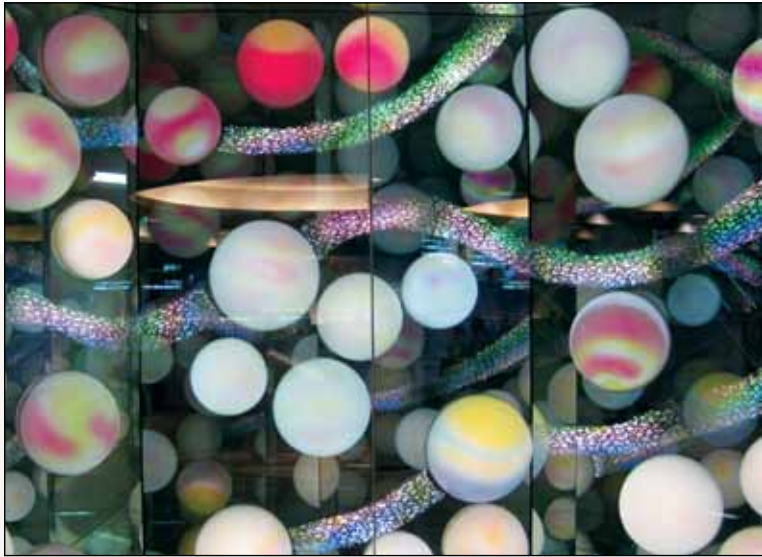






cheryl dean

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FLOATING  
Photography  
20" x 30"

It was on a trip to Cambodia with her daughter that Cheryl Dean stepped beyond photographing beautiful images to documenting inhumanity. Mother and daughter were visiting Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Dean had decided in advance not to shoot pictures, but the more she learned, the more horrified she became, the more she felt compelled to photograph, document, and return home with a collection of images recounting the Pol Pot Khmer Rouge genocide.

The collection hung for one month in Picture This Gallery, her framing shop and gallery in Peoria Heights. People asked questions and Dean talked with them about her experience, but perhaps most importantly, the images spoke intimately with each viewer.

Dean credits her maternal grandmother, Anice Barmes, with her love of photography. From an early age, she remembers seeing her grandmother taking pictures with an Argus film camera and a Brownie. When Dean got older her grandmother gave her the Argus, and she still has it.

Born in Pontiac, Michigan, Dean and her family moved to central Illinois when she was seven. She graduated from Princeville High School. There was no art curriculum in school, but like her grandmother Dean was always shooting images. After high school, she was one of the few women who worked in the machine shop at Caterpillar Inc. The first day, she wasn't sure she'd make it but ended up enjoying a decade there before her daughter and son were born. The family traveled extensively, and Dean always took pictures, developing them in her basement darkroom.

She was working at Dick Blick art supply store in the framing department when the store decided to close its Peoria location. She was allowed to keep the customer list, and she called each customer and told them she was opening her own shop on Prospect Road. The first Picture This Gallery opened 11 years ago in 700 square feet. She showcased a few artists and eventually had up to 12 shows a year. In 2008, she moved across the street into 1,800 square feet.

For the past six years, Dean's daughter has lived in Japan where she teaches English. Dean visits about once a year and she estimates she takes nearly 1,000 photos each trip. A map on the wall of her framing shop includes pins in all the countries she's visited.

Next trip is for beautiful images. Dean, 58, and two friends will spend a week in Bruges, Belgium, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



CHOCOLATE DIAMONDS  
Acrylic on Cast Paper  
36" x 36"

Painter and sculptor John Tuccillo calls himself "a visual salvage man."

He studies and reproduces the broken down and decaying artifacts and objects in the realm of the ordinary such as manhole covers, water meters, and tree stumps. He's able to see perspectives largely unseen by others in a rushed world awash in facts, factoids, and alarm clocks. He might turn his gaze to the intersection between man and nature, like the damage inflicted when a lawn mower rolls over a massive tree root coiling over the ground.

He's a patient man. He's able to spend a day working, creating molds, crouching over a manhole cover in a neighborhood where people don't pause to glance twice.

Tuccillo, 48, came to art without a clear map. He attended parochial schools with good art programs in his hometown of Kansas City. He transferred to a public high school with virtually no art instruction. He had no strong career goals but thought teaching might be interesting. He started college by meandering through different disciplines. He worked his way through University of Missouri in Kansas City while living at home. It took him six years, and he didn't declare a major until his junior year when an advisor helped him catch fire, and he earned a BA in art with emphasis on painting and photography. He earned both an MA and MFA from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and took a job in Taos, New Mexico, at the Harwood Museum of Art, teaching part time at the University of New Mexico Taos.

john tuccillo

Mixed Media  
E jtuccillo@icc.edu



He and his wife, the artist Anita Tuccillo, lived in a home with sweeping views of the mesa surrounding Taos. When Tuccillo accepted a job teaching at Illinois Central College, the couple moved to Peoria, and he found himself looking not at pastel sunsets over the desert but at an electric power transformer in his backyard. He watched his art flounder. Now, more than a decade since moving to Peoria, Tuccillo has trained his eye to see the beauty in the landscapes and streetscapes of the Illinois Valley.

"In Taos, the beauty is overt. Artists will move to Taos. They say 'The mountains are calling me.' It's easy to see," he said. "Here you have to train your eye. When you educate your eye, you change the whole paradigm."





**rozanne hubbard**

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TAZEWELL COUNTY SUNRISE

Pastel  
7" x 17"

Don't tell Rozanne Hubbard that central Illinois is a flat, featureless, agricultural expanse sadly lacking in iconic images of classic landscapes. Hubbard finds inspiration in the regional Midwest landscape. It trained her eye. At 5 a.m., she's often outside snapping pictures of scenes that will inspire her work. She shoots images from her car as she travels through the countryside.

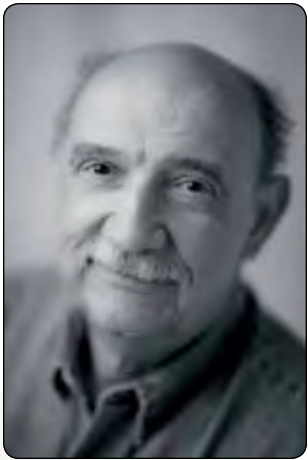
Born in Mexico, Missouri, Hubbard's earliest memory is sitting on a sofa with her artist mother. They were both drawing trees. She was 12 when her family moved to Morton, and she still sighs when she explains art wasn't part of the high school curriculum there until the year after her graduation.

She enrolled at Illinois Central College in graphic design, but soon landed a job as a graphic artist at PJStar Publications where she worked until her first daughter was born. She continued freelancing for the publications until her second daughter was born, and she couldn't keep up with the deadlines. What she lost in terms of income, she gained in terms of her development. That period began her transformation from graphic art to fine art. She and her mother began attending artists' workshops at Ghost Ranch in Santa Fe and others coast to coast. She painted en plein air and from photos she took of regional landscapes that inspired her.

There was one 10-year period in her life she didn't paint. That was when she was working as a realtor. Today she's making up for lost time, working at least seven hours a day until her legs give out. Her work is carried in galleries in Door County, Peoria, and the Illinois Artisan Gallery and Shop at Rend Lake. Her work is in private collections throughout the Midwest and beyond.

In November, Hubbard, 59, expects to open what she thinks will be the first art gallery in Morton, the Jefferson Street Studio & Gallery. Her studio will be behind the gallery, and she will rent out studio space to other artists.

"The 10 years I sold real estate and didn't paint were very difficult for me. I had an unfinished pastel over my desk and as soon as I remarried and left real estate I finished that piece and sold it," said Hubbard. "I feel like I need to catch up for those 10 years. So often people don't see the beauty in the Midwest, but it's definitely here. People can drive down the road past a mundane scene, but at certain times of day, in certain light, it becomes breathtaking."



**joe richey**

Sculpture  
E jrichey@tricitymachine.com



MY WORLD

Stainless Steel, Aluminum, Fiberglass  
6' x 4' x 4'

It was on a trip to a national board meeting of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers that Joe and Michele Richey decided to stop in Penland, North Carolina, to tour the art community. They also stopped in Charlotte. What they saw in both locations prompted them to examine the 6,000 square feet of empty space they had at Tri-City Machine Products on Washington Street in Peoria and repurpose it into artists' studios and a gallery. That was 2003, and they formed a not-for-profit for the undertaking, Prairie Center of the Arts. They also established an artist-in-residence program that has attracted artists from around the world, some with handicapped accessibility issues. The Prairie Center's residency is handicapped accessible, and a caravan runs six days a week between the residency and the center. The center also provides some technical assistance for artists.

Joe Richey is third generation of four generations in his family working in metal. He's also an entrepreneur, an artist, U.S. Air Force veteran, graduate of University of Illinois with a BS in business, and graduate of Bradley University with an MBA and an MS in industrial operations. He's currently completing work for an MA from Bradley.

He puts in 40-hour weeks as president of Tri-City Machine Products and another 28 hours a week working in his studio located within the old, sprawling brick factory. He and his wife are also parents of six children. The couple bought the building on Washington Street, constructed in 1888, that once housed Peoria Cordage. The doors of the building never closed because the Richeys moved in when the cordage moved out.

That was 1975, and today the Richey's business has 25 employees. Peoria architect Les Kenyon helped them list the building on the National Register of Historic Places.

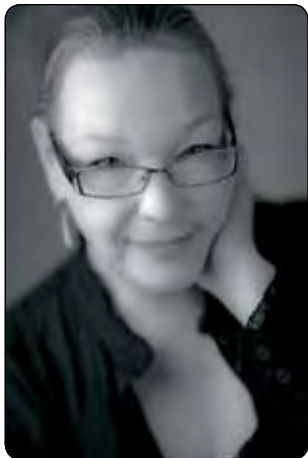
"I've always had in the back of my mind things I'd like to do, and I want to push forward instead of look behind," said Richey, 71. "Every day I think of something else to do."

Growing up in Springfield, Richey attended both public and parochial schools and remembers art in his public school years and music in his parochial school years. He and his wife have taken art classes together for years and think art is critical for children, helping them expand their perspectives and stimulating all learning, including geometry and spatial analysis. Prairie Center partners with schools to sponsor art programs, and hosted the juried Mid-Illini High School Art Show last year. It will be one of the locations for the 2013 Bradley National Print and Drawing Exhibition.

"I work in a geometric aesthetic. Everything can be reduced to math. Math is a way to analyze the world," Richey said, pointing to one of his sculptures. "This is objective expression as a way to express inner feelings. It's a little like Gestalt theory."

Richey added, "I'm a positive artist ... not a negative bone in my body. I learn every day, and mathematics keeps me moving forward every day."





### janet keturi

Drawing | Mixed Media | Painting  
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**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** My favorite style is my line drawings in charcoal because the charcoal can be manipulated so easily and used in so many different ways. Charcoal is like having a dance partner who knows instinctively how to move with your rhythm.

**Describe your artistic process.** I start with a concept that is my reaction to something. I decide which medium will best reflect my concept. I work in an additive and subtractive process building layers and, as the medium reacts to the process, I then work with the medium's reaction to being manipulated. Even if I start with a traditional technique, I will mix in nontraditional media. I have a flexible approach to my creation. My original vision may completely change by the time I finish.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** Knowing that my art touched someone's life.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** Rejection.



### bill galassi

Mixed Media  
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**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find it in the universe around me.

**What was your most humbling moment?** At one of my first shows, a woman commented that she didn't know what my drawing was about nor did she understand it...but she liked it.

**Why did you become an artist?** Because I enjoy constantly learning about the process of making art.

**What is your favorite subject?** Color and light.

**Who and what inspire you?** Abstract expressionists inspire me to create in a subconscious and rebellious way.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Don't be afraid to approach those in a position to help you show or sell your work.



### brian staniszewski

Photography  
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**How did you get started in art?** I started in photography to capture the beauty of the places I visit.

**Describe your artistic process.** My artistic process is about discovery ... discovering what nature has to offer. I don't create my images ... they have already been "drawn by the wild." It just takes some work to uncover these visual treasures. That process sometimes involves hiking miles into a site, hiking in the dark wondering if that crunching sound is a grizzly, or sometimes simply stumbling across a great scene and realizing the potential. On the editing side, I keep things simple. None of my images are composites and all my images of animals are taken in the wild ... no zoos or animal parks.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Having one of my images used in an African Safari guidebook. It's pretty neat to go into a bookstore and see one of your images in a book there.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Do something different. Many aspiring outdoor photographers try to replicate others. You see this at the national parks where photographers congregate sometimes in herds larger than the herds of animals they are photographing. My advice: Turn and look the other direction. I captured one of my favorite landscape images from my trip to Africa while turned away from a lion pride.



### carol rennick quell

Mixed Media  
**E** cjquell@comcast.net

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** My art is an expression of the seen and the unseen and offers the possibility for a wide range of interpretations by the viewer.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I spend time in my studio preparing collage papers and experimenting with different materials and techniques. This process generates ideas.

**Describe your artistic process.** I begin by working freely and spontaneously, gradually building the surface with layers of paint and collage materials.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working or finishing?** The best part is starting and working. Knowing when to stop is more difficult.

**If you could have dinner with any artist, (living or dead) who would it be? What would you ask them?** Mary Cassatt. I would ask what challenges she faced as a woman artist working in the 19th century.

**Three words that best describe you:** Introspective, determined, empathetic.

**How did you get started in art?** Making art was a journey that began with my wanting art materials as a child.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** My studio has good lighting, music, enough space, comfortable chair, and is not very neat while I am working.



### vicki padesky

Photography  
**E** vpadesky@yahoo.com

**Describe your artistic process.** Usually, I see the details and the quality of the light around me and I am driven to capture it in my photography. Sometimes I start with a "blank canvas" and bring the elements and light together as I would like to see them.

**What do you want your art to do?** I want viewers to linger over my photographs.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I enjoy giving permanence to a moment in time.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "To me, photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place ... I've found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them." Elliott Erwitt

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Whatever you dream you can do. Begin it – and get a marketing and business degree.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** Our planet, my studio, and my computer (the modern darkroom).

**Who and what inspire you?** Painters and photographers – Rembrandt, Vermeer, Mary Cassatt, Andrew Wyeth, Ansel Adams, Joyce Tennyson, Elliot Erwitt.



### georgeanne cassulo

Drawing  
**E** gafromdunlap@comcast.net

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I enjoy capturing the life of an animal through the eyes.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** When I have completed it with satisfaction.

**Three words that best describe you:** Fun, busy, creative.

**How did you get started in art?** I took art in school, gave it up for years and recently (2004) decided to start drawing again.

**Why did you become an artist?** As a child I always liked drawing.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I am working on a large flower piece; this links to another one I won an award for.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** The greatest satisfaction in my art would be to win a 1st place in an art show.







### nana ekow maison

Mixed Media | Painting  
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**What is your favorite subject?** Life.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it?** Pointillism. It's a style of painting/drawing in which various dots of color create the image.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I am working on a series of charcoal drawings on paper, investigating tonal effects using the pointillist style. This links to past paintings of the same subject done in the same style.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** Three hours to six months.

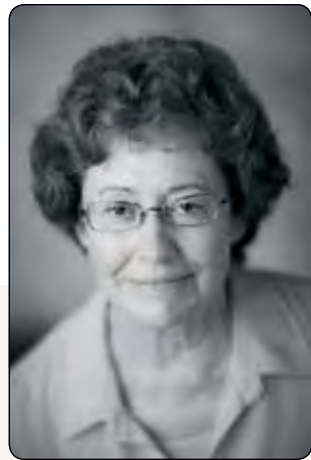
**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** All is Well!

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "I study nature so as not to do foolish things." *Mary Ruefle*

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Seek to mature as an artist.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** My innermost being.



### mary hildebrand

Painting  
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**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I am inspired by the beauty, the colors, and the shapes of flowers. I look for strong contrasts of sunlight and the resulting shadows. Close-up views of flowers are very compelling.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** I enjoy the challenge of creating rhythm, abstract designs, and impressionistic colors within the realism of my paintings.

**What's your artistic goal?** I am working and studying so that my art develops to a higher level of creative and technical excellence and a more poetic sense of expression.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Producing art is an emotional experience. Learning to paint with your emotions and thoughts, along with your knowledge, is a very fulfilling experience.

**Describe your artistic process.** First, I do the drawing. I paint in layers, always refining the drawing, going from the dark values to the light values.



### jan ebling

Photography | Wearable Art  
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**E** janebling@gmail.com

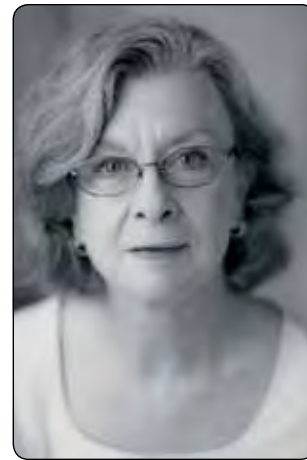
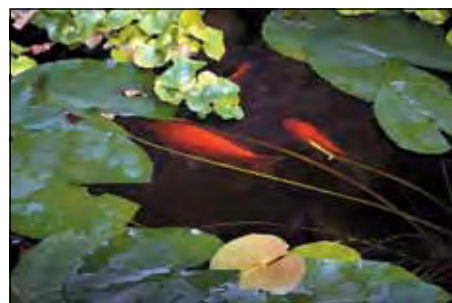
**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find inspiration from both nature and architecture – I love the organic feel of natural objects, but I also crave the structure that architecture reveals.

**Who and what inspire you?** Traveling extensively in the Southwest, I have been influenced and inspired by the region's landscapes with their enchanting colors, textures, and shapes. In contrast, contemporary Asian design soothes my soul and I'm also drawn to that genre. Both styles are truly reflected in my photography and my metalwork jewelry.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** When I was accepted into the prestigious Illinois Artisans Program.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** First of all, take risks in your creations. Do what comes naturally to you, but push yourself to cross unknown boundaries and don't fret about any criticism along the way. Remember "Art" is subjective and not everyone is going to like what you creatively put forth. Secondly, don't worry about so-called competition. When it comes right down to it, nothing is original. It's pretty much all been done before to some degree, just not with your touch. The important thing is to focus on your own art and it will all fall into place, as it should.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Organic, intuitive, colorful.



### elizabeth j. davis

Painting | Sculpture  
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**Why did you become an artist?** I can say things with my art that I can't say in any other way.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Old family photos, day-to-day experiences, the need to work through a challenge or express an emotion.

**What's your artistic goal?** To create work that speaks to others, so that others look at it and say: "yes, I've experienced that" or "I've felt that."

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working – that's when I lose myself in what I'm doing.

**Three words that best describe you:** Learner, listener, "synthesizer."

**What is your most treasured lesson?** When all other choices have been removed, I can still choose my attitude.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Everything is related to everything. EIR2E



### susan carson

Painting  
**E** paintbox@mtco.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Nature and music.

**How did you get started in art?** In junior high school, I had to choose between the study of music or art and, with much regret, I chose art. It was a bittersweet choice, but now I have the best of both worlds as my inspiration for nonrepresentational painting comes from the love of classical music.

**Why did you become an artist?** I need creative challenges.

**What's your artistic goal?** To forever express myself with color and marks.

**Describe your artistic process.** Like conducting music, the beginning is all gestures.

**Do you have a favorite style?** A combination of gestural line and detail.

**Who and what inspire you?** I like the work of Gauguin for the boldness of color.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** You don't need permission to create.

**What is your favorite subject?** I look at the subject as the motif for color and line.



### jeremy berkley

Printmaking  
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**Why did you become an artist?** It's one of the few things I'm decent at.

**What's your artistic goal?** A small, but loyal, cult following.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** Humor usually creeps into my work.

**Who and what inspire you?** Eyvind Earle, Patrick Nagel, Aaron Horkey, Saul Bass, Vincent Kennedy McMahon.

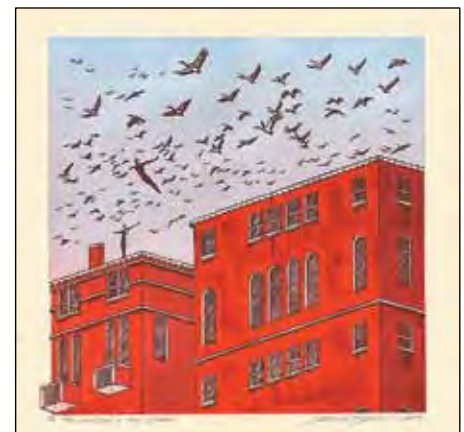
**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** DIY.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** It's like a meth lab, except slightly less toxic.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Don't dream it, be it." *Dr. Frank-N-Furter*, a scientist.

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** Filling out this questionnaire.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** A month..







### steph van doren

Sculpture | Painting

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**A** cancer diagnosis when she was 32 had Steph Van Doren reassessing her life. Since childhood, she had to be an artist, but her family was geared toward paychecks and health insurance. She had two young children, was on a career path to becoming an executive in a major insurance company, and it hit her: what a waste it would be to die without ever doing what you really love. She quit her job, left her benefits behind, and started college majoring in art. With the help of state aid, student loans, grants, and scholarships, she graduated from Drake University with a BFA in painting.

After graduation she taught part-time and became involved in grassroots art programs in Des Moines. She discovered she loved teaching art, researched graduate schools, and moved to Peoria with her children to start a graduate program at Bradley University. During graduate school she gravitated away from painting toward sculpture, earning her MFA in 2009.

"I love welding and forging, and I sew casings around my forms. I love that yin and yang of the male and female ... welding and sewing," said Van Doren, 49.

She was working as an adjunct drawing instructor at Illinois Central College, Robert Morris University, and Bradley University when

### INNER EVENTS

Steel, Muslin, Acrylic  
52" x 10" x 8"



an opportunity opened to be full-time art teacher at Quest Academy in Peoria District 150. The school encourages interdisciplinary projects. Van Doren and a number of other teachers developed a curriculum teaching students how to design and construct a model for a playground. The students used computers, math, science, and art to complete the assignment.

"It was a creative project. They designed the playground on computers and built the models in my class. They had to do it to scale. They had sandboxes, tire swings, slides, monkey bars. These were middle school students!" Van Doren said. "The project connected all the classes and kids who asked 'Why do I need math?' had the opportunity to see why. It has been proven that fine arts and music enhance students' learning, challenge their brains, and give them other ways to look at the world."



### PORCELAIN TEAPOT WITH OILSPOT TEMMOKU GLAZE

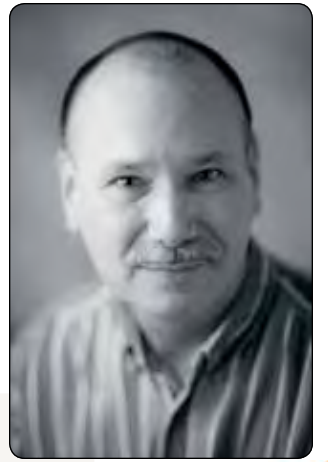
Porcelain  
4 1/2" x 4 1/2" x 8"

**W**hen Jerry McNeil left his job at the Peoria Civic Center to work full-time as a potter, he plunged into 60-hour work weeks divided between his studio and teaching at the Peoria Art Guild. Encouraging him to take the leap was his mother, a seamstress and wardrobe designer with community theater.

"If something is humanly possible, you can do it," she'd say to McNeil and his four siblings. McNeil attended District 150 public schools and recalls a number of outstanding art teachers. He attended Illinois Central College where he again had some wonderful art teachers, including Marlene Miller.

While working full-time at the Civic Center, he worked part-time on his pottery wheel, took a small-business course at Bradley University, put together a business plan, figured out standard accounting practices, and stepped into life as a full-time potter. He started holding classes in a studio set up in his garage. He did a few shows around the Midwest.

Now, over two decades later and with a 1,600-square-foot studio in the Murray Building, 65 to 75 percent of McNeil's



### jerry mcneil

Ceramics

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work is special order. People sometimes assemble dinnerware over time, purchasing dinner plates one year, bowls another, serving platters another. He has a subscription plan. People decide what they want for the entire set and then receive and pay for pieces on installment. He does bridal registries. He opens his studio for CIAO's First Friday events. He's working with a contact in New Zealand who is establishing an online coffee shop selling items produced throughout the world.

McNeil makes his own glazes. A friend gave him a lump of clay from a local creek bed. His daughter gave him clay from the Fox River. He has a few secret locations he hikes to for other materials.

"I don't want my blue glaze looking like the next guy's blue glaze. I let the glaze evolve ... 50 percent of this, 50 percent of that," he said.

He's a strong supporter of government funding for the arts.

"Without government funding, arts become elitist, and that shouldn't be. Everyone should have access to the edification the arts provide," said McNeil, 53. "Peoria would be a far duller town without the arts."





### ken tiessen

Painting | Drawing  
**W** KenTiessenArt.com  
**E** Studio@KentiessenArt.com

**Describe your artistic process.** I work and learn best from life, then bring those skills and ideas into the studio work.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Perfection is the enemy of good.

**Do you have a favorite style?**

**What is it and why?** I feel that style is not chosen – it is inherent. My work is a blend of Realism and Impressionism.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** In nature.

**Why did you become an artist?**  
To express the feelings I have for beauty.

**What is your favorite subject?**  
Portraits and mountain landscapes.

**What do you want your art to do?**  
To help others see the beauty everywhere in our world.

**What's one thing you should throw away and haven't.** Fear.



### dr. peter j. couri

Photography  
**E** Rin520@aol.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** My backyard is an untouched hickory-oak forest. The seasons provide an unending palette of images. The images I submitted for the exhibit were taken last April during one walk. It struck me that the red, white, and blue flowers were patriotic portraits of the treasures of wild America.

**Why did you become an artist?** My mother, Isabelle, enrolled us six kids in every art class Lakeview Museum provided during the summer. The passion and creativity of the instructors have never been forgotten.

Artist Grace Van Norman Correll was one of our favorite teachers. Her eccentric ways (and the kittens she would bring to class) were inspiring. I have one of her massive oils hanging in my office as a tribute to her eternal youth.



### tracey frugoli

Painting | Photography  
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**What do you want your art to do?**

After being an art therapist for 11 years and witnessing the horrible things one person can do to another, I want to create positive energy with my art – to push back against all the negatives out there. I want it to soothe, heal, inspire, and celebrate. That is why I focus on light and the effects of light on our visual world. Whether I am painting a sunset or sculpting with light in my photography, I want to create a meaningful and beautiful image that touches the viewer on a personal level. I believe that is more powerful than we will ever know.

**My life as an artist won't be complete until I...** You can't be serious. How could it ever be complete? I hope to go to my grave with a brush in my hand and my camera around my neck.

**What is your most treasured lesson?**  
Life is short, so start living your dreams. It's ok to fail even though it hurts, because not trying is just self-censorship and that's just plain depressing. Always be humble enough to be a student. It's ok to not know or be good at everything. You don't have to be tough and hard just to be taken seriously in a man's world. It's ok to let people love and value you. It's ok to be open and loving in return. Let the other guys chase their tails in pursuit of what any particular society wants. Be honest and true to yourself and you will have no regrets.



### erica mancuso

Painting | Sculpture  
**E** emancuso0405@gmail.com

**How did you get started in art?**

Both of my parents were artists and our house was full of beautiful art.

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?**

I think you got that backwards – my life has influenced my art.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** It might be better if I were a Parisian artist.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Traveling to France to unveil a sculpture that I collaborated on with 12 factory workers in Grenoble.

**What was your most humbling moment?** I was humbled by the fact that the company I work for, a company not typically associated with the arts, has recognized me as an artist and given me numerous opportunities to create art. I recently finished a sculpture created with salvaged parts from the factory in Grenoble. I worked long distance with 12 very talented Frenchmen to bring my concept to fruition. Standing with all of them next to the completed work was one of the most humbling moments of my life.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Never stop making art.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?**  
A drawing in 3rd grade. Mrs. Lawrence praised me and showed it to the class.



### lori daniels

Mixed Media  
**E** Loridaniels157@hotmail.com

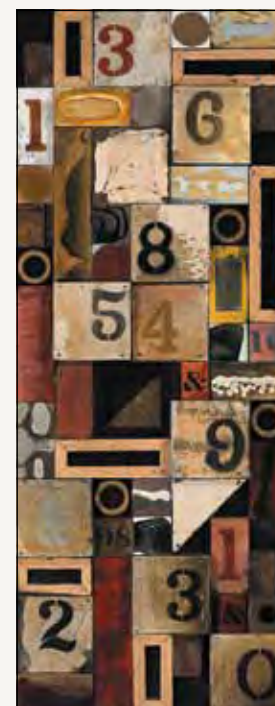
**Describe your artistic process.**

I am a mixed-media sculptor who is having a love affair with color. My collages include "found objects" as well as historically important recycled architectural fragments.

**Does your art have a message?** That the passage of time changes everything and nothing. Look closely at the world in which we exist – life is a circle. Through my art, I want the viewer to see the past and integrate it with the future.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Life is so short. "Live life like you're in love, and you will be."

**Describe the space where you create your art.** I can't imagine any better place to create art than in the garden. God's handiwork surrounds and inspires you!



### kelly wolfe

Drawing | Photography  
**E** kelly.e.wolfe@gmail.com

**How did you get started in art?**

I've always dabbled in any kind of media I can get my hands on or in. I'm a very sensory-oriented person and I see the world through colors, shapes, and, especially, textures. It's been my way of self-expression, solace, and communication.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Just as life itself is, art is enjoyed most in the process of doing and being rather than in the end result. This is where my recovery from mental illness takes place the most.

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** Moment by moment I live and breathe with a mental illness. With this, I must force myself to look at my thoughts and behaviors with a nonjudgmental stance, mindful of each individual moment.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "What is to give light must endure burning." *Viktor E. Frankl*

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." *Eleanor Roosevelt*

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "Follow your bliss." If you do what you love, then you love what you do.







### julie k. purdum



Painting  
**W** etsy.com/shop/prairiemooncreations  
**E** juliepurdum@att.net

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Color in nature.

**Describe your artistic process.** I draw in ink and then paint using only transparent paints, 20 or more skin-thin layers, in the reverse method on glass or plexiglass.

**What is your favorite subject?** Native flora of Illinois and the Midwest.

**Do you have a favorite style?**  
**What is it and why?** Detail, detail, detail. People enjoy discovering new bits in paintings they've looked at for a long time. It gives them a little rush.

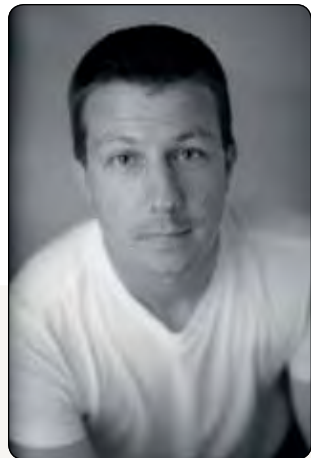
**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** Trees and also prairie grass from Jubilee Park.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Keep an open mind.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "A leaf is a letter from a tree that writes, in gold, 'remember me!'" *Joan Walsh Anglund*

**What's your favorite piece?** "Wild Asters."

**How did you get started in art?** Just born this way.



### rc sayler

Sculpture  
**W** rcsayler.com  
**E** rcsayler@gmail.com

**Why did you become an artist?** Some of us were born to plow fields, crunch numbers, or play sports. I have no choice but to be an artist.

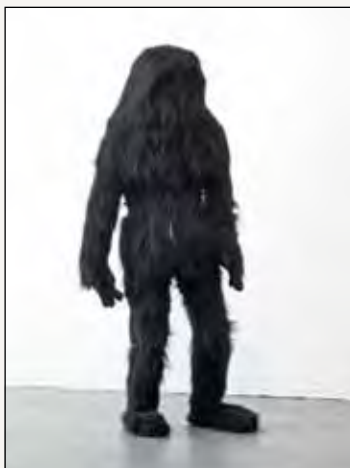
**Describe your artistic process.** Generally, I start with an idea and then materials. As I work to manipulate the materials, my idea also becomes worked and manipulated. This requires me to rework the materials and the idea until a compromise is achieved between both. "A good compromise is when both parties are dissatisfied." *Larry David*

**What is your favorite subject?** This may sound arrogant, but "myself" is the subject of my work.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** I would be most satisfied if my art made itself.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I get ideas by not doing anything. Idle hands...

**Is there a purpose to your artwork?**  
**What is it?** Have you ever packed all your belongings into boxes and loaded them into a truck and then unloaded the truck at another destination and unpacked all the boxes?



### marti millington

Painting  
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**E** marti@martimillington.com

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** My subject matter is wildlife. My goal is to raise awareness of the need to preserve what we have before it is lost. Extinction is forever.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I have a "gazillion" reference photos I have taken of animals and habitat. I find that just going through them brings numerous ideas to mind.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Be true to your goals and paint what you love. If you don't, it will show in your work.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** My proudest achievement is becoming a Signature Member of Artists for Conservation.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** I refuse to accept a world where all the animals are behind bars.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** From the world around me.

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** Yes; if we don't preserve the wildlife and their habitat now, it will be lost to future generations forever.

**How did you get started in art?** My mother was an artist.

**What's your favorite piece?** My next one.



### jane coultas

Painting  
**E** janecoultas@hotmail.com

**What's your artistic goal?** To create an image that captures a moment.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I like the challenge of creating something positive.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** I work quickly, then refine. The initial effort is fast – bold might be a better word than fast. The refining can take hours, even days!

**Three words that best describe you:** Spontaneous, fun, unique.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Life is short, so don't waste time with insignificant things.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Find out who you are and then be that person. Enjoy what you do and share that joy.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Create and don't hesitate.



### jeanna fearon

Painting  
**W** jeannafearon.com  
**E** mail@jeannafearon.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** My paintings are fueled by the way I experience moments, and the beauty that those moments behold. I am especially fascinated by the little things in life that may often go unnoticed or are taken for granted, but are actually a pinnacle of beauty... something full of wonder that deserves appreciation.

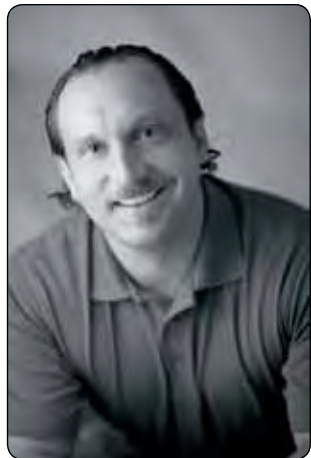
**What do you want your art to do?** Through my paintings, I ask the viewer to pause and fully embrace, sensually, what a moment offers.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Inspiring others to discover their creativity and express themselves through art. I do this through both art therapy and art education.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Follow your heart. Create art that makes you happy. Don't give up your dreams to please others.

**Three words that best describe you:** Passionate, quirky, fun.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Don't dream it... Be it!"



### chris hutson

Drawing | Printmaking  
**W** chrishutsonart.com  
**E** chutson99@gmail.com

**How did you get started in art?** I picked up a crayon as a kid and never stopped.

**Is there a purpose to your artwork?**  
**What is it?** Scratching the itch.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I either start drawing or pick an idea from the archive of ten million ideas I'll never get around to finishing.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** I keep many pieces going at any one time, so while any given piece may take months from start to finish, it will typically take several days of actual work.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** I've been influenced by the methodologies of Surrealism and the characteristic shapes and forms of the Mannerist and Baroque periods, among others.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** Wherever you go, there you are.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** It's a trap.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I have no use for inspiration; I'm too busy expiring.

**Where can people see more of your art?** On my website, at upcoming shows posted thereon, and monthly at CIAO First Fridays at The Atelier.





**H**iram Toraason was raised with the values of his grandfather's generation. Yes sir. No sir. A commitment and responsibility to others. His grandfather, a physician practicing in Peru, Illinois, had "No appointment necessary" printed on his business card. Everyone received medical care.

Dr. Toraason died in 2011 when he was 87. He was in a wheelchair at the end but still enjoyed visiting his grandson at his studio in Peoria. He liked to sit before the huge glass furnace at Toraason Glass and watch his grandson blow molten, glowing orbs. Inevitably at some point a piece would fall and shatter. Dr. Toraason always felt the loss.

As a young glass artist, Toraason adopted his grandfather's last name as an honor to his mother and grandparents. His mother was a single parent, and her parents helped raise Toraason and his two sisters. The family did not see art as a viable career and did not immediately embrace the notion of Toraason becoming a full-time glass artist. That changed as they observed his skill develop.

Toraason attended St. Bede Academy in Peru and was exposed to an incredible art curriculum. St. Bede might have been the only high school in the country with bronze casting. There was instruction in lithography, oil painting, investment casting, and basically a core college curriculum in art. But it wasn't until he was at Southern Illinois University that Toraason was exposed to glass. He tried to resist.

He was in the business school and had promised his mother he'd finish college. He stayed on campus during holidays and semester breaks to work in the glass studio. He ultimately graduated with a BS in liberal arts and a passion for glass.

After graduation he went to Penland, North Carolina, home of the renowned Penland School of Crafts. He worked in several glass studios there for nearly four years before moving to Peoria, his wife's home town. He opened his first studio in 2004 and was working 100 hours a week. Later, he bought an old machine shop on Evans Street near Morton Square Park. It offers affordable space and light from huge windows. Bus tours and school groups visit the gallery and watch the artist blowing glass.

"If you show people the process, they always have a greater appreciation," he said.

Toraason's wife, Holly, teaches special education and the couple has two young daughters.

"I can blow glass all day everyday and never get tired of it," said Toraason, 37. "I feel fortunate to be in Peoria at this time. So much is coming together. The Peoria art scene is still in its infancy, but we're getting closer. Would I still be a glass artist if I wasn't in Peoria? That's a good question. Today, glass artists are on the endangered species list."



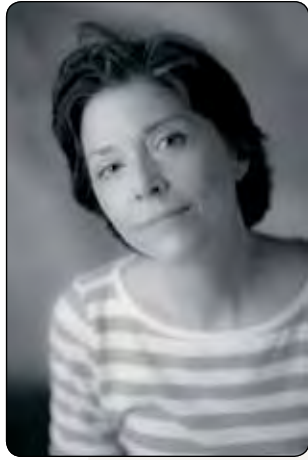
**hiram toraason**

Glass  
**W** toraasonglass.com  
**E** toraasonglass@yahoo.com



**BASKET WEAVE NEEDLE BOTTLE**

Hand Blown Glass  
18" x 13" x 9"



**marlene miller**

Ceramics  
**W** millerclay.com  
**E** millerclay@mtco.com

**C**eramic sculptor Marlene Miller saw her art work improve after she bought a building just off the square in downtown Washington, Illinois. The building had been constructed in 1862 as a "manufactory of wagons and plows." Miller was living in an apartment on the third floor when the building was put up for sale. There were several other apartments and street-space storefronts. At a minimum, the building needed a new roof and rewiring.

Miller's father had been a real estate developer, and she had seen firsthand what it meant to get calls about leaky toilets and broken door locks. She didn't want any part of that, but she decided she'd make an offer only because she wanted to remain in her apartment. The process of working with attorneys, bankers, and then contractors, plumbers, and electricians was incredibly demanding, and Miller discovered she loved it. The experience boosted her confidence. She started accepting new and difficult commissions and started producing work that at one time she would have been too afraid to tackle. She still lives in her top floor apartment, has some wonderful tenants, works out of a street level studio, and has a small gallery in a storefront space.

She grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, attending parochial schools in the early grades. She remembers the excitement of wearing a smock and standing before an easel in kindergarten. She remembers her first experience with clay at age 7. After parochial school, she attended La Follette High School in Madison. The school had about 2,500 students and seven full-time art teachers.

Besides art, Miller enjoyed chemistry and math. Wanting to be practical, she decided to major in chemistry in college and attended the same college her chemistry teacher had attended. During her first semester at Bradley University, she took one chemistry class and also enrolled in an art class. By the end of that semester, she knew chemistry was not her path. She earned a BFA in ceramics and painting from Bradley in 1976. She was awarded a two-year graduate fellowship in ceramics at Syracuse University and earned her MFA in 1978.

She taught at Illinois Central College for 20 years. With the boost to her confidence gained from having a building acquisition and renovation under her belt, she undertook a major mural project for ICC. When that project was successfully completed in 1998, Miller resigned her faculty position and has worked ever since as a full-time sculptor.

"Art is often seen as a frill. It's not. Art helps us ask questions. This recession makes funding for the arts more difficult, but our culture is a big loser without art," said Miller, 58. "I think art is in all of us. We all have a hunger for art and, when we cut that off, we suffer individually and as a culture."



**QUEENIE**

Glazed Stoneware  
38" x 11" x 11"





### cis carlson

Wearable Art  
**W** ciaopeoria.com  
**E** ciscarlson7@sbcglobal.net

#### What do you want your art to do?

My desire is to create a piece that will make people happy and feel good about themselves.

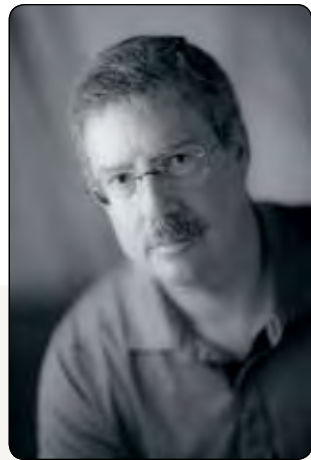
**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** Nuno felting, which is the technique that bonds loose wool fibers into a sheer fabric like silk – developed by Polly Stirling around 1992.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Starting – I wake up with ideas of color combinations and designs and then lay them out to see if it works.

**What's your favorite piece?** I hand felted Merino wool into a shawl and then needle felted more wool on it to present my interpretation of a painting my nephew did of cherry blossoms.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Make many acts of love, for they set the soul on fire and make it gentle."

**Three words that best describe you:** Happy, compassionate, lucky.



### craig stocks

Photography  
**W** craigstockarts.com  
**E** craig@craigstockarts.com

**Why did you become an artist?** I'm a very visual person, and I love the feeling of creating something that's exciting to look at.

**Do you have a favorite style?** My favorite style is hyper-detailed large format prints. I describe my style as graphically simple, technically precise, and vibrantly colored.

**What's your favorite piece?** "Mosquito on Red Canoe," which is shown here. The detail in the photo is so great that you can clearly see a mosquito perched on the bow of the canoe. I love to watch people get drawn into the image as they try to find the mosquito.

**If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be?** **What would you ask them?** Leonardo da Vinci. Besides the obvious (what's the story behind the Mona Lisa), I would like to understand his creative process. I'd probably ask him to fill out this questionnaire.

**What is your favorite subject?** I am particularly attracted to beautiful landscapes.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** My current work is extending the concept of hyper detail to create new "puzzle pieces" where the viewer is invited to explore the photo to find the hidden details.



### cathie crawford

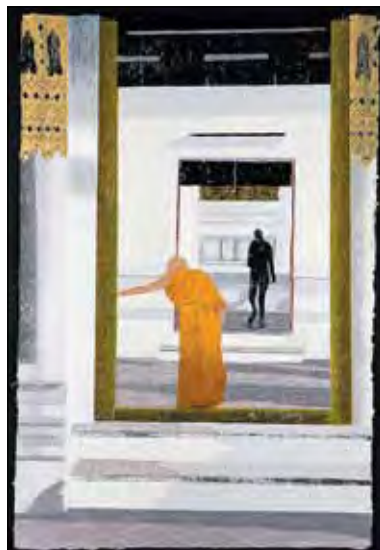
Printmaking  
**W** peoriacac.org/Directory/  
**E** cathierich@comcast.net

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** Making printmaking non-toxic and green was my biggest hurdle. I was a lithographer for 15 years before rediscovering the woodcut. My studio is now solvent- and acid-free.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** My color reduction woodcut process is very time consuming. I usually work on each edition of prints for several months.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** My happiest achievement is having my work exhibited twice at the International Print Center in the Chelsea area of New York City ("Monsieur Blanc n'est pas blanc" in 2007 and "Sab pan yu" in 2010). Also, I am very proud that "Plane Magic" was acquired by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** My predominant theme is Bliss of Being: A Celebration of Life.



### mary annen

Painting  
**E** maryannen@heartlandchc.org

**Describe your artistic process.** It generally begins with a fragment of an idea followed by research and then a few rough sketches. However, about 95% of my pieces evolve into something completely different than my original idea.

**What is your favorite subject?** The human form is my favorite subject. There are so many shapes within the human form – one can focus on just one aspect and create something abstract or work with the entire body. There are many options.

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** Painting has forced me to become patient, adaptable, and flexible. Sometimes I can't manipulate the brush and/or the paint in the specific way that I want. When that happens, I step back and take a moment to decompress before I continue and that generally works for me.

**Why did you become an artist?** I became an artist because I have always been creative and "artsy." It wasn't until I was a full-time art student that I realized that creating art was therapeutic for me. In addition, I am truly passionate about art.



### don rosser

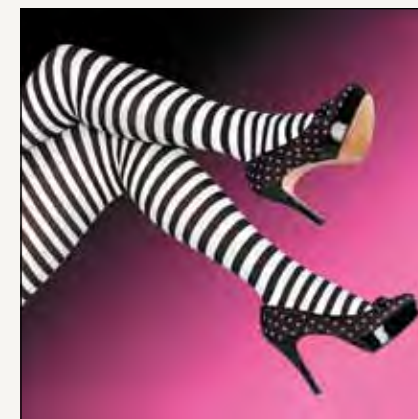
Photography  
**W** woodennickelimages.com  
**E** donrosser@comcast.net

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find inspiration everywhere. I seldom have an idea for an artistic photograph that is not followed by other ideas. So many ideas, so little time!

**How did you get started in art?** I have been a photographer all my adult life, but with the advent of high-quality digital cameras, Photoshop, and fine-art printers, I feel as though I have been waiting for this opportunity all my life. I now focus my passion toward creating fine art photography (and riding my Harley).

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are." *Anais Nin*. Even before I read her words, I understood this. Often I see things a certain way and discover other people see them differently. I think this applies to all artists and helps us shape our lives and our art.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Don't quit your day job. Know your customers. Never give up on your art!



### diane donohue

Painting  
**W** DianeDonohueArt.com  
**E** diane.donohue.artist@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** The natural world inspires me.

**What's your artistic goal?** I hope that the viewer will see things in a new way – look up from those phones and look around at the beauty.

**What is your favorite subject?** Trees and paths and, lately, old Illinois barns and the fields. I feel a sense of urgency to capture these rural scenes before the metal buildings and wind turbines overtake the landscape. I also love to paint from life by setting up small still lifes.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** Light and shadows are recurring motifs in my landscape work. There's something about the quality of light that grabs me.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Make art that comes from your heart. Try to get out of your own way by not over-thinking things.

**Describe your artistic process.** I use my camera as my sketchbook and then execute the work in my studio.







## linda reed

Mixed Media | Painting | Photography  
**E** reedhaven2@frontier.com

### Why did you become an artist?

I enjoy dreaming about my next piece and anticipating the fun of it. I especially enjoy a challenge, because learning new ideas always makes me a better artist.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Designing a piece of art relaxes me. Bringing joy to others is what it's all about – such as when a customer explains to me how much a piece has touched his or her heart.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** When I was a little girl, I watched my father paint with oils and design landscape pictures, and he sold many of them. I always wanted to be able to paint as well as he did.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Nature – all the beautiful things it has to offer.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Do not get involved in art for the money. Do it because it brings you happiness, and to be able to touch someone's heart with a piece you have designed.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Never say "never."

**Who and what inspire you?** My father.



## oliver searle

Painting  
**W** ollie-ink.com  
**E** ollie@ollie-ink.com

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** Definitely fashion illustration.

### How did you get started in art?

Professionally, it was when I showed some of my work to Retrospect Galleries, Byron Bay, Australia. One particular work, featured in this book – "Astral Traveler" – caught the gallery owner's eye.

**Why did you become an artist?** I was born an artist!

**What's your artistic goal?** To find truth and beauty.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I'm working on a series of skull paintings. My previous work was focused on portraits – fashion figures. It seems like a natural evolution that I have moved into skulls.

**Who and what inspire you?** Artists of any discipline. It can be very inspiring to hear different artists talk about their chosen craft.

**Three words that best describe you:** Quirky, misunderstood, outsider.



## david zalaznik

Photography  
**W** davidzalaznik.com  
**E** dzalaznik@comcast.net

### How did you get started in art?

Fascination with documentary images of the world.

### What's your artistic goal?

To expand, change, experience.

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** This is who we are and this is our world.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I love to offer the opportunity for others to see beauty around us, both in people and landscapes, that is otherwise overlooked.

**What was your most humbling moment?** When a photograph of mine was tacked on a wall with 50 others, and photographer David Plowden pointed to it and asked, "Who took this?"

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** Turning again to black and white, which is where I started.

**What do you want your art to do?** I hope to create an understanding.

**What's been your most difficult decision?** The decision to leave a comfort zone, return to college, and open myself up to a whole new world.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** In all aspects of the world around me.



## lisa nelson raabe

Mixed Media | Wearable Art  
**W** LisaNelsonRaabe.com  
**E** Lisa@LisaNelsonRaabe.com

### Is there a purpose to your artwork?

**What is it?** Inner realms of contemplation.

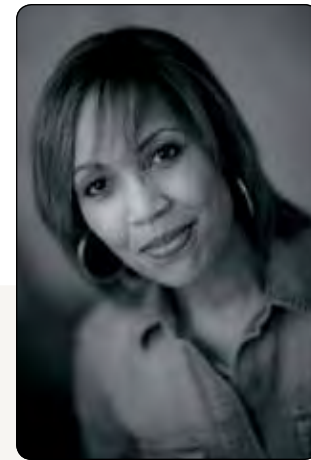
### Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?

Mandalas, centering forms, internal states, and objects of meditation reflect many trips to India and my current work as a yoga therapist and teacher.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Meticulous, colorful, contemplative.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "A greater painting would be one that brings forth some innermost secret of the heart, a secret which, when revealed, inspires a unique segment of love which has never been seen before in quite that way; and this is art." *Lynn Ott*

**Describe your artistic process.** I work with drawn and painted images that are scanned and digitized, then sewn – first with an embroidery machine and then embellished by hand with embroidery and beading.



## natalie jackson o'neal

Photography  
**W** NatalieJacksonOneal.com  
**E** Natjack007@aol.com

### Why did you become an artist?

Growing up, I thought being an artist was the norm. I wanted the freedom to create.

### What's your artistic goal?

To share my feeling of a particular moment in time with my audience.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** A body of work called "Thresholds." It's a recurring theme of doorways, gateways, passages, and paths we encounter through certain points in life, whether physiological or psychological.

**What do you want your art to do?** Tell a story, relay a mood, share an experience.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** Advice from my dad, Preston Jackson, to shoot what I know.

**How did you get started in art?** My dad bought me drawing books and sketch pads when I was very young. Going to the art supply store was like going to the candy store. I got my first camera when I was 10.

### Who and what inspire you?

My husband, Dexter, inspires me. He is very supportive of everything I do. He is my personal "technology app" and constantly challenges me to try new things.



## sarah gindville

Photography  
**E** sarahgindville@yahoo.com

**What is your favorite subject?** My favorite subjects are people who are under-appreciated, unnoticed, and shy. Where dark secrets hide, great work appears.

### Describe your artistic process.

Watch. Dissect. Manipulate. Formulate. Photograph. Deconstruct (on occasion). Create.

I watch people and observe arguments, debates, discussions, flirtations, affection, and the like. I dissect what happened and manipulate it to fit a personal experience. The idea forms and photographing follows. I cut out, replace, and cover over aspects of an image that show as untrue. That is my creation.

### What do you want your art to do?

I want my art to allow people to engage in uncomfortable topics of conversation and have them not feel uncomfortable doing so. I want these images to, at times, create confusion allowing for personal interpretation of what I have presented.







## christopher holbrook

Drawing | Printmaking  
W [ciao.peoria.com](http://ciao.peoria.com)  
E [czholbrook@yahoo.com](mailto:czholbrook@yahoo.com)



54 SLIDE  
Monoprint  
15" x 25"

A self-proclaimed elliptical thinker, Christopher Holbrook reaches into past, present, personal, and community to draw influence for his work.

A gnarled twig, picked up while walking in the High Street neighborhood with his partner, the artist Susanne Nestory, sits on a table on the back porch of their Colonial Revival home and appears in his drawing "Frozen Country."

Diversity and multi-culturalism are guiding principles in his life. Holbrook, 54, rarely reads only one book at a time, usually bouncing among several. He rarely works on one piece of art start-to-finish but usually has several going. He returns to each over time to study and expand upon different articulations. An adjunct faculty member at Bradley University, Holbrook is a draftsman, printmaker, painter, and ceramic sculptor. Earliest influences were *The New Yorker* magazine covers and album covers omnipresent in his homes growing up in Canton and Peoria.

He recalls no strong art curriculum in his parochial school education, but he drew constantly. As an only child, drawing was his entertainment, companionship, and voice. He attended Western Illinois University, earning a degree in commercial art. While in graduate school at Bradley, where he earned an MFA, he earned money painting school playgrounds with

a game his step-father invented called "Run, Think and Yell" designed to teach geography. He was a visiting professor at West Virginia University and worked in Ft. Lauderdale, Pittsburg, and Philadelphia, all the while developing an interest in intaglio and collagraph printmaking.

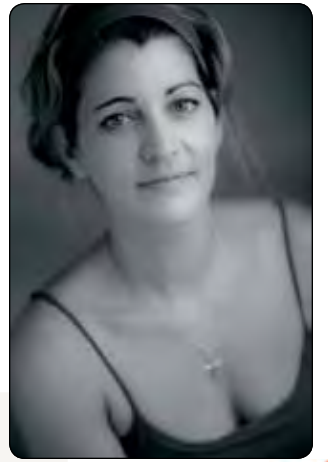
Assessing the neighborhoods where he has lived, Holbrook said home has always been in older areas with history and character. He likes the feeling of living among many generations, and he incorporates those layers of experience and time into his work.

"I make a concerted effort to make work more than just formal elements," Holbrook said. "Content accrues over a lifetime. Art makes a statement. Art is talking. There are two kinds of artists: those who wake up and want to make something and those who wake up and want to say something."

Holbrook wakes up ready to make art that talks.

## carrie pearce

Painting  
W [carriepearce.com](http://carriepearce.com)  
E [sunkissii@hotmail.com](mailto:sunkissii@hotmail.com)



SEA MOUSE  
Oil  
30" x 24"

Carrie Pearce drew and painted for more than three decades, graduated cum laude from the Savannah College of Art and Design, sold art to tourists from her studio in Savannah, and worked with a number of different styles and media. Then she had a transformational moment standing before a portrait painted in 1474 of a beautiful, introspective Florentine intellectual.

Pearce, 42, recalls the 2006 experience that changed the course of her art. She and her husband, the artist and furniture maker James Pearce, were visiting the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. They were standing before Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Ginevra de' Benci. "I want to paint like that," Pearce remembers saying, staring into the face of an unsmiling, aristocratic woman.

Maybe because of Pearce's solid grounding in basics and her MFA in illustration, the new direction was an immediate fit. She developed the technique fairly quickly. The unresolved question was subject matter. She didn't want to depend on models hired to sit for hours in her studio. She didn't want to paint from pictures

of models. She started buying old photographs of children from the 1850s to the 1920s at estate sales and antique stores. She has hundreds of these images and paints the faces of these children in diverse settings from underwater fantasies to formal silk chairs in parlor rooms. Each portrait can take over 100 hours of work.

"Adults come with baggage. Kids are more spirited than worldly. Adults have a specific history," she said of her subject matter.

With piercingly direct gazes, the children show vulnerability, affliction, obstinacy, and timelessness. Pearce was surprised and bothered when people started telling her the portraits were scary and creepy.

"People have said to me 'You don't look anything like someone who would paint these portraits,'" she said. "But I'm not my art work. People ask why are they so sad, but good and bad are such stereotypes. Can't sad be good sometimes?"

Pearce started drawing by age three and disliked the art classes in her parochial school. By seventh grade she was enrolled in public schools in Dunlap and art classes became fun and challenging. Her father was an engineer and woodworker who died in a car accident when Pearce was two.

She and her husband have held jobs in retail, restaurants, and construction but they have focused on art full-time for a number of years. They recently bought an old building in the Warehouse District in Peoria and have studio space there and plan to move into the building eventually.

"Art is a hard way to make a living. Art is not really in you. It's from the unmanifested, and you're a channel for it," Pearce said. "Rehabbing this old building is a shared goal. Making something that doesn't exist is what drives artists."





## julie dodge

Photography  
**E** thedodgelodge@gmail.com

### What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?

I had a knee injury that changed everything in my life. I wondered if I was going to be able to walk again. It made me realize, for the first time, what life would be with a disability, and what life is for people who have serious disabilities. When I got back on my feet, I realized that I can still go to amazing places off-the-beaten path, albeit much slower, and bring back photos to share with people who will never be able to go where my legs can still take me. The greatest satisfaction would be to exhibit my photos at hospitals and nursing homes where others can experience the world through my photographs, remember places they used to be able to visit, or just forget reality for a moment.

### What do you want your art to do?

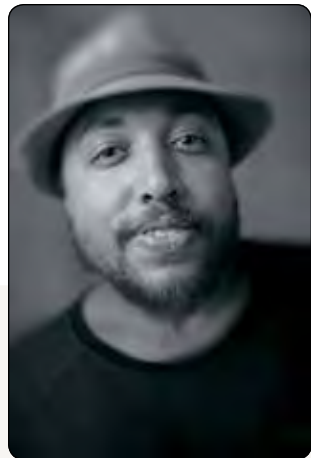
To take you there, to that exact moment in time and place, so you can experience what I experienced. And provoke you to ask questions about what you see in the photograph.

### Three words that best describe you:

Down-to-earth.

### Three words that best describe your art:

Peaceful, serene, tranquil.



## keith wilson

Painting  
**W** facebook.com/kreativeworx  
**E** kreativeworxbykeith@gmail.com

### Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?

My favorite style is abstraction; it's loose and free flowing.

### What are you working on now?

I am currently working on a large mural by Glen Oak School for the community. I like working with the community.

### Who or what inspire you?

My biggest inspiration is Banksy and my family.

### How did you get started in art?

I became an artist by watching my uncle as a child.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

As an artist I find inspiration from everything around me ... from my inner feelings to what is happening in the world.

### What's your artistic goal?

My artistic goal is to someday have my art in a major gallery and rely on art sales for a living.

### Describe the space where you create your art.

My studio is rather large and clean, where I can get work done.

### On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?

I usually work on a painting over a period of time, 2-3 days usually.

### What is your proudest moment/achievement?

There are a few, but one of my proudest moments is to be a part of this book.



## christian arrecis

Photography  
**W** christianarrecis.smugmug.com  
**E** c\_arrecis@hotmail.com

### Describe your artistic process.

Materials and processes are usually informed by investigation and accident (and vice versa).

### What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?

I am working on photograms, basically a camera-less photo process. The twist is I am using expired black and white photo paper, and there are some interesting things that happen. The ideas that I want to explore, in terms of subject, are similar with a previous body of work, "Phaenomena Naturalis." The work looks decidedly different but asks similar questions.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

Just about everywhere.

We live in an incredible time. This refers to technology as well as the ability to stand on the shoulders of everyone before our time to be able to see differently, to see further.

### What do you want your art to do?

To ask questions of the viewer and of the world around them. It's all about dialog.



## nancy dee davis

Photography  
**E** Photochick1@gmail.com

### What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?

My biggest hurdle was learning to use my camera with balance after a life-altering trauma to my right arm. I hold my camera European style because it's less pressure to my arm. I shattered my arm in a fall on the ice. My "bionic arm" has four plates, two screws, and 13 pins.

### Why did you become an artist?

The excitement of creating an image to share.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

I find inspiration in color and objects.

### Describe your artistic process.

Photography, seeing the light.

### What is your favorite subject?

Water and reflections.

### What's your favorite piece?

I created an abstract series with brilliant colors.

### How did you get started in art?

I got my first camera for Christmas when I was 10 years old.

### Three words that best describe you:

Fun, creative, talented.

### If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be? What would you ask them?

I'd enjoy dinner with Dorothy Lange. I'd ask her how she prepared herself to photograph the immigrant farmers and farm families in the dustbowl.



## p.k. bhosale

Painting  
**W** artwanted.com/pkbhosale.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

People – their lifestyles, their habits. I love to observe their movements. That's why I have the best time at the airports waiting for delayed flights.

### How did you get started in art?

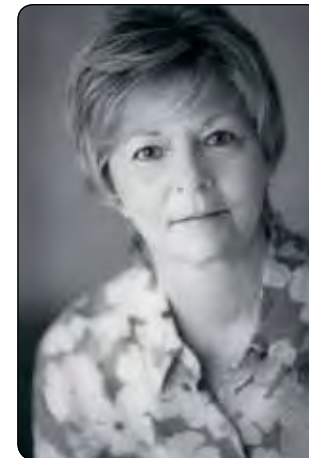
My mother was very artistic. She used to make amazing things out of disposed materials, such as cloth and paper. She had a natural talent of creativity, which she passed on to me.

### Why did you become an artist?

It is the joy of creation. When I discovered I really can draw and found there are admirers of my art, including my parents, I decided to be an artist. But we know you can't make a living from art, so I became an architect. Architecture is considered to be the mother of all arts.

### What is your favorite subject?

Real people. I do like to play with faces, figures and forms to make complex abstract compositions using primary colors. I also enjoy drawing cartoons.



## kathy roth

Painting | Photography  
**E** kmrdesign@aol.com

### What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?

My first piece of art was done with a leftover set of paint-by-number paints because that was all I had at the time. It is the only painting I refuse to sell. It still hangs on my wall, not because it is a great work of art, but because it reminds me of where I began.

### What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?

I am combining my painting and photography as collage. It has a link to my past abstract art.

### Three words that best describe your art:

Influenced by nature.

### Three words that best describe you:

Thankful; always experimenting.

### What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

Be yourself. Develop your own artistic style.

### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." *Pablo Picasso*







## april i. sepich

Mixed Media  
**E** april1344@mchsi.com

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?**  
Reclaiming the old, the historic, the past – re-interpreting what has come before and resurrecting the cast-off. Things are finite. Art is not.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** “All that is gold does not glitter; not all those who wander are lost...”  
*J.R.R. Tolkien*

**Describe the space where you create your art.** Yikes!!...my garage. It could no longer house a car if it had to. It's stuffed full of old rusty tin (my canvas of choice), found objects (someone's junk), broken things, spray paint, old interesting bits of farm machinery, old wood, and other pieces of choice ephemera. In other words, it has anything I've dragged home thinking it will be a cool addition to one of my collages. It's my heaven on earth.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** In almost anything, but usually in something that someone else no longer wants.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I love it. The Midwest is a great place to live and create art. I've found most people in this area very open to learning about art and are willing to change their perception about what makes art, art. All it takes is a little education.



## connie andrews

Painting  
**W** connieandrews.com  
**E** iamzartist@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I try to pause every day to take in the beauty during the “golden hour.”

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I am currently working on a series of paintings depicting hands doing what they know how to do – create, nurture, and protect. My main subject interest has always been people, so this series links naturally to my past work. It is just more focused.

**If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be? What would you ask them?**  
Maybe Norman Rockwell or Michelangelo. I believe I would ask them if there is one piece of art that they regret not having the chance to create and what it would be. I wonder if maybe their regrets have nothing to do with creating art.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** My home studio is filled with natural light and a gorgeous view of fields and open sky. In the evening, I am blessed with an unobstructed view of the sunset.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Fuji apples are the best.



## susan haley

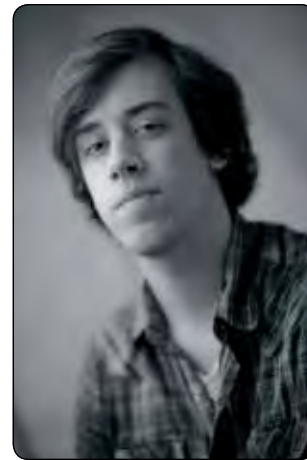
Glass  
**W** ciaopeoria.com  
**E** classyglass13@yahoo.com

**What do you want your art to do?**  
I simply want people who have a piece of my art not only to be pleased with the picture itself but also to enjoy the richness, the texture, and the colors of the glass.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Don't be afraid of putting your work out for the public to view. I am my own worst critic. I was surprised that others appreciated my work and were actually willing to pay for my pieces. That has really boosted my self-confidence. Constructive criticism is very helpful and compliments are always a “feel-good.”

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?**  
My first piece of art was a fleur-de-lis. It was about 8"x10". I was very afraid of cutting the glass and more terrified of breaking it. Glass has no forgiveness. If you break it you have to start all over. That can get very expensive, as I quickly found out. The pattern had some very thin areas. It was easy to crack those pieces, and I did several times. Through it all, though, I learned a lot about stained glass. Even though I had to cut the glass several times, I rather liked the challenge and felt elated when I was finally able to accomplish the piece.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** If I don't keep my creative juices flowing, I get bored and will find myself getting down in the dumps.



## troy rexilus

Mixed Media  
**E** Trexilius@mail.bradley.edu

**What's your artistic goal?** To show the beauty of architecture and the process behind human-made structures.

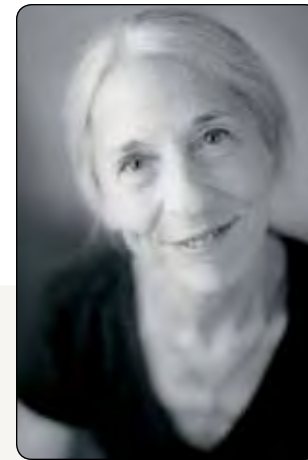
**Does your art have a message? What is it?** The sources of my images come from places that I find beautiful and inspiring. Sometimes, these areas are overlooked. My art showcases the beauty of architecture by exploring the planning, magnitude, engineering, and creation of structures.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** Recently I have been working on cardboard. It is the perfect middle tone and its fluting can be cut and manipulated to create actual depth, along with texture.

**Who and what inspire you?** Artists that influence me are Charles Demuth, Gregory Euclide, and Alberto Giacometti.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working – because, when I get into a sort of art zone, new ideas start to flow that could never have been imagined before. You can plan your piece down to the last detail, but working yields new and fresh concepts.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Photographic journeys in which I wander random parts of a city to collect imagery.



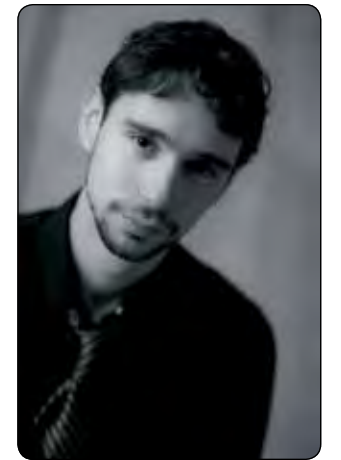
## janet newton

Drawing  
**E** janet.newton@sbcglobal.net

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?**  
I view the world as a series of snapshots, isolated observations of an object at a particular point in time. What fascinates me most is not the isolated entity, but the space between things – the relationships, the connections. In every way, individual things live life attached and bonded to one another. The space between objects is not empty at all, but charged with the energy of the individual pieces interacting with one another.

**What is your most treasured lesson?**  
From one humbling moment, I learned just how subjective art really is. There is no right or wrong answer, just create your art and hope it finds its appropriate audience.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I go outside and shoot photographs, then analyze and arrange the pieces into meaningful relationships.



## d.c. little

Photography  
**W** etherealdc.deviantart.com/  
**E** daniel.little@loop.colum.edu

**How did you get started in art?** I've been drawing since I could hold a pencil. My passion for photography came from my father, who had a darkroom in our basement when I was growing up. I was fascinated by the alchemy, by the mechanical eye of the lens, and by the fact that you are literally painting with light.

**What's your artistic goal?** Everyone is an island unto themselves; my goal as an artist is to bridge that gap, reach out and show – not tell – exactly how I see the world and hopefully make a real connection with another human being, if only fleetingly.

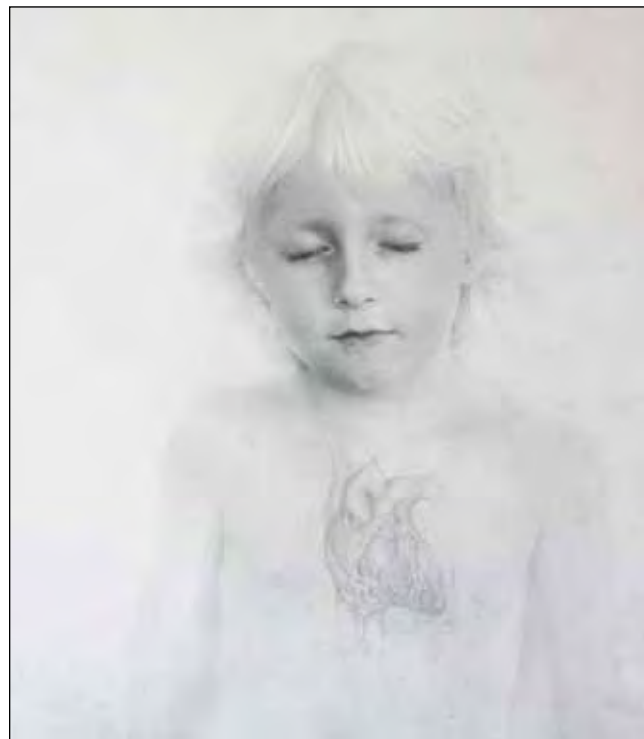
**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Putting an image that exists only in my own mind into a form that can be seen and experienced by other people. I am presenting a slice of myself, originally invisible to anybody else, to an audience.

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** For me, it's usually the opposite – I synthesize my past experiences into a vision that comes out in my art. My art is an exorcism in which I try to make constructive use of everything I've gone through.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** The desperate melancholy that seems to pervade my generation – aimless; searching for meaning, hope, and love in a cynical world.







PRESSURE

Mixed Media  
27" x 24"

There's a little punk rock in artist Katie Beasley. There are times when her husband, who works in management at Caterpillar Inc., comes home, and she has blue hair. There was that time it was purple. Once it was a mix of blue and magenta that looked different in different light.

"My husband never says anything. He knew what he was getting into when we got together. We were both living in downtown Chicago and met playing flag football with Chicago Social. My hair was dyed and streaked very punk rock. It was brown with streaks of white, and he is very business even on the football field," said Beasley, 36.

She grew up in DeKalb, attended public schools there, and took a few art classes at Northern Illinois University. Her parents couldn't afford many classes, but the experience got her going. She had some art in high school and did art projects with 4-H. But at Western Illinois University what started out as a major in nursing was derailed by an art elective the first year. She graduated with a BFA, majoring in drawing with a minor in painting.



katie beasley

Painting  
W katiebeasley.com  
E ktbeasley7@mac.com

Her parents were not thrilled. Nursing seemed more secure. Beasley couldn't afford graduate school and panicked about her job prospects. She enrolled in every computer graphics boot camp in downtown Chicago that she could find, ultimately landing a job at an ad agency in Des Plaines.

After she married, she and her husband moved to Switzerland and Italy with his job at Caterpillar and were there for three years before moving to Peoria. They have three children, 7, 5, and 2. Beasley's studio is in the lower level of their Washington home, and she's working on putting together a portfolio to support her application for an MFA program.

"If I still had my studio in the Murray Building (in Peoria) it would be harder. My studio in the basement is perfect for me. I can work for 10 minutes and run to take care of my children, put out a few fires, and get back to painting," she said.



CURL

Ceramic  
96" x 72" x 12"



jacob grant

Ceramics  
W thepottershouse18.com  
E jacob@thepottershouse18.com



on the side. That's when another epiphany of sorts hit him. He perceived a fundamental distinction between academic art instruction and children's art classes. The formative power, he concluded, is in children's art classes. That's where the future art culture of a nation is born, and Grant wanted his hand in that.

He left a tenure track at ICC and formed Wheel Art Pottery Studio with a partner. Housed in 3,000 square feet in an old wood mill in the Warehouse District of Peoria, the studio includes two gas kilns, electric kilns, pottery wheels, classroom space, and co-op space for other artists. Art camps operate through the summer for children 6 to 17 years old. There is a full schedule of after-school art classes during the fall and winter. Grant gets to hone his theories with his own three young children.

"Our culture is so much into industrial mass production. Kids play video games, and art is cut from the school curriculum. We need to work with younger kids before their creativity and ideas are taken away. We need to work with them at younger ages so, as adults, they understand and value art. Appreciation for the arts comes from education," he said. "When people buy something from an artist, they feel the energy in that object and make a connection with the artist, form a relationship, have a conversation."

Jacob Grant grew up in rural Illinois in an area referred to as "land of the Amish" near Arcola and Arthur. As the fourth of nine children, Grant learned an ethic of usefulness and purpose. Frivolous luxuries were not in his family's budget, so when he learned something could be useful and aesthetic, practical and creative, it was an epiphany.

That realization came after pursuing art for decades. It came years after wonderful junior high school art classes and not-so-wonderful instruction in high school. It came long after art classes at Parkland Community College and after earning an associate's degree in art from Lake Land Community College. It arrived during his first semester at Eastern Illinois University when he got his hands on clay.

"It was all over after that," said Grant, 34. "I was drawn by the fact it is a functional medium. Everything can have a purpose."

After earning his BA from Eastern, Grant worked for group homes in the Mattoon area caring for people with disabilities, all the while producing pottery from a studio set up in his garage. He interviewed at Bradley University and enrolled in the MFA program. After earning that degree, he taught at the Peoria Art Guild, Illinois Central College, Robert Morris College, and Bradley, once again continuing his studio work





### mikki grant

Painting  
**E** mik.grant@hotmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find inspiration in interesting shapes and colors...the lines of someone's face, or the color and patina of a weathered object.

**What is your favorite subject?**  
I love the human face as a subject.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** I would call my style realistic with a twist. I like to use unconventional colors sometimes or may exaggerate certain features of my subject.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Since my favorite subject is people, I use photographs as well as live models. I created a couple of abstract pieces lately that just evolved using colors and shapes I find intriguing.

**Three words that best describe you:**  
Creative, fun-loving, witty.

**Three words that best describe your art:**  
Eclectic, colorful, diverse.



### bethany dornberger



Wearable Art  
**W** ciaopeoria.com  
**E** hairbybethany@yahoo.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find my inspiration in nature, music, movies, different eras, and just by day dreaming.

**Why did you become an artist?** I never thought about being anything different.

**What do you want your art to do?**  
Make people feel beautiful and able to wear the story behind the piece.

**What's your artistic goal?**  
To work with numerous media.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?**  
Getting to use my imagination to create a story in every piece I make.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?**  
A four-foot, three-dimensional flower. I remember it because I was told I couldn't make it.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Don't ever say you can't!"

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Don't give up.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** My first art show.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** Anywhere from an hour to five hours.



### sharon chamberlain

Painting  
**E** schamb@mtco.com

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?**  
It has been pointed out to me that I like things lined up, in a row: picket fences, a stand of trees, five pears in a row, a line of chairs. I think it is making order from chaos. My art has always been an answer to the chaos of life.

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** It is more like how have different events influenced my art? My art – as my very life – has been about overcoming obstacles and solving problems creatively. Art saved my young family and me in the 80s. In the 90s art got me through an illness and disability and led me from graphic design into fine art. It is always in times of struggle that I turn to my art.

**Why did you become an artist?** I became an artist because I hated math! The full story was published in *The Second Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*.

**Three words that best describe you:**  
Only one word is needed to describe me: tenacious. It sounds better than stubborn!



### joy johannes-miller

Mixed Media | Painting  
**W** peoriacac.org/Directory/  
**E** jmil2705@hotmail.com

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** There is usually a hidden meaning to each piece that becomes apparent to me after I finish. It has something to do with my life at the time I created it – due to an event or maybe an emotion.

**What do you want your art to do?**  
I would like my art to make someone stop and study it, and maybe think it's interesting – whether they enjoy the content, the color, or whatever catches their eye.

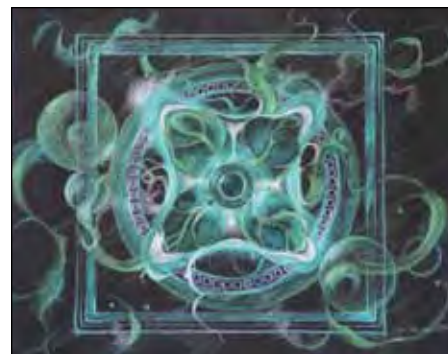
**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Creating puts me in a dream-like state of mind and, when I go there, I don't want to leave.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Do lots of work and don't expect every piece to be wonderful.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I am presently working on an acrylic abstract using some textures and strips of fabric. I have also been experimenting with monoprints and collographs. My past work was more realistic.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find most of my inspiration in nature.

**What's your artistic goal?**  
My artistic goal is to please myself. I often have difficulty with that.



### jennifer costa

Sculpture | Wood  
**W** jennifercostastudio.com  
**E** jennifercostastudio@yahoo.com

**Why did you become an artist?** I have to make things – I love the ability to create something unique from a pile of supplies.

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** I tend to notice things that most people wouldn't. I notice when a portion of a new building going up isn't quite square. I notice the variation of yellow in a flower on a bush. I notice the difference in the texture of trees in the winter vs. the summer.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** My favorite styles are Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I read articles and look at other people's work that is similar to mine. I love learning new techniques and am always inspired to challenge my skill.

**What is your most treasured lesson?**  
My grandfather was going through my dad's chisels one day and complained that they weren't sharp. You can't do anything with dull chisels – they need to be taken care of. He sharpened them right then and there. It was great seeing him make himself at home in my dad's workshop.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** I tend to make functional art, not only furniture, but functional sculpture as well. I like having work that is not only nice to look at and appreciate but also that serves a purpose other than beauty.



### roger bean

Painting | Photography  
**W** rogerbean.squarespace.com  
**E** rogerbean13@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I try to observe the world around me for compositional elements, i.e. line, shape, texture, color. When I see something that has visual interest for me, I document it with a camera.

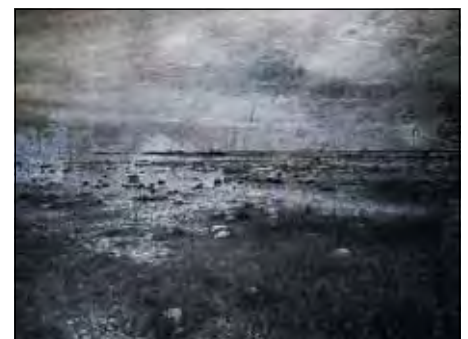
**What's your artistic goal?** My artistic goal is to make images that please me visually.

**Describe your artistic process.**  
I spend a lot of time gathering images before I start to process the images for a particular series or theme.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** After you have developed your technical skills, make work that pleases you first and foremost.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you, the less you know." *Diane Arbus*

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** It was the first time I sold a fine art photograph. I had sold hundreds of commercial images for publication, but I got much more satisfaction from selling that one image, which was produced only to please me.







## ioni wenzel

Photography  
**W** yellowlilyphotography.com  
**E** yellowlilyphoto@sbcglobal.net

### How did you get started in art?

I took my first photo when I was 12 years old, and I never looked back.

### What do you want your art to do?

I want people to have a visceral reaction to my work. I want it to stop them in their tracks and make them do a double-take when they see it. I want them to smile.

### What's your artistic goal?

To be a household name!

### Three words that best describe your art:

Colorful, charming, feminine.

### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"...the camera need not be a cold mechanical device. Like the pen, it is as good as the man who uses it. It can be the extension of mind and heart..."  
*John Steinbeck.*

### What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

You will never know everything. Be a lifelong learner.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

I find inspiration everywhere – even the most mundane things can be beautiful.

### Do you have a predominant theme?

#### If you do, what is the reason for it?

No predominant theme. But color always gets my attention – I don't shoot much black and white.



## shelley koenigs

Painting | Mixed media  
**E** shelleykoenigs@gmail.com

### As an artist where do you find inspiration?

Consistently I am inspired by nature, but on any given day I can be inspired by something new, such as textiles, rusted relics, or architecture and its patinas.

### Describe your artistic process.

To create my works, I experiment with a variety of materials to discover their effects. I draw, paint, scratch and gouge the surface – building layers to create depth and mystery. Assemblage of several boards creates a collage effect with many of my paintings.

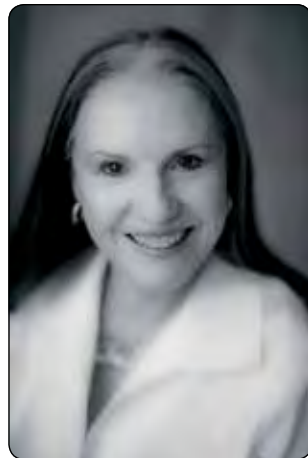
### Do you have a favorite style?

Soft contemporary with a rustic edge.

**How did you start in art?** This "artist thing" actually is very new for me. When the recession eliminated my fun, exciting, creative career, I needed to reinvent myself outside my "day job" and get back the joy of creating. I took a painting workshop and was hooked.

### Your predominant theme?

Often my piece starts out as a somewhat preconceived idea of a landscape and then somewhere along the line the art becomes vulnerable to interpretation.



## george ann danehower

Mixed Media | Painting | Printmaking  
**E** georgeannbyrd@comcast.net

### How did you get started in art?

I was standing in the Prado where I had enrolled in an art history class – that was my epiphany.

### Why did you become an artist?

I just knew that I had to do it.

### Describe your artistic process.

I usually work in a series interpreting an object or idea until I feel I've explored all ways to look at it.

### What do you want your art to do?

I enjoy creating artworks that encourage people to think; that is, to look beneath the surface.

### What's your favorite piece?

A painting using a glaze technique creating an abstract work that began with a close-up view of flowers.

### My life as an artist won't be complete until I...

complete a series of painted wooden triptychs based on Ruth, the woman who had the greatest impact on my life.

### What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?

I enjoy the process of working on the art.

### What are you working on now?

#### How does it link to what you have done in the past?

I'm painting a portrait series of "Rescued Dogs." This is a follow-up to my portrait series of "Homeless Dogs."



## stephen r. white

Sculpture  
**E** loridaniels157@hotmail.com

### Three words that best describe you:

Folk/outsider artist.

### What inspires you?

My welding instructor at ICC – Eric Ockerhausen. Recycling metal fragments into art. Saving parts and pieces from filling our landfills and damaging Mother Earth.

### What is your favorite subject?

Human and animal faces reinterpreted into rusty outdoor sculpture.

### What are you working on now?

As always, buying and selling antiques and, in the meantime, looking for great discarded pieces of metal on which to use my new torch. Spending time in junk yards looking for the perfect pieces to buy and use with the best old paint or patina.

### What is your favorite quote?

"Carpe Diem." If I have wasted the morning, I have wasted the day.

### What is your most treasured lesson?

It's never too late to start a new career – or add to one you already have.

### Biggest hurdle you overcame?

Taking my first welding class at ICC at age 59.



## tom romanowski

Photography  
**E** troman47@ix.netcom.com

### What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?

Working on an image is the best part because this is where discoveries take place. Images are never finished. I revisit them to correct formerly unseen mistakes, update them for new techniques I've learned, or rework them completely to change the purpose of the image.

### Who and what inspire you?

Jerry Uelsmann creates photo collages that are filled with mystery, symbolism, and evocative psychological fantasies. Long before Photoshop, he was creating astonishing images using only refined film-processing techniques that he perfected.

### How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?

I spend time looking at the work of other artists and reading what they and others say about their art. But often the idea for a digitally manipulated image comes from my imagination.

### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

My motto: I want my images to be better than they look. My favorite quote: "To the critic, art is a noun. To the artist, art is a verb."

### What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

I enjoy finding unexpected images when I photograph and the process of creating something unique and surprising during post-capture processing.



## jodi pshebelski

Drawing  
**E** pshebelski83@msn.com

### What is your most treasured lesson?

What looks like a beagle may be a dinosaur. An artist has intent and meaning in the work, but once the work is created it must be released and opened for interpretation.

### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."  
*John Lennon*

### What's some of the best advice you've been given?

You only give to yourself. If you understand that good will come back to you, you can afford to be generous.

### Describe the space where you create your art.

It's a riotous, organized mess that grabs me and refuses to let go for entire days.

### What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?

Collages are unlike anything I've done before, but there is a sense of nostalgia in this work and past work.

### Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?

Kindergarten art class. Those little artists are fearless! I want that kind of bold, unabashed enthusiasm in my work.

### What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?

That's tough... there's excitement in starting, catharsis in working, and satisfaction in finishing.







**ann conver**

Photography  
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THE DARK HEDGES, IRELAND

Photography  
 20" x 30"

**A**nn Conver's father was a city editor at the Peoria *Journal Star*, and he often worked on Sundays. Conver's mother would pack up Sunday dinner and the family would eat together at the paper. Other journalists often joined them, and the adults would linger with coffee after the meal while Conver and her siblings set out exploring. The most amazing place in the entire building for Conver was not the press or the newsroom with constantly clicking linotype machines, but the photo department darkroom with its dim amber light.

Photography was always part of Conver's life. Her father had a twin-lens reflex camera, her brother had a Brownie, and she and her sister had Polaroids. *Life Magazine* with its covers and photo spreads was always in their home. It was understood – photography was powerful.

Conver attended parochial schools and graduated from Bergan High School. She went to the University of St. Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas, graduating with a degree in physical education and a minor in art. She taught in Kansas for three years before moving back to Peoria and earning her MFA at Bradley University. She then taught for 12 years at St. Mary's Academy in Nauvoo, Illinois, leaving to attend the one-year Maine Photographic Workshop in Rockport, Maine.

"That was a year-long immersion in photography from 8 a.m. to midnight. We had instructors who were some of the best photographers in the United States. It was an opportunity to spend one year perfecting your craft," said Conver, 61.

She was an adjunct professor at Bradley and now teaches continuing education classes at Illinois Central College and an after-school art program at First United Methodist Church. She and photographer David Vernon organize photographic workshop trips taking groups of photographers to locations throughout the country and around the world. They are planning an upcoming trip to Scotland, Wales, and the Lake District of England.

"Our Ireland trip sold out before we even held the meeting to tell people about it. We announce a trip and within weeks it's full," she said.

"I'm a visual person. I love making fine art photography, standing before a beautiful place and being able to show that place from my perspective. Photography is learning to see."



BRONZEVILLE TO PARIS

Cast Bronze Relief  
 36" x 11" x 6"

**P**reston Jackson tells his history through art. Art is his voice. He shows the discrimination and marginalization he experienced growing up in Decatur and attending Milliken University. He reaches back to the stories of his ancestors. Now another theme is emerging from his work: environmental degradation and climate change.

"I'm focusing more on environmental issues than on racism. Racism is like a heavy coat that I've taken off and thrown on a chair. I'm not over with it, but I'm working on something else right now. Environmental issues affect all of us," Jackson said. "I could have done landscapes, but my voice was somewhere else. I use my voice to tell the truth."

Born in the 1940s, Jackson was one of 10 children. He attended public schools in Decatur, and all the Jackson siblings had music and art lessons. At an early age, his art was recognized and praised. His parents had migrated north from Tennessee and his father got a job working in the Wagner foundry in Decatur. Getting ahead through education, work, and effort was foundational to the family. After graduating from high school, Jackson worked at Caterpillar Inc. and attended Milliken University part-time. There were few black students at Milliken at the time, and he felt unwelcomed. He later transferred to Southern Illinois University and flourished at a school with a strong black student body. After earning his BFA, he was part of an affirmative action program at University of Illinois where he earned an MFA.



**preston jackson**

Sculpture | Painting | Mixed Media  
**W** prestonjacksonart.com

Jackson taught at Western Illinois University in the 1970s and 1980s, found campus life positive there and could have stayed, but he decided to try to break into the Chicago art world. He taught sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, retired, and still teaches there as an emeritus professor. In 1995, he started The Raven Gallery, home of the Contemporary Art Center in Peoria where he teaches children's art, painting, sculpture, and tai chi.

"My parents made sure we didn't catch the disease of racism. They knew racism hurts people. Being filled with hatred hurts people. Their goal was that we never think of ourselves as better than others," he said. "Racism is a form of mental genocide."





## richard coers

Wood  
**W** ciaopeoria.com  
**E** coers@ameritech.net

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** For texture, I look at what nature does to seed pods. For color, I look at how ceramic artists use glazes. For shape, I study Native American and classic pottery forms.

### Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?

Currently, I am working on three different themes. In one theme, the piece looks as tree-like as possible – with bark, natural edges, and natural color. Second is a semi-natural style – all surfaces are cut and I keep the natural colors. Third is a style in which I add colors and textures. The textures can maintain a natural look, but the colors range from mild to wild. All different styles keep me excited and provide different impacts for the collectors.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** Currently, I am working on adding pyrographic textures to my work. I retain forms from my past work, but create a new feel to the work, both visual and tactile.

**What do you want your art to do?** I want to provide an object that can be enjoyed by the collector – something that can be felt since wood has such an earthy warmth, but also a visual treat as it sits in the home.



## nancy huschen

Painting  
**E** nancy\_huschen@hotmail.com

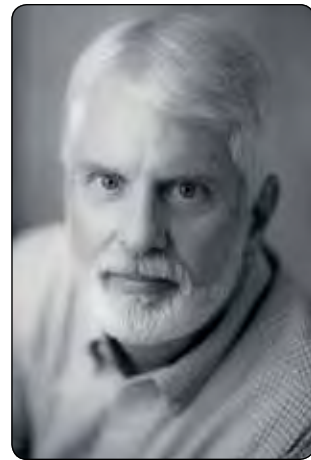
**What do you want your art to do?** Yes, this may be shallow, but I want my paintings to make their owners crazy about the room the painting is in.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Doing the murals for a Bloomington hospital pediatric floor.

**My life as an artist won't be complete until I... die.** You are always an artist. It's the way you see – the way you think. There's no disconnect.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** Appreciating all art has taught me to be non-judgmental. Art critiquing has taught me to welcome constructive criticism. And art has made me a problem solver. These are life lessons.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Oooo, the working part, when you're so lost in the painting that you lose track of the world.



## robert drake

Photography  
**E** rddrake1@comcast.net

**What's your artistic goal?** To capture and present an image that will stir an awareness or awaken emotion in the eyes of the viewer.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Taking photographs helps me to look beyond the casual glance and really see the beauty and detail in all that surrounds me.

**What's been your most difficult decision?** Creatively I've always been torn between music and photography. It seems if I'm creating music, I'm neglecting photography and vice versa.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find inspiration in nature and all God has created.

**How did you get started in art?** I have been fascinated with the process of photography since I was in sixth grade when I first started developing and printing my own pictures.

**What's one thing you should throw away and haven't. Why?** Now that I'm fully immersed in digital photography I should probably get rid of my darkroom equipment, but I keep thinking I'll mix up a batch of chemicals and print some black and whites one more time.

**What is your favorite subject?** In addition to nature I would have to say my 10 grandchildren.



## barry miller

Painting  
**W** historicoilpaintings.com  
**E** mllrc300@aol.com

**What is your favorite subject?** America.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** The history of this country and the rugged individualism that has been nurtured by its constitution.

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** Have pride in who you are, tempered with a humble respect for those who came before.

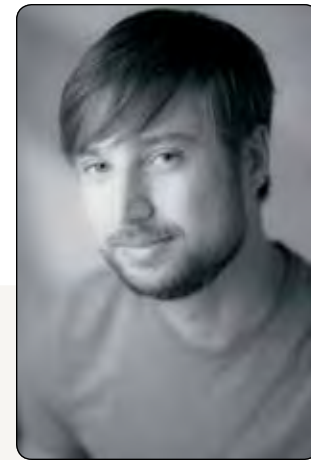
**What do you want your art to do?** Teach the uniqueness of this country.

**Three words that best describe you:** Attention Deficit Disorder.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** Only you can limit what you become.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "We the people..."

**How did you get started in art?** My art teacher started me down this path. Coming from a small town, I had a unique opportunity to have a very good artist as my instructor from first grade until I graduated from high school. He became a great mentor and friend and helped me find the direction of my talent.



## matt buedel

Photography  
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**E** mmbuedel@gmail.com

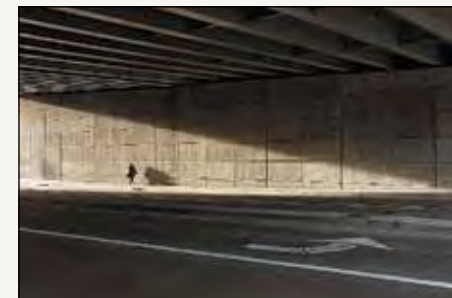
**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** When I go out to photograph, I try to keep close to home in both figurative and literal ways. I look for suggestions of humanity and harmony in places too common to be thought of as sources for either.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** When I'm in the zone, so to speak, I'm surrendered completely to the moment and free of all conceptions of self, aware of nothing except that which is before me and the infinite possibilities of each fleeting instant.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** I was once asked an important question that counts as advice, "Do you want to be right or do you want to be happy?"

**What is your favorite subject?** If my favorite subject is the one I photograph most often, then it's a tie between trash and my family.

**Is there a purpose to your artwork? What is it?** I admire work with coherence and purpose, though I feel my own has none beyond what Garry Winogrand described as the desire to see what something looks like as a photograph.



## rick melby

Glass | Mixed Media | Sculpture  
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**What do you want your art to do?** Make people think, feel, and step outside of their normal perceptual boundaries.

**Describe your artistic process.** Often I will find objects that stimulate connections with other objects or require me to create things to bridge those gaps. With glass, the medium itself can dictate certain forms or techniques. Dealing with the limitations of the media will push me into new areas and serendipitous discoveries.

**Why did you become an artist?** The joy of making things, of bringing delight into others' lives from my creations, is a huge stimulus. If I wanted to make money, I would have chosen another career. Art chose me, as much as I chose to be an artist.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** I am comfortable hopping around in various ponds. I have often been criticized for not focusing on one specific style. I find that attitude boring. Life is about discovery, and I feel that constricting my creativity is counter-productive.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Keeping my brain and spirit open to life. Continue to wrestle with my chosen media and make things that stir emotions and challenge perceptions.







### **lisa garrison**

Wearable Art  
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**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** Along with my faith, working with fiber has sustained me through my hardest times. There is a therapy and solace in the physicality of the textures in my hands, feeling the rhythm of the loom, and in seeing colors play in the web. Showing my work and the activities in organizations have produced rewarding friendships with other artists and patrons.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** To know that it has touched or inspired someone.

**Why did you become an artist?** I have always enjoyed all of the arts. My degree is in printmaking, but when I learned to weave, spin and dye in 1982, I just had to make it a focus in my life.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Sometimes just seeing the yarn or color inspires a project. Sometimes it is seeing a combination of colors that I want to recreate in fiber.



### **susanne nestory**

Painting  
**E** snestory@gmail.com

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** With any given style, there will be artwork that moves me and artwork that leaves me flat. I am interested in the way an artist personalizes the use of visual language, the decisions that are made about what to include and what to omit. Matisse had great style.

**Do you have a predominant theme?** A predominant theme for me has been to develop a nonobjective language in drawing and painting. Nonobjective expression opens a range of possibilities for creating visual parallels to psychological or emotional experience, a way for the unseen realm to become visible.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find inspiration in still moments when the visual world around me grows more alive and complex.

**Describe your artistic process.** Engaging with the materials at hand as a vehicle to stage a convincing visual argument.

**What is some of the best advice you've been given?** Faith cannot exist without doubt, but it's the fear of the doubt that's a killer!

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** When I'm making art, I exist in my own sense of time and place. I feel fully alive there, for better or worse.



### **nick welsch**

Photography  
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**Why did you become an artist?** Too much schooling required to become an astronaut.

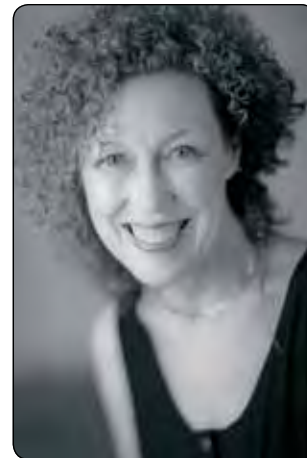
**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** Surrealism, street photography, and Pop Art.

**What do you want your art to do?** I would like it to inspire others and take me around the world.

**Where can people see more of your art?** Hopefully in their homes.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** The boredom of living in the Midwest really causes you to look outside the usual for things to intrigue you.

**Is there a purpose to your artwork? What is it?** To be seen.



### **janet jackson**

Painting  
**E** janetjackson48@gmail.com

**Why did you become an artist?** To capture "feeling."

**What is your favorite subject?** I so enjoy painting people – figuring out what they're all about, their emotions and psyche, and hopefully capturing it in a composition.

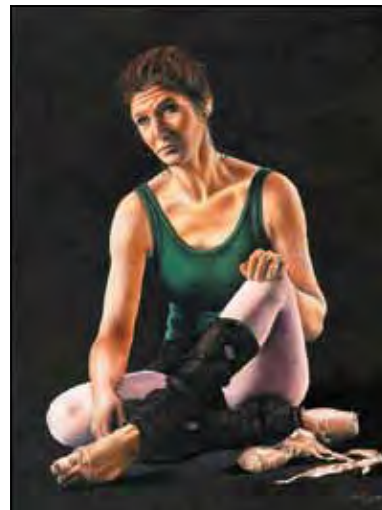
**Who and what inspire you?** The realization that what I have always been is called "artist" has come through friendships with several area artists. These people have helped define that this is me.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I study, get to know my subject, and create a composition that I hope captures their essence and not simply their likeness.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "Never let them steal your mind magic!" *Preston Jackson*

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Don't waste time – just do it!

**How did you get started in art?** I have always been an artist. I'm not sure I realized it at the time, but I can't remember not creating.



### **grace chien**

Ceramics  
**E** gracechien15@hotmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Traveling, museums, and window shopping.

**What's your artistic goal?** Personal freedom and peace.

**What is your favorite subject?** Bottles.

**What's your favorite piece?** "Bamboo Forest."

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** It lets me be myself.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Simple, clean, elegant.

**Three words that best describe you:** Simple, creative, persistent.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** A good firing.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** I enjoy the whole process.



### **judith koren-shanahan**

Mixed Media  
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**E** Judithks37@gmail.com

**How did you get started in art?** I began to draw at age 4½, and that was all I ever wanted to do.

**Describe your artistic process.** I make small sketches, gather together papers and paints, turn on some exciting music (jazz), and begin.

**Do you have a predominant theme?** My themes vary from satire, to humor, to love, to sadness. Wild, colorful abstractions let the viewer interpret the piece.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "He who binds to himself a joy Does the winged life destroy; He who kisses the joy as it flies Lives in eternity's sunrise." *William Blake*

**Three words that best describe you:** Creative, driven, loyal.

**Where can people see more of your art?** My art is on exhibit in my studio, Atelier 421 in the Murray Building, 100 Walnut Street. Other pieces are in private collections throughout Illinois, Wisconsin, Washington, and Ohio.







**alec dejesus**

Painting

**E** the\_mad\_sculptor@yahoo.com

**A**lec DeJesus moved with his family from Chicago to Peoria and then continued to move as the family was evicted from one place after another. He attended four different schools, and his home life was challenging, but good art teachers in District 150 kept encouraging him. It was an art teacher at Richwoods High School who told DeJesus he could make a career in art and helped him get into the Peoria Art Guild Mentor Apprentice Program.

DeJesus, 21, is enrolled at Illinois Central College, works part-time in retail, is in charge of the ICC painting lab, and still manages to work about 20 hours a week in his studio at Prairie Center of the Arts. He's building his portfolio to apply to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago or University of North Carolina in Asheville where his maternal grandfather lives.

"My work is a combination of realism and abstraction. I use my art to get people to see something they may turn away from. My characters are melancholy, but they are sugar coated with bright colors," DeJesus said. "My life experiences are in my work. My art lets me speak. I have not lived a Barbie lifestyle but living close to poverty didn't break me down. My childhood was pretty short lived."

He cites Egon Schiele, Salvador Dali, Jasper Johns, and Herakut as artists who have influenced him.

Working in the painting lab at ICC has given him a taste of teaching, and he enjoys it. He'd like to see more art integrated into the public school curriculum

"Education in America was designed for the industrial period, for business and math," he said. "Every time we cut music and art, life gets a little grayer. We need art to understand our history and our culture."



**CARNIE**

Acrylic on canvas  
48" x 24"



**morgan elser**

Sculpture

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**M**organ Elser grew up in Cazanovia, Illinois, and attended schools in Metamora. She remembers wonderful, encouraging art teachers and projects involving drawing, painting, and printmaking. She taught herself clothing design and was active in 4-H. She opened a design and bridal shop in Peoria but closed it due to health problems. She later worked in a number of shops doing alterations. She and her husband moved to Delavan in 2000 and purchased the first of a number of older homes and buildings that they renovated. They built one new home, lived there a short time, and later moved when her husband concluded "This house doesn't need us. We need one to save."

They lived in a beautiful Foursquare in town for almost five years before selling it and purchasing an historic building in downtown Delavan. They lived in a renovated space on the second floor, and Elser opened an antique shop on the first floor. She did elaborate decorations for the shop windows and developed a seasonal favorite by creating Santas with quilts, laces, and tapestries. A woman commissioned Santas for her five daughters made with fabrics left over from their weddings. That launched Elser into the world of "art dolls," and a contact in the industry suggested Elser try her hand at sculpting. She started sculpting, enrolled in Preston Jackson's classes at the Contemporary Art Center, and began receiving commissions including work for the W.C. Boyce Council of the Boy Scouts of America; the Tazewell County Museum and Educational Center; Friends of Friedrichshafen, the organization that fosters the City of Peoria's sister city relationship with Friedrichshafen, Germany; and the Delavan Historical Society. She closed her antique shop and opened Morgan Elser Gallery, selling her own work and that of other artists. She hosts art and wine events every six weeks highlighting the work of a regional artist.

"I like promoting other artists and helping them be successful," said Elser, 59. "It's been phenomenal. It feels like I've found what I was put on Earth to do. I'm going into other mediums, and I keep learning. My goal is to find more challenges."

**MEDICINE WOMAN**

Mixed with Bronze Overlay  
17" x 10" x 10"







## jerry phillips

Mixed Media  
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**E** jerrybphillips@gmail.com

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** Much of my work has an aquatic feel. The images usually appear as though they exist within a world that undulates with the ebb and flow of water currents. I come from a family of Paluans, from the island country of Palau in the western Pacific ocean. My inherent affinity for water is something I can't escape.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I look through a lot of books and publications, I talk with artist friends, and I frequently look through *thisiscolossal.com* to see works from amazing artists and think about ways in which I can apply my own aesthetic to some of their visual decisions. I also watch a lot of documentaries about the ocean and its ecosystem.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** When everything seems negative and you feel lost in your production of art, remember that even bad art is a step forward to making great art. You have to keep producing work. The worst thing an artist can do is to stop creating.



## kelly roath rowden



Painting  
**W** aggressivamedia.com  
**E** aggressiva@aggressivamedia.com

**Describe your artistic process.** I look for inspiring images, watch inspiring movies, and read inspiring books. Then I think and think and think.

**Do you have a favorite style?** My favorite styles are Art Nouveau and Art Deco probably because my education is rooted in graphic design.

**Why did you become an artist?** I became an artist because it's the only enviable talent I actually possess.

**What's your artistic goal?** My artistic goal is to try out some other mediums and test their limits. I haven't spent nearly enough time sculpting and experimenting.



## nicole maloney

Mixed Media | Painting | Drawing  
**W** facebook.com/NicoleMarieIndieArts  
**E** cocomarie80@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I take inspiration from the people around me. Lately I have pulled some ideas and visuals from my migraines and the strange orbs and auras that come with them.

**What is your favorite subject?** As long ago as I can remember, I have always wanted to draw people. I love the challenge of capturing one of the hardest subjects – the human face.

**Who and what inspire you?** Children are totally inspiring. Their little brains and fingers crank out some of the coolest artwork!

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Come disconnect the dots.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I have been working on a new series of pen and ink abstract drawings. I am having a lot of fun doodling and just letting my mind wander. I have always done this type of drawing, but have been focused more on portraits and realistic drawings recently.



## brent harter

Photography  
**W** flickr.com/photos/brentharterphotography/  
**E** brentharter@gmail.com

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** Single-exposure light painting photography is my favorite. I love it because of the seemingly impossible nature of it.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** To see my artwork inspire others to push their own limits and break through a wall or two.

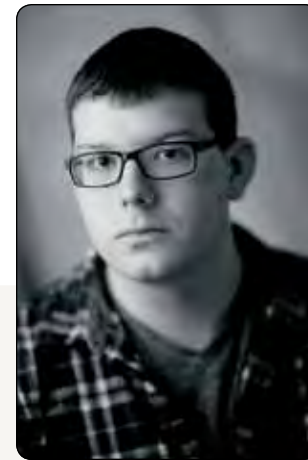
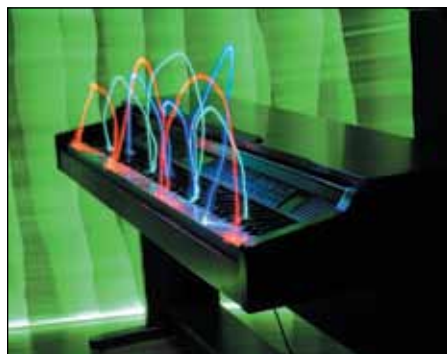
**Describe your artistic process.** Get inspired. Incubate an idea. Experiment. Take a step back and think. Experiment and work more. Pick the best photo. Eat a turkey sandwich. Print.

**What's your artistic goal?** To allow the viewer the opportunity to dig deep into their imagination and experience something unique.

**Why did you become an artist?** Because it is the only way to truly express myself.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** Yes, the current light-painting photography movement on the website Flickr has been very influential.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Raising money for the Illinois CancerCare Foundation since 2009 by donating my photography to their annual silent auctions.



## ryan dowell

Painting | Photography | Sculpture  
**W** ryandowellart.com  
**E** rdowell@mail.bradley.edu

**Why did you become an artist?** It was either go into art or go into politics because I have so much to say about the world. I gave up any aspirations to become a politician and instead I voice my opinions through my art.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Curious, thoughtful, controversial.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Have no fear of perfection – you'll never reach it." *Salvador Dali*

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** To always stay true to yourself and always give your all in every piece you do – whether it be a smaller drawing, a mound of clay, or a large canvas. Always make sure you do your finest.

**Describe your artistic process.** My process is usually to get an idea in the most random of places – usually by a spark of a conversation, or seeing something happening in the world. I constantly carry around my phone where I sketch out my idea and write down a topic to write about, then I begin work on the piece and see where it takes me.



## scott cavanah

Photography  
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**E** scott@scottcavanah.com

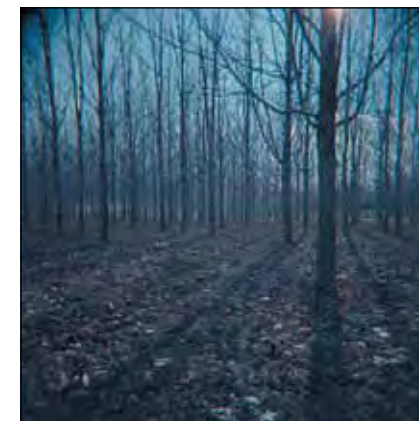
**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** I strive to show the viewer something they have never seen before, even if the subject is something they are intimately familiar with. The particular day – the moment in time that will never happen again – is what my images are about.

**What do you want your art to do?** Provoke an emotional response and avoid apathy. Good or bad, I want a reaction. Love it or hate it.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** Location is everything and nothing. Regardless of locale, it is my job to show my viewers something original.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Inspiration is for amateurs." *Chuck Close*

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I am always working. Everything I shoot is somehow a reflection of work I have done in the past. Without knowing where I've been, I cannot show my viewers something that is new to me (and hopefully them).







**william butler**

Painting  
**W** peoriacac.org/Directory/  
**E** artcentr@mtco.com

**Describe your artistic process.** Beginning with pencil doodles, I allow the subconscious to direct me rather than planning everything out beforehand. These small drawings are enlarged and developed into color studies. The study provides confidence as I approach the final piece on canvas or on shaped wood. As I progress, I make conscious color or design decisions, while remaining true to the initial impulse.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** I like the thrill of a new idea, and it is satisfying to complete something. There is always a point of turmoil in the middle when I am stuck and feel I can't go on, but I have learned to ignore my feelings and push through it.

**How did you get started in art?** From my earliest remembrance, there was this compulsion to draw. When I was six, I told my dad I wanted to be an artist. No one was surprised.

**Who and what inspire you?** I have always been drawn to comic books and block printing. I like any art form that has mysterious imagery.



**rebecca draland-doyle**

Mixed Media | Painting  
**W** StudioDoyle.com  
**E** Rebecca@StudioDoyle.com

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** All three: starting is the challenge, peace is in the working, and satisfaction in the finishing.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "I want to stay as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center." *Kurt Vonnegut*

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** It's always the same: when the real owner of one of my works arrives and takes the work home.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Remember the source of your creativity and always protect and nurture it.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** It's great! Just as the Midwest soil is the richest and most fertile in the country, so also is the environment for us to develop freely here as artists.



**carmen sánchez-lorente**

Painting  
**E** cslorente@yahoo.com

**Describe your artistic process.** Most of the time, I start to paint or draw from an idea, a feeling, or even a color. I work from the back of my painting to the front, so I cover the whole canvas first. When I start to build it up, it seems to me that the painting covers ground by itself. Then there is a dialogue, or sometimes a fight, with the painting. Some of the paintings come easily, others take a longer time, and some never come and I have to start over. I love the smell of the canvas, the wood, the turpentine, the oil, the linen smoothness.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** There are many different styles that I love, but at this moment I would choose prehistory. I love its simplicity and because, in my opinion, we should not need to add an explanation to make a work of art. The painting should speak for itself.

**What do you want your art to do?** I want my paintings to no longer need words of explanation. I want them to "talk" by themselves in silence.



**nichole beaver**

Mixed Media  
**W** victoriousheartinternational.com  
**E** nbeaver100@gmail.com

**Why did you become an artist?** Out of the need to reach deep into the heart of people because I wanted to fill their hurt with pleasantness.

**Who and what inspire you?** I am inspired by the broken hearted and the hurt.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** The lush sands and waters of famous beaches can be imagined, but the view of flat lands cannot.

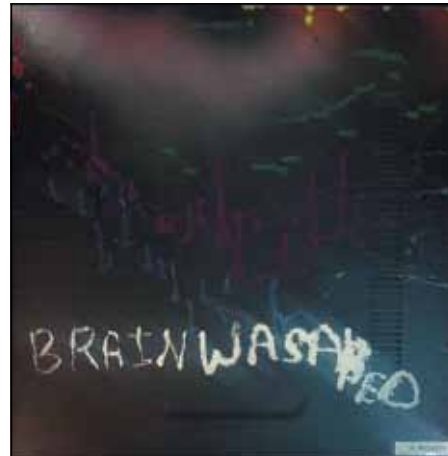
**Three words that best describe you:** Determined, courageous, whimsical.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Modern, cool, unpredictable.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** My goal as an artist is to totally change the heart(s) of those viewing my work.

**How did you get started in art?** I always filled in the lines as a youngster and went to Lakeview for lessons.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** I enjoy the entire process and never stop long enough to determine where I'm at.



**sj boyd**

Mixed Media | Painting | Drawing  
**W** livbigstudios.com  
**E** Joebagadoenus@comcast.net

**What do you want your art to do?** Make people smile at a soul level.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I take photos of things that interest me for reference and apply them to my colored pencil and mixed-media pieces. My paintings are created from dream images that won't leave me alone.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "He who jumps into the void owes no explanation to those who stand and watch." *Jean Luc Godard*

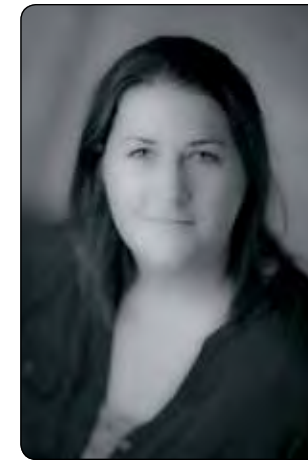
**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** My ego's fear.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "Do what you do. Paint what you paint. No one else can do what you do as well as you. Don't compare yourself and your art to others – just do it."

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Start. Don't wait. No matter your age. Start now. And live it.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** All of the above.

**What's your favorite piece?** The one I just finished, quickly replaced by the one I just started.



**kate smith**

Mixed Media  
**E** proxy188@yahoo.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** My inspiration sprouts from a mixture of dreams and reality. Dreams form from subconscious memories twisted into a new vision of "truth," and I love the results.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I get to escape life and reality while I am creating artwork. I enjoy the way in which I am able to remove myself from my surroundings, with no awareness of anything but the art.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** The majority of my ideas come in that moment before I fall asleep; I feel the clearest on the edge between wakefulness and sleep.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night." *Edgar Allan Poe*

**My life as an artist won't be complete ... Ever.**

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "Let your ideas live through your art."

**Who and what inspire you?** Human nature and Mother Nature both inspire me. My goal is to create a snapshot of how I see the world.







**don forrest**

Photography  
E donforrest@f-w.com



HALL  
Photography  
16" x 22"

Music had been his lifelong creative outlet until technology lured Don Forrest to photography. Not the photography of friends and family, but the photography of shuttered prisons, solitary trees on a desolate terrain, abandoned industrial buildings, and the night life of cities.

Forrest is a business development manager at Farnsworth Group, an engineering and architecture firm. When he travels on business, days are packed with work. At night, he may leave his hotel room at 10 p.m. and start walking the city with his camera, surprised to look down at his wrist watch and find it's 4 a.m.

Growing up in Yates City west of Peoria, Forrest attended local public schools and can't remember any art lessons except one in high school making "spoon people" out of plastic spoons. College was at Illinois State University where he graduated with a BS in geography, a love for cartography, and a dream of doing pen and ink mapping for National Geographic. That ended when computers gave everyone access to maps, and there was no demand for aesthetic, pen and ink mapping.

He worked on a master's degree in history but dropped out just short of the thesis because by then he had a young, growing family. He did GIS (geographic information system) work for Tri-County Regional Planning Commission before starting at Farnsworth.

"I'm still a romantic about maps. Google mapping is great, but it's not aesthetic communication," said Forrest, 50. "Being at Farnsworth surrounded by creative people has influenced my eye. I certainly recognize aesthetic awareness is almost an emotional education."

**david benko**

Photography  
E burningcloud@comcast.net



It wasn't until he was middle aged that David Benko took up photography, and it became one of his primary modes of storytelling. These days, Benko, 53, says he is looking for deeper meaning in his visual images.

Born and raised in Peoria, Benko attended public schools and began writing song lyrics when he was 15. He was interested in film and directing, attended Illinois Central College, and earned his associates degree in 1998 with a focus on video, photography, and visual arts.

"My interest in photography started in 1996 when I bought a Canon AE1 and a couple of lenses from a guy. The first time I got my hands on that camera, it felt like I could freeze time," Benko said. "Like music, photography is a different language. I use photography like story boards."

He worked for 20 years as a journeyman meat cutter and is now in maintenance at Richwoods High School.

"As human beings, people have a deep need to express themselves," he said. "Taking music and art out of the school curriculum would leave no color in the world. Students need to be able to select their means of communication. Everyone can't be in the same disciplines."

ILLUMINATED

Photography  
14 1/2" x 9"







### susie ryan

Ceramics  
**E** susie@mtco.com

#### How did you get started in art?

I was told that I was born with a pencil in my hand. I have always created art. I didn't realize I could sell my art until I was in college. The dean of the college was my first customer.

#### Do you have a favorite style?

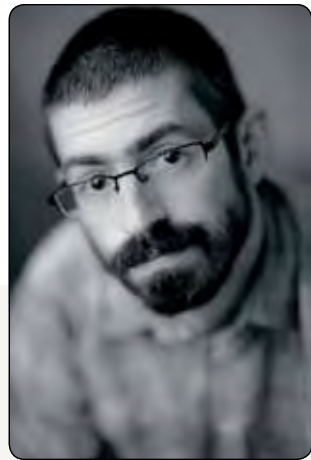
**What is it and why?** Carved and altered ceramics are my favorite. I can't seem to leave a round wheel-thrown piece alone; it seems unfinished.

**What do you want your art to do?** I want my art to bring enjoyment to my audience – I want people to feel good when they use or look at a piece of my art. Some of my sculptural pieces may cause them to think a bit but, in the end, I want them to feel good.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Don't be afraid. Work hard and do what you love. Get your art into places where people can see it.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I am inspired by the beauty of nature – leaves, rocks, flowers, trees, wind.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Ideas come from everywhere. My head is full of them. There are more ideas than time.



### dave kube

Photography  
**W** davekube.net  
**E** davekube83@gmail.com

#### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

I draw a lot of my inspiration from the Midwest because it offers a dissonance in which my gay identity – intrinsically connected to a community with its own history, struggle, and communication – is often isolated from a more tangible sense of connection. This conflicting intersection creates two dichotomies that often provide the basis for my visual research.

#### Do you have a predominant theme?

**If you do, what is the reason for it?** I tend to make work that embeds queer undertones into seemingly neutral imagery to create an allegory to the invisible presence of sexual minorities within a perfunctory heterosexual norm.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "...to make invisible possibilities and desires visible; to make tacit things explicit; to smuggle queer representation in where it must be smuggled and, with the relative freedom of adulthood, to challenge queer-eradicating impulses frontally where they are to be so challenged." *Eve Sedgwick*



### anita tuccillo

Painting  
**E** anita.tuccillo@icc.edu

#### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

From the world that my eye sees – snippets of lyrical and sometimes mysterious motifs.

#### Why did you become an artist?

Marks on a canvas somehow seemed more "real" than life. This discovery created my drive to make more art.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Each group of work, when focused, offers new challenges. It is a cycle of life in paint.

**What's your artistic goal?** To make a composition that exudes formal excitement for my viewer while teaching about this magical world of construction with paint.

#### Describe your artistic process.

I shoot photos. Then I work from a series of memories to incorporate photos, memories, and memories of memories until my composition is complete.

#### What is your favorite subject?

Motifs that appear in nature just as the light captures them.



### michael vujovich

Photography  
**W** vujiphotos.com  
**E** vujiphotos@gmail.com

#### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

The human element – the honesty and connection of a human presence in an image as well as the stories behind the photos that lack a human subject.

#### What's your artistic goal?

To connect, create, and inspire.

#### What is your favorite subject?

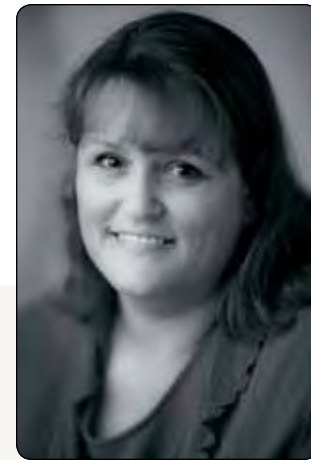
For portraits, it's the candid, honest moment – capturing the "human" side of a person. For fine art, it's the story that hasn't yet been told.

#### Do you have a predominant theme?

With my landscape work, I've been very attracted to both rural and urban scenes where there is a sense of abandonment or isolation. I find myself drawn to pieces of the past that have been left to rust or fall apart even though they used to be a vital part of someone's life.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** Don't worry about the world ending today; it's already tomorrow in Australia.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I have a list of concepts and project shoots from the past few years I'm starting to pursue. Most of them deal with a deeper look at society including our greatest fears, our modern interpretation of art, literature, and religion, and our fantasies.



### cyndi merrill

Ceramics | Sculpture  
**W** facebook.com/pages/The-Crabby-Rabbit-Studio/226147660808141  
**E** TheCrabbyRabbit@yahoo.com

**How did you get started in art?** I have always been creative but, being raised with Midwestern values, I learned that being an artist was a frivolous pursuit. After many years of trying to be what others thought I should be, I was miserable. One day I signed up for an art class at Illinois Central College with Professor Jennifer Costa. It was a life changing experience!

#### Why did you become an artist?

It's a therapeutic process for me. Making art makes me happy, and the reaction of the public feeds my motivation.

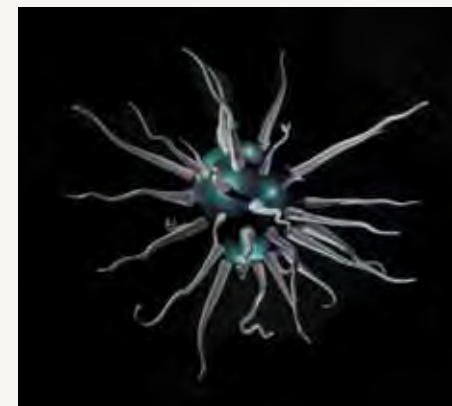
#### Do you have a predominant theme?

I enjoy making tentacles, horns, and tails – the spire shape. I give it curves and life, as if it were frozen during a moment of a graceful dance. There is humor to my work because I want people to smile when they see it.

#### Does your art have a message?

**What is it?** Stop. Look. Smile.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Seeing the smiles or hearing the laughter of people who get my humor.



### ray keithley

Photography  
**E** rayk25@yahoo.com

#### How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?

It was a refuge from the business world. It is a creative outlet when I feel swamped by the mundane. And I hope it's flowering now in my "retirement."

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I'm trying to use all my artistic experiences of the last 50+ years to develop a conscious personal style.

#### How did you get started in art?

Trix cereal and Song of the South. It's a great story I love to tell. Ask me sometime.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** Pictorialism and f/64. I realize that's a contradiction, but there you have it. With a little surrealism, abstract, and zen thrown in.

**What's your artistic goal?** To capture beauty. To create beauty. To share beauty. To communicate beauty.







## andrew voytko

Sculpture  
**E** andyvoytko@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** To be honest, it finds me – the curve of a piece, the juxtaposition between objects, etc. tend to fit together as if pieces of a puzzle. The objects tend to dictate where they want to be.

**How did you get started in art?** It became the creative extension of the best parts of my daily work life.

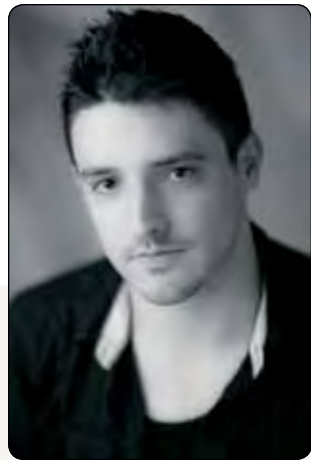
**Why did you become an artist?** The incessant, albeit wonderful, encouragement of wonderful friends.

**What's your artistic goal?** I love it when people walk away from a piece with their own interpretation of it.

**Describe your artistic process.** Pure engrossment in the moment.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** It's being lost in that moment in time when creation takes precedence over being.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** The working is definitely the best part.



## brandon carpenter

Photography  
**E** cmpusman87@yahoo.com

**How did you get started in art?** I got started in art when I believed there was little beauty left in the world. I started looking for the uncommon in the common. To my surprise, the world was truly beautiful. My eyes weren't open wide enough.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Art is expression. There are no set rules. Be as creative as you want and don't take "no" for an answer.

**Describe your artistic process.** My artistic process is very simple. I mute the sounds, slow down time, and ignore the "unwritten rules" of art. I go with my feelings at that time.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "He who hesitates is lost."

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Don't forget who you are as a person. Be the difference in the world – don't follow in the lines of others.

**Three words that best describe you:** Innovator, emerging, timid.

**Why did you become an artist?** I became an artist to express emotion. The world is viewed very one-sided but much more is offered to the eye. I wanted to capture that.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I get my ideas through my feelings, people's struggles/stories, or world-changing events on the news. Sometimes it's as simple as walking outside to start photographing the world around me.



## doug goessman

Mixed Media | Painting  
**W** goessmanart.4t.com  
**E** Cultshockart@hotmail.com

**Describe your artistic process.** My process on the surface appears very simple and it is meant to seem that way. Despite the simple imagery and subject matter, though, the ideas behind the artwork go deep into who I am as a person. It also touches others in many of the same ways. I enjoy using alternative processes and approaches to creating art. I will experiment with and try almost anything to adapt to my artistic vision.

**What do you want your art to do?** Make people pleasantly struggle with why I do paintings with imagery such as Ronald McDonald, for example.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** I do this all of the time and say the same thing, "There is no one way to do art or be an artist. Be creative and willing to try new things, work hard, and have fun! Art should above all be fun."

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I have years' worth of ideas; it all depends on my mood as to what I do. Outside of the main idea, my work is fairly spontaneous and organic in my development of it.



## dorothy thornton

Painting  
**W** dorothythorntonpaintings.awardspace.com/

**What do you want your art to do?** Put smiles on people's faces.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Playing with color.

**Three words that best describe you:** Funny, passionate, kind.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Colorful, bold, happy.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** My mood.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?** My husband's 60th birthday gift was a painting of a sailboat on a lake.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** A delightful 1920s style studio over my garage.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** "Go for it."

**Who and what inspire you?** God.



## john sinn

Drawing | Painting | Sculpture | Wood  
**E** sinn265@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Through legend and history.

**How did you get started in art?** By drawing on rainy days.

**What's your artistic goal?** Never finding my masterpiece but working toward it.

**If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be? What would you ask them?** Frank Frazetta. I'd ask him, "What is it like to be the grand master of imagination?"

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Pursue your dreams!

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Keep practicing and never stop learning.

**Describe your artistic process.** Improving.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working.

**What was your most humbling moment?** Entering my first art contest.



## jeff rowden

Ceramics | Photography | Sculpture  
**W** clayplayground.com  
**E** jeff@clayplayground.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Everywhere. You can find inspiration in the most unexpected things.

**Why did you become an artist?** It's all I've ever wanted to do. It is inherent to me.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** It calms me. It's almost meditative when I am working in clay.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I'm just an artist, plain and simple. It doesn't matter where you come from. Art is everywhere.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Be true to yourself first and foremost. How you feel about yourself is more important than how others feel about you.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Do it because you love it. If you are in it for the money or fame, you are in it for the wrong reason.

**How did you get started in art?** As a child, I was only interested in art. I would sit and draw for hours. It was the only thing that held my attention.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?** In 8th grade, I made a drawing of a grebe and no one believed that I drew it.

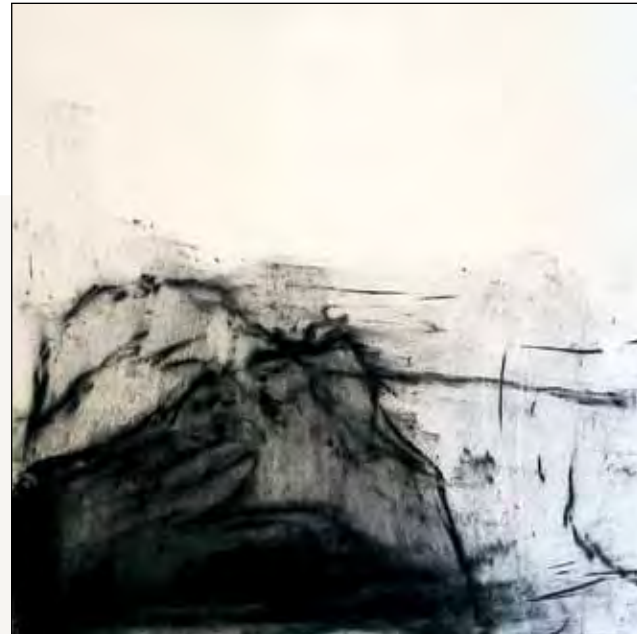






**sarah nesbit**

Painting  
**W** sarahnesbit.com  
**E** sarah.nesbit@gmail.com



UNTITLED  
Mixed media on panel  
12" x 12"

**S**arah Nesbit has managed to cobble together dozens of income-generating jobs in Peoria, Chicago, and Germany, sometimes in art, sometimes not, usually with enough time after work to focus on her own art but sometimes not. Now she's back in Peoria and thinks the art community here might have grown enough to enable her to stay ... making her own art and teaching art

She came home to be a caregiver for her mother. Almost immediately, she was accepted as an artist-in-residence at Prairie Center of the Arts. She's been invited to join the Backspace Collective at the conclusion of her residency program.

Nesbit, 36, said her art curriculum was outstanding at Roosevelt Magnet School and, after graduating from Richwoods High School, she attended Illinois Central College in graphic design. It wasn't clicking with her, and she took a lot of studio art classes, put together a portfolio, and was accepted at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She later transferred to University of Illinois at Chicago, earned a BFA in studio art in 2000, and worked as a studio assistant for Professor Phyllis Bramson.

"Working as a studio assistant lets you get into an artist's mind a little bit and see how they put things together. She was doing a lot of collage. Now I'm doing a lot of collage," Nesbit said.

She worked with Artemisia, a Chicago women's artist cooperative with a strong mentorship program. In the graduate program at School of the Art Institute of Chicago she created a niche for herself working in fiber art and painting. Her advisor warned her time was running out to get her thesis show together.

"I was having fun with painting. I got into the zone and it all came together," she said. The show helped her secure one of only two Art Institute fellowships.

Six pieces in the show sold, and the Kavi Gupta Gallery in Chicago picked up her work. She was productive and selling until the economic collapse, and her sales dried up along with her energy. She was invited to help the gallery open another location in Germany where she worked assisting the director, had three shows, an artist residency, and learned German. She was also homesick, moved back to Chicago, worked in an ad agency, and then returned to Peoria in May to help her mother who has been bedridden for 12 years. Whenever the other caregiver steps in, Nesbit is working at her studio in the Prairie Center. She'll be teaching Saturday classes at the Peoria Art Guild in November.

"I wish there was more money and stability in art, but passion to make art trumps money and stability," Nesbit said. "Art deepens our humanness. So much can only be communicated visually. Art is powerful. It causes people to reflect on themselves and gain insight into who we are."



BUNNY RUSH

Ceramic with Screen Printed Photography  
13 ½" x 9" x 4"

**W**hen Maggie Off attended Peoria Notre Dame High School, the art curriculum was limited. There was one full-time art teacher, and Off didn't have any art classes until her junior year. When she became the school's one full-time art teacher, she began expanding the program and enrollment ballooned. Now, eight years later, there are two full-time art teachers and one part-time teacher, and Off, 36, teaches early bird classes before school and senior portfolio during her lunch period.

How did she expand art during a period of budget cuts and recession? She presented the administration with research showing students who have art and music score better on ACT tests. She opened up the senior art show, and it went from four participants to over 30. She started hanging student art throughout the building. She establishes an atmosphere in her classes where students are encouraged to help other students and no one's work is criticized.

Some of these principles came from growing up in her family of five children. Her parents didn't encourage or discourage art, but her father, a math major in college, did try to push math. It worked pretty well with her older siblings. He'd devise games to help Off with math, but she struggled with it. Not until college at Southern Illinois University was she diagnosed with dyslexia.



**maggie off**

Mixed Media  
**E** m.off@pndhs.org

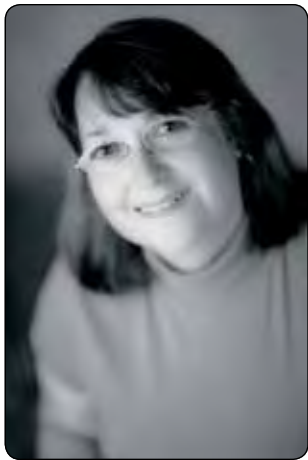
As a child, the youngest in her family by eight years, Off remembers melting toy soldiers, ripping things apart, cutting off her Barbie doll's hair and putting everything together again. In high school, she had two pieces accepted for the scholastic awards in art and writing. Her work made it to judging in New York City. Working in mixed media and abstraction remains her focus.

After earning a BFA at Southern in studio art with an emphasis on painting, Off worked as an assistant for Chicago artists Lora Fosberg and David Jansheski. She taught art at the Racine Art Museum. It was working two years from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. as a truck dispatcher with no time to devote to her own work that made her decide to move back to Peoria. She worked temporarily at a trucking company in Morton while earning another Bachelor's in education at Bradley University, and she accepted a teaching position at Notre Dame.

Today, her own work explores themes of family and connections. Her mother comes from a family of 10 children. In addition to raising such a large family, Off's grandmother worked in retail in Peoria. Off has made a ceramic vessel with a silk screened image of her grandmother and the word "Rush" printed on it.

"Art is often created to discover who we are and to figure out where we came from. What makes me, me?" she said.





## marcia straub

Photography  
**W** marcia-straub.artistwebsites.com/

**How did you get started in art?** My mother was an accomplished oil painter. I think I inherited her “eye” for the image.

### What’s your artistic goal?

To capture the perfect image. It will never happen, so it is a never-ending journey.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** We are fortunate because we have the change of seasons, each one unique, and we have both large cities and rural areas. The opportunities for a photographer are endless.

**If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be? What would you ask them?** Vivian Maier intrigues me. She was a nanny in New York and Chicago who captured more than 100,000 amazing candid photos on the streets of the city on her days off work. I would like to know how she was able to get such candid shots with a large camera and to learn what drove her.

### Why did you become an artist?

The best I can describe it is that when people say that they enjoy my work I respond, “It’s not work, it’s my pleasure.”

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** The Internet has opened a world of possibilities. I browse images from all over the world on Flickr and 500px. There are new techniques and styles to draw from every day.



## jeff embry

Wood  
**W** embrycustomwoodworking.com  
**E** studio\_825@yahoo.com

### What do you want your art to do?

My art should inspire and influence people to see the wondrous beauty in nature.

### Describe your artistic process.

I like to let my piece speak to me. I’ll look at the grain, the shapes, and the beauty the material offers, and let that guide me.

### What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?

Inspire others to see beyond the surface and recognize the inner beauty.

**Three words that best describe you:** Fearless, creative, understanding.

### What is your most treasured lesson?

I learned to be true to myself when creating my artwork.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Create art for yourself. Be yourself and make what’s in your heart.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I look at the world around me and start with what nature has created, then I add my creative touch.

**What’s the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** When I’m working on a piece, I find it relaxing. I also like showing people that there are different types of art.



## becky kregar

Ceramics | Sculpture  
**E** bkregar@mtco.com

**Who and what inspire you?** My eyes were opened to the infinite possibilities of ceramic sculpture by Sandy Schmidt, owner of the McKenzie River Pottery in Washington. She inspires me to push the boundaries into new forms of expression.

### Why did you become an artist?

There is a God-given passion in me to make beautiful things out of “dirt”!

### What is your favorite subject?

I think I like animals best. Their infinite variety keeps me challenged.

**What’s the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Working in clay is forgiving and therapeutic. I also work in stained glass, but it is not forgiving!

**How did you get started in art?** I fell in love with clay when I took wheel throwing classes at the Civic Art Center in Galesburg.

### What’s your favorite piece?

I have a line of “Whistle Stop Pottery People,” (small free-standing figures doing various activities).

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** “Who gave dirt a bad name?”

**Where can people see more of your art?** At the McKenzie River Pottery and at the Washington Fine Art Fair.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** My inspiration comes from nature, reflecting on the beauty of creation.

**What do you want your art to do?** Bring joy and make people smile.



## dave hupke

Photography  
**W** hupkeimaging.net  
**E** info@hupkeimaging.net

**What is the biggest hurdle you’ve overcome?** Death...more than once.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

Inspiration comes in all forms, especially from the unexpected side of life.

### How did you get started in art?

A photographer who shoots for National Geographic made some positive and dramatic comments about some images.

### Is there a purpose to your artwork?

**What is it?** Preserving that perfect moment.

### Who and what inspire you?

Ansel Adams and Alfred Hitchcock – for their approaches to light and shadow.

### What do you want your art to do?

Strengthen your creative emotions and make you feel...

### What are you working on now?

**How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I am working on a concept that uses the idea of the Indian Dream Catcher. This is a new avenue, which will bring a fresh imaginative flow.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Have belief and faith in yourself and your art work will take you places.



## larry campbell

Sculpture  
**E** lmcampbell1644@gmail.com

### What do you want your art to do?

I want my art to offer insight into the many ways human beings can be creative, imaginative, and expressive. Ideally, the work should separate the viewer from distractive thoughts, allowing reflection on what is being presented for contemplation.

### What’s the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

The act of making the art and the process of thinking it through, with all the possibilities that must be narrowed down to what is essential for the piece to be complete, free from gross misinterpretation, and a worthy presentation to viewers. In brief, the reward is in the doing.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** A cluttered mess of great fondness.

### Why did you become an artist?

I am only an artist when I am actively engaged in the process of making a work. Most of the time I am not an artist. I am less a noun and more of a sometimes-active verb. I never met a person who was not at some time an artist.

**What’s one thing you should throw away and haven’t. Why?** I have saved used, but washed, paper coffee filters for the past seven years (thousands) with the expectation that someday I will be inspired to use them in art piece. It hasn’t happened.



## jeffrey sarver

Mixed Media | Painting | Wood  
**E** jeffrey.sarver@comcast.net

**How did you get started in art?** Necessity. I didn’t have any money and had to build my own furniture, painting it in the process.

**Why did you become an artist?** I don’t seem to have had any choice in the matter.

**What’s the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Working by myself.

**What’s your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?** I built a bench. I remember it because it was blown away by Hurricane Andrew.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Every step is fun and interesting.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** Two to six months.

**What is the biggest hurdle you’ve overcome?** Going public.

**What’s been your most difficult decision?** Going public.

**What’s one thing you should throw away and haven’t. Why?** The past. It tends to stick.

**What’s some of the best advice you’ve been given?** The moment you get a concept the piece is doomed to failure.







### sue marx

Photography  
**E** s-marx@sbcglobal.net

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Interacting with and observing nature and people.

**Why did you become an artist?** Because I enjoy being creative.

**Describe your artistic process.** To produce an image within the camera and enhance the image through computer manipulation.

**Do you have a favorite style?**  
**What is it and why?** To give an object the look of motion.

**What do you want your art to do?** To be enjoyed by others.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** The camera gives me the opportunity to observe nature and is a wonderful tool for meeting people.

**Is there a purpose to your artwork?**  
**What is it?** To think "outside of the box."

**Three words that best describe your art:** Colorful, motion, contrast.

**How did you get started in art?** Photographing in my backyard.



### billie howd

Mixed Media | Painting  
**E** howdcb@yahoo.com

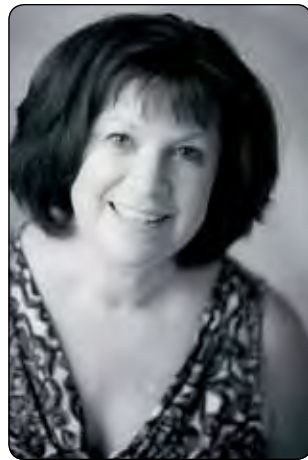
**Why did you become an artist?** I have a passion for making art – it fills a need in me to make, create, build, and challenge myself.

**What are you working on now?** I have developed my own method of working with materials that includes molding paper pulp in plaster molds. This allows me to paint, sculpt, and use many combinations of materials.

**Who and what inspire you?** Preston Jackson has been very influential along the way. I value his critiques and believe they have been invaluable to my development as an artist.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** That the best art is found in the midst of prolific efforts, not a concentration on a few works.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Whatever is going on in your life, keep working on your art. Go forward.



### judith kramer

Sculpture  
**E** hyjude4@yahoo.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** My inspiration is derived from found objects.

**What's your artistic goal?** I enjoy the concept of assembling random objects to create an entirely new sculpture, often with a sense of humor at the helm.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** Surrealism.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I get my ideas as I am attempting to listen to people while getting lost in my own thoughts.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** My "Sole Memories" collection provides an opportunity to explore both memories and social implications offered by uniquely sculpted shoes.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** My senior show at Eureka College received the largest amount of visitors for an opening show in college history.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Whimsical, creepy, memorable.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Lao-tzu



### david vernon

Photography  
**W** escapesphoto.com  
**E** david@escapesphoto.com

**Is there a purpose to your artwork?**  
**What is it?** There is a purpose to my artwork. It lets me rediscover my soul; it brings me peace; it lets me create. It is for me. It is how I cope; it is how I survive. The rest doesn't matter.

**What is your favorite subject?** Nature – when it surprises you with beauty and lets you see it. Not all nature is right for photography and not all nature is willing. It is a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** It's all in the working. There is no real start or finish – just keep working.

**Why did you become an artist?** As a balance to the things you sometimes have to do in life when you aren't sure you are an artist. It takes work and time to become an artist.

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** A lot of years in the daily grind – not being an artist – and then coming to my art later in life with the realization that I could be an artist.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "Go for it."

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Work your butt off – it's the only way to be sure you are what you think you are.



### merrell mcquarrie

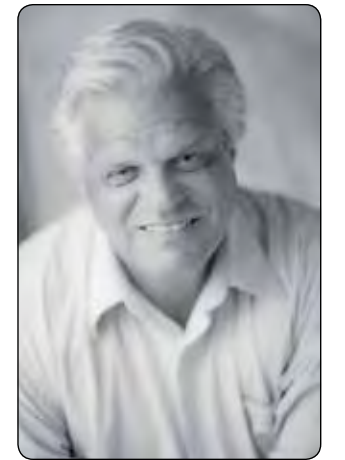
Sculpture  
**W** merrellmac.com  
**E** merrell@merrellmac.com

**What do you want your art to do?** It would be great if people viewed my sculptures and came away with a greater appreciation of the hidden beauty that this earth produces.

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** The solitude and separation from everyday life has pulled me through some tough times.

**Describe your artistic process.** Sounds crazy, but I live with a stone long before I start working with it. Sometimes, if it's small enough, I bring it in the house so I can see it every day. Eventually, it tells me when it's ready.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** I love finishing stone. Each increment of wet sanding brings out the color, depth, and beauty of the stone that can't be seen during the shaping process. It's like discovering hidden treasure.



### joe mcguire

Painting | Drawing  
**W** JoeTheArtGuy.com  
**E** joemc@mtco.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I like to paint landscapes inspired by local central Illinois locations. When I do caricatures, I am inspired by the uniqueness of every face and personality.

**What do you want your art to do?** I want to make people smile – whether by a caricature I have done or by a painting of a place that is special to that person.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I feel most engaged, focused, and inspired when I draw and paint. I feel this is a central purpose for me, inspired by God.

**Why did you become an artist?** To fulfill an urge to create that I have had as long as I can remember.

**How did you get started in art?** I have always loved to draw and paint all of my life.

**What is your favorite subject?** Grandview Drive.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** I enjoy most painting plein air, especially on Grandview Drive.







**james jenkins**

Painting

**E** [jjenkinstudio422@yahoo.com](mailto:jjenkinstudio422@yahoo.com)

**J**ames Jenkins recalls meeting New York City gallery owner Walter Wickiser for the first time. Wickiser and his gallery assistants had reviewed Jenkins' work and were grilling him in a small, airless room. After two hours of nonstop questions, Wickiser stood up, patted Jenkins on the shoulder, and said he planned to represent him and give him a solo show.

Jenkins remembers walking into the elevator and throwing up. That was 12 years ago, and Jenkins hasn't stopped pushing himself and developing his work.

It had been Peoria artist Ken Hoffman who suggested Jenkins contact Wickiser. Jenkins had a more serendipitous meeting with his other agent, Stephen Howes of Thomas Crown Art International in Malaga, Spain. It was during a family vacation. Jenkins had a day to himself to explore, shop, and eat. He was chatting with a fellow at Churchill's Pub when the discussion turned to Howes. The guy said he golfed with Howes, called him on his cell phone, and handed the phone to Jenkins.

"The days of being discovered on the street are gone," said Jenkins, 48, who believes artists need to make their luck, get their name out, participate in large art fairs, and network. He does "the sunshine circuit" attending shows and art fairs including Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Toronto, ArtHamptons, ArtPalmBeach, and Cherry Creek Arts Festival, Denver.

For those larger shows, the gallery is invited to participate and bring some of its artists. Even with the gallery covering half the cost, the remainder might come to \$4,000 per artist, so it's important for artists to price their work correctly and keep size in mind. Jenkins has gone from painting huge pieces to small pieces and now a size in the middle range. He looks to his larger works and focuses on one segment, deconstructing it and reinventing it over 10 to 15 smaller pieces that he'll juggle all at one time.



**SPACE BOY**

Oil Acrylic Resin

72" x 60"

"I like things in flux. Always changing," Jenkins said. "I like to have lots of things in play."

His parents were living in Chicago when Jenkins was born. He was about five when they moved back to the Peoria area. He attended Bartonville public schools and Limestone High School. It was in high school, he decided he'd like a career in art, but his father, a high school guidance counselor, steered him into the sciences. Jenkins attended Illinois Central College for a year. He later enrolled at Illinois State University and then Bradley University where he earned a BFA with a focus on ceramics. He taught at the Peoria Art Guild and as an adjunct professor at Bradley. He's had a studio in the Murray Building for over 20 years. Wickiser suggested Jenkins focus on painting, and it's been over two years since he worked with clay.

"To be in art, you have to be a jack-of-all-trades. You have to be able to sell yourself. As an artist, you're the top predator," Jenkins said. "You have to sell your work to someone who doesn't need it in order to survive."



**CORAL JAZZ**

Mixed Media on Wood

24" x 48"

**G**reg DePauw's voice is about change, challenge, and reinvention. Those are the foundational themes reflected in his work. Those principles played out in his youth as the son of two artists in a family of three siblings, all of them artists themselves. Those themes reverberated again through his life following a trampoline accident two weeks before graduating from Metamora High School. The accident left him quadriplegic, yet he went on to become a prolific professional artist and art teacher.

Following the accident, DePauw's father made a device that enabled DePauw to draw with his mouth while lying in a hospital bed. Intensive physical therapy helped him regain use of his hands and arms. He attended Illinois State University, earning a BA in studio art and art education in 1982.

DePauw's parents met while both were majoring in art at Bradley University. Parents and children visited museums and artists' studios throughout the region. DePauw remembers becoming convinced he wanted to be an artist when he was five years old. He and his father were visiting portrait painter Ed Nicholson's studio and the young DePauw fell in love with the smell of linseed oil.

"Our strongest memory is smell. Even more than sight," said DePauw, 56, who lives in Metamora in a home with art covering interior and exterior walls and spilling out onto the lawn. Inside is work by his parents Vicki DePauw and Robert DePauw, his brother Doug, and his sister Mary Jo as well as his own work.

DePauw is famous among legions of school children as the man with the Art Rod Foundation. He'd drive his art mobile, a 1937 Ford Street Rod, to rural schools, the Center for Prevention of Abuse, and community events to hold art classes and talk about a can-do attitude.

"I'd go to rural schools in little, little towns, and the children would be starving for art. They'd be climbing over each other to see," DePauw said, contending that budget cuts don't



**greg depauw**

**W** Mixed Media | Sculpture  
[gregdepauwstudio.com/](http://gregdepauwstudio.com/)

have to mean cutting art from the schools. He remembers winning a scholarship sponsored by the Metamora Women's Club enabling him to attend a University of Illinois summer art program. He won another, also sponsored by the Metamora Women's Club, for an art program at University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.

"Art lives, sometimes with just grassroots support," he said.

When the Peoria *Journal Star* newspaper converted from its old Goss letterpress to a new MAN Roland offset press in 2004, DePauw asked for the old letterpress. He was told he could have it if he could disassemble it. A team helped him get some of the pieces, and he is now conceptualizing how he will reuse components of the old press that told a community's history for decades and will once again have a voice, this time in DePauw's sculpture.





### elijah thorne sansom

Photography  
**W** peoriacac.org/Directory/  
**E** film\_by\_ets@sprynet.com

**What do you want your art to do?** To help people see and experience the world with a more critical vision and with more appreciation of the beauty in the world.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Photographing a subject and highlighting the essential elements so that even a child can appreciate the results.

**What is your most treasured lesson?** Every person has a unique artistic view and, if they pursue it, the world will be a better place for it.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Understand yourself. Identify your unique vision and what manner of expression brings out your passions.

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** "I believe in beauty. I believe in stones and water, air and soil, people and their future and their fate." *Ansel Adams*

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?** "Blue like you" is a study of glass, form, and texture in a sunlit window. It won first place at the Illinois Art League member show.



### darius donaldson

Mixed Media  
**W** facebook.com/animositycarclub  
**E** darius115@yahoo.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Nature – for the color combinations.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** Patterns and graphics on metal canvas – combining color combinations that, on paper, won't go together, but do once applied to metal.

**Who and what inspire you?** To see how far I can go – to test my own limits of creativity.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Research the latest trends. Try ideas I've been thinking about.

**Three words that best describe you:** Focused, determined, driven.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Crazy, colorful, detailed.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Sometimes a "no" can be better than a "yes" because then you can figure out why they said no and adjust from there.



### suzette boulais

Painting  
**W** suzetteboulais.com  
**E** Suzette@SuzetteBoulais.com

**Is there a purpose to your artwork? What is it?** My art seeks to comfort and calm...perhaps even inspire. It aims to take the viewer to a state and place of peace.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** I am forever indebted to and highly inspired by abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko, whose paintings were expressions of complex thought. My own work aims to express what I call "abstract expressions of inspired thought."

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** My paintings express a message of hope. In all my paintings, using light is the way I represent this message of hope.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Soothing, serene, contemplative.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** You'll know that doing art is absolutely for you when you must do it – nothing deters you from doing it. In short, you can't not do it.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I often find inspiration from nature photographs or graphic designs of sunsets, sunrises, moonrises, birds flying over water, mountain peaks, sailboats on the ocean. I'm always attracted to images that are universally symbolic and say something more than the images themselves.



### linda verkler

Painting  
**W** lverkler.com  
**E** lverkler@lverkler.com

**How did you get started in art?** I have been drawing since I was a child. It has always been a part of my life.

**Why did you become an artist?** It was the most effective way to express myself.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Losing myself.

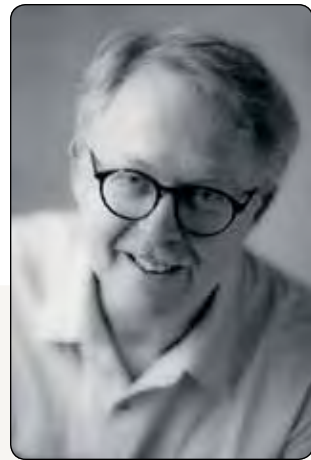
**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** Whatever the average would be between a couple of hours and several years.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I work best in cooler weather so, for me, the Midwestern summers are not ideal.

**What do you want your art to do?** Have lasting relevance to the viewer.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** That it would hold interest beyond the immediate.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working!



### roy rogers

Sculpture  
**W** roygrogersfinearts.com

**Why did you become an artist?** I found satisfaction in creating things and then it became meaningful to communicate my feelings and beliefs using different media.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I get new ideas every day by changing my routines and discovering new places and things.

**What do you want your art to do?** I want the viewer to interpret the meaning of the work and apply it to his/her own experience.

**What advice would you give an aspiring artist?** Three things: Take your work seriously. Make art that feels right to you. Work on your art as much as possible.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Winning the "best sculpture of show" award at the Illinois State University BFA/MFA annual student show. I felt like an artist for the first time.

**What was your most humbling moment?** When the work that I thought was my best was rejected.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Starting, since my pieces are formulated in my head before I begin.

**What is some of the best advice you have been given?** Work, work, work.



### ken kiley

Photography  
**E** kkileyjr2000@yahoo.com

**Describe your artistic process.** Photography with some computer manipulation.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?** A boat dock scene with abstract shadows on the water, circa 1950.

**What is your favorite subject?** People and silhouettes.

**What's your favorite piece?** St. Mary's Cathedral.

**Who and what inspire you?** I have always been interested in artistic photography.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Getting two books of photographs printed.

**Three words that best describe you:** Fast, fun, talkative.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Keep on keeping on.







### dalton harmon

Painting  
**E** Harmon@thewheelers.org

**What's your favorite piece?**  
The last piece I just completed and sold. It portrayed a waterfall and sunset.

**How did you get started in art?**  
In grade school, I took some drawing and painting classes.

**Describe your artistic process.** Turn on some music, choose the color of spray paint to use first, and just start painting.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working on the painting.

**Who and what inspire you?** Music.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?**  
There are no rules or set designs.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Selling my first painting.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "There are no mistakes." *Bob Ross*

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** It takes about 45 minutes for most paintings.



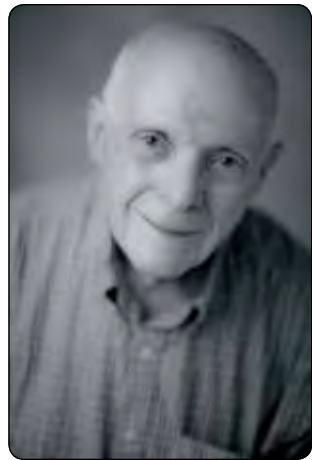
### angie stiles richardson

Wearable Art  
**W** metalME.etsy.com  
**E** metalME@ameritech.net

**Does your art have a message?**  
Usually an emotional message of some kind – such as love, rescuing, saving, helping, healing, remembering. I donate a percentage of my sales to charities that include animal rescue groups, women's shelters, cancer research, heart disease research, and mental health awareness.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** My style is "rough around the edges." I'm also a graphic artist and I love layers and details – something that draws you in and tells a story. My jewelry is similar. I usually start with smooth shiny sterling silver. I cut and form it, then take a hammer to it. I remove a lot of stress this way! Then I use small files to add even more character to each piece. I finish them with varying grades of sand paper and buffs. When it has the right feel and character, it's ready.

**What do you want your art to do?**  
I want it to touch people's lives in an emotional way, so wearing a piece of my jewelry causes them to feel an emotional connection to someone or something in their lives, or they just feel good wearing it.



### william nolden

Painting  
**E** njhodge1@comcast.net

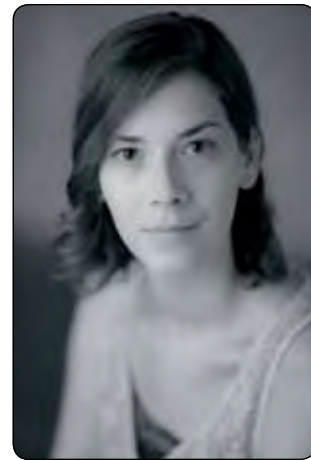
**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** There is no one thing that may inspire me to start a painting. Ideas may come from several sources such as nature, a photograph, a book I'm reading, or being impressed by another artist's work.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** For me, putting the last touches on a painting is the most satisfying aspect – that point at which I feel a sense of accomplishment.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** When asked for advice by young artists, I encourage them to enroll in an art school or at least join classes where they can share experiences with other students and receive instruction from qualified teachers.

**How did you get started in art?** Art was an influence on me through my 4th grade teacher who let me cover the blackboards with drawings, through years of advertising, and by an avocation in community theater.

**Who and what inspire you?** People who have inspired me include my father, a high school art teacher, and another artist, long-time friend, Fred Larke. Inspiration may also come from an unusual event, a place, a sunrise that makes me think, "I'll paint that."



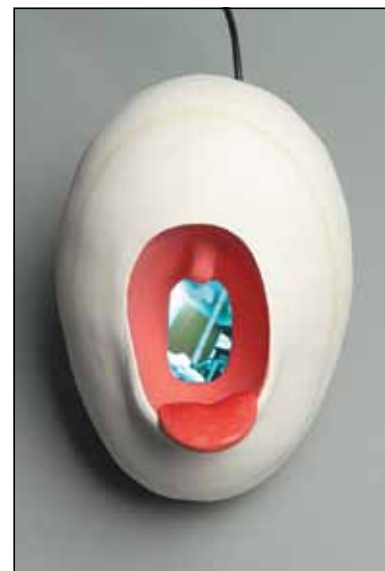
### angela dieffenbach

Ceramics  
**W** angeladieffenbach.com  
**E** adieffenbach@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I'm inspired by mathematics, neuroscience, microbiology, drug design, healthcare trends, pre-modern anatomy, and the evolution of medical symbols.

**Who and what inspire you?** Through research on anatomy's history in the visual arts and sciences, I have become increasingly interested in the role artists play in the perception and understanding of the human vessel. I reference early anatomists, such as Andreas Vesalius, using their artful rendering of the body as inspiration.

**What do you want your art to do?**  
I aim to challenge the viewer to examine the private, and often alien, aspects of being human. Through encouraging the observer to consider the vessel housing them, I aim to call attention to the delicacy of life, as well as the role industry plays in the maintenance of our bodies.



### jeff selke

Wood  
**W** ciaopeoria.com  
**E** jdselke@hotmail.com

**Why did you become an artist?**  
The freedom to express myself.

**What do you want your art to do?**  
Make people happy.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** When I get inspiration.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?**  
That people love, respect, and take joy from my work.

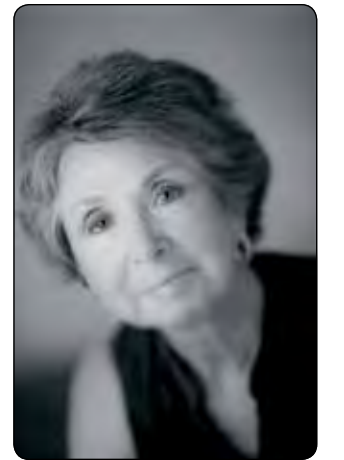
**Is there a purpose to your artwork? What is it?**  
To be functional and pleasant to the eye.

**On average, how long do you work on a piece of art?** 40 to 100 hours.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** All three, but I am like a little kid when it comes to finishing because I can't wait to see how the wood changes when the finish is applied.

**What was your most humbling moment?**  
When people considered me an artist.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?**  
I ask God for my inspiration every day.



### barbara unes

Painting  
**E** unes831@yahoo.com

**How did you get started in art?**  
I had an exceptional art teacher in high school who first inspired me.

**Why did you become an artist?** I first became a teacher, and then realized how much I could add to learning using art integrated into basic curriculum classes.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?**  
I try a new theme or subject and then experiment with it using other media.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** The process of "working" on a piece often leads to an expansion of ideas for the next piece.

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?**  
I am particularly fond of the Impressionist philosophy and style.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** For me, doing my own artwork is an escape.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?**  
My favorite watercolor of seagulls is done in a special technique, so special that I have not been able to duplicate it.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I think Midwestern artists probably have a more conservative flavor in their art just because of the influences on us.





As an illustrator and graphic artist, Ken Clubb prefers the energy and tactile creativity he gets in board art rather than computer-generated art. He's watched colleagues and clients turn to computer graphics, but he continued to earn his living from hand-done illustrations. Then the recession of 2008 hit, and the economy failed to recover. Clubb watched his workload decline until 2012 started to play out as his slowest year in a career spanning 40 years. Even his teaching load at Illinois Central College went down to reflect declining enrollment.

That's when he decided to make a change. Self-employed since 1981, Clubb took a job working for a subcontractor for Caterpillar Inc. coordinating personnel moves that can number 600 people a month. He works out of Caterpillar's corporate headquarters in downtown Peoria and finds the days go by quickly, and the 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. schedule still leaves him time to drive to his studio on Pioneer Parkway and put in a few hours.

"When you're an independent artist, you might work until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. and on weekends when the client needs the job," Clubb said. "Working with a daily schedule is a totally different lifestyle."

He still does freelance work and teaches illustration and watercolor painting at Illinois Central College's North Campus. He's also planning to build a portfolio of paintings for the day after his retirement when he hopes to turn to fine art sold through galleries.

Clubb grew up in Peoria, graduated from Richwoods High School, and attended Western Illinois University, earning a BA in art education and an MA in studio art and watercolor. He worked at Thomas S. Klise Co. in Peoria for years until the company closed the educational film strip division in 1989. That's when he started freelancing for a wide range of clients including ad agencies, Caterpillar, hospitals, and PJS Publications.

"I enjoy beauty and natural forms and see that all around, but a lot of people can't see it," said Clubb, 61. "So much in advertising, television, and visual media don't help people see and appreciate. Good art can help people train their eye. There is a lot of satisfaction in doing art: When the client sees it and says it's wonderful. When it's published ... a lot of subtle rewards."



ken clubb

Mixed Media  
E kenclubbillustrator@gmail.com

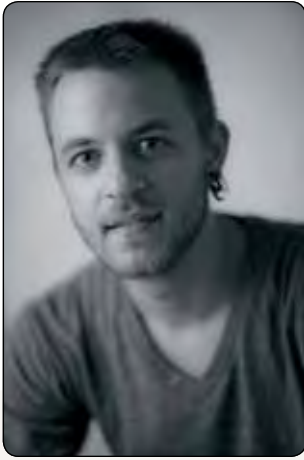


PORTRAIT STUDY – 2009  
Mixed Media  
32" x 24"



sarah williamson

Painting  
E joyfulsarahanne@yahoo.com



marty gniech

Painting  
E joyfulsarahanne@yahoo.com



THE HEAVENLY MAN  
Acrylic Paint and Mixed Media  
48" x 48"

For the four years he was attending Bradley University, Marty Gniech painted collaboratively with Sarah Williamson during Hilltop Campus Church services held at Bradley Epworth Church on Columbia Terrace. Gniech and Williamson view their work as performance art. For about 45 minutes during the Friday evening service, they worked in acrylics on large canvases. Of the scores of paintings they produced, there was a portrait of a smiling Jesus, Jesus in a sports jacket with his flock surrounding him, many Bible verses transformed into images, and abstractions based on Biblical interpretations.

"The goal is to produce art that visually expresses what God is teaching," said Williamson, who graduated from Bradley University in 2006 with a BFA in ceramics and drawing and now works with the Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship on campus. She said performance art is designed to help people develop a greater appreciation for the arts.

"Beauty is necessary. People need beauty. Even in the Bible, God commissioned artists to make the temple beautiful. Why would he do that if art wasn't necessary?" said Williamson, 31.

Gniech, 22, added, "It's important to have art in society so mankind can experience beauty. Art is not just beauty, it also communicates a message. Sometimes something can be said in a painting, but if it were said to a person's face, it wouldn't be taken well."

Each 45-minute performance/painting Gniech and Williamson did during services was the culmination of hours of work conceiving and roughing out the concept. After graduating from Bradley earlier this year with a BFA, Gniech returned home to Batavia and is visiting galleries with his portfolio. He's found a church in the area where he is painting, both collaboratively and solo, during services. He said 90 percent of his work is faith-based.

"With collaborative art, you are not trying to glorify your name and your art. I could paint over something Sarah did and she could paint over something I did. We bring a fresh set of eyes to the work," Gniech said. "The collaboration elevates the art to a higher level."

Williamson has traveled on mission trips to Hawaii, China, Mexico, and Jamaica.

"Art is an international language," she said. "Artists have a message burning inside them, and they feel an urgency to get it out there for people to see."





## nyla salem

Photography  
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### What is your favorite subject?

Nature, because it is always changing and there are so many different subjects.

### Three words that best describe you:

Realistic, unique, colorful.

### What is your proudest moment/achievement?

When I was chosen to be a part of the Peoria Riverfront Museum's grand opening!

### What was your most humbling moment?

When I was asked to create drawings for people whom I had never met (they were in Texas where I had lived for three years). They believed in me – believed that I could create what they were envisioning.

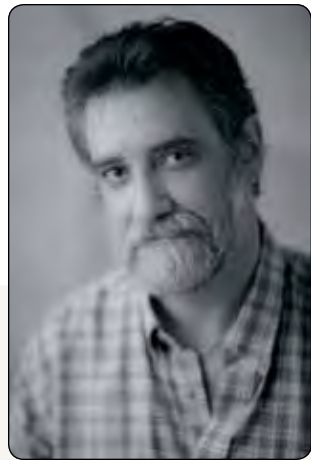
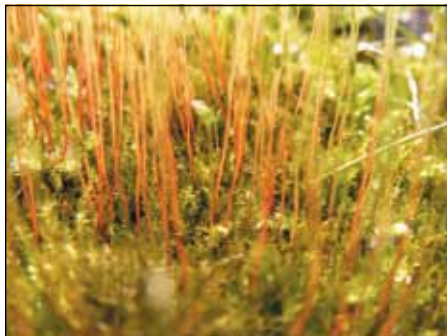
### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." *Mother Teresa*

**Who and what inspire you?** My sisters inspired me with drawing. I've always admired their abilities. My daughter inspired me to pick up my camera every day since the day she was born, and that opened my eyes to a new world in photography.

### What do you want your art to do?

I want it to make people smile and ask, "How did she do that?!"



## todd snyder

Painting  
**W** fineartamerica.com/profiles/todd-snyder  
**E** toddman@mtco.com

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

The local urban landscape and the heavy equipment produced here.

**Why did you become an artist?** Because it's one of the last bastions of rebellion.

### Do you have a favorite style?

**What is it and why?** I enjoy Realism and Surrealism because they deal with recognizable subject matter.

### What is your favorite subject?

The urban landscape in various incarnations – both real and surreal.

### Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?

I like the German New Objectivity movement of the early 20th century and Surrealism.

### What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

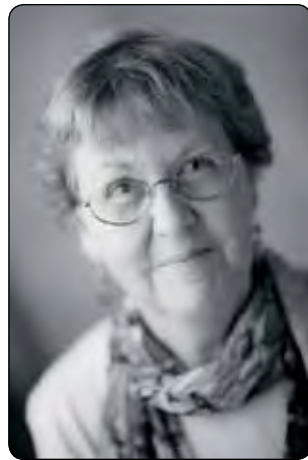
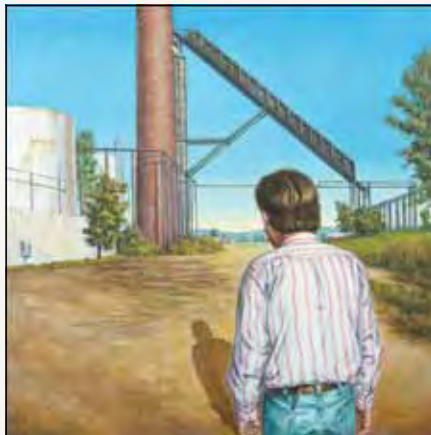
The pure pleasure of pushing oil paint around into recognizable motifs.

### What is your proudest moment/achievement?

Selling a triptych to Heartland Community College in Bloomington, Illinois.

### What's your artistic goal?

To be a full-time artist.



## jean gronewold

Mixed Media  
**E** jean@gronewolds.com

### Why did you become an artist?

Painting has helped me to remain "centered" in my life when certain stressful events seem overwhelming.

### Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?

I have been influenced by the Abstract Expressionism Movement that frees me as an artist to express my emotions in color and movement.

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

I find inspiration in repurposing found objects for non-objective work. I also find that plein air painting inspires me in a different direction.

### What do you want your art to do?

I want my art to create a positive emotional response with the viewers.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "To take the road less traveled."

### What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

I enjoy teaching art for the Adult Community Programs at both Illinois Central College and Bradley University (Osher Life Long Learning Institute).



## shannon alig

Mixed Media | Painting  
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### What do you want your art to do?

I want my art to make people look, linger, think, ask questions, start a conversation, evoke a response, or all of the above.

### What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?

I think it's the best place to be an artist. The people here are genuine, unpretentious, and encouraging.

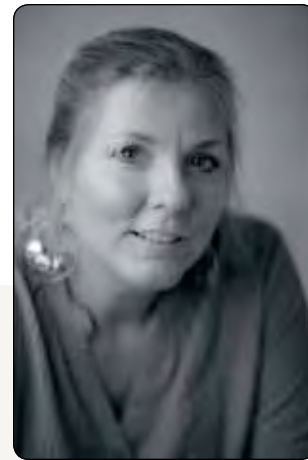
### Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?

Abstract Expressionism. I am fascinated with the way in which certain images can mean so many different things and cause such emotion, thought, and conversation.

**What's one thing you should throw away and haven't. Why?** To a mixed media artist, anything can have creative potential. I have boxes and boxes of things just waiting to become part of a work of art.

### How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?

In my dreams at night – like a movie projector flashing random floating images. The images that stay with me longest are usually the ones that get made.



## jaci willis

Sculpture  
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**E** jewillis27@yahoo.com

### What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?

I am working on a woman and child bronze sculpture called "Facing the Storm" that depicts the early 1900s when women were fighting for their rights. I am in the middle of a life-size bronze depicting A.J. Robertson that Fisher Stolz and I will complete for Bradley University in October 2012. In August I will be installing a stainless steel and blue glass sculpture on Lake Shore Drive, Chicago. It's called "Surge," which is about how environment influences relationships.

**What is your favorite subject?** I am always looking at relationships and finding ways to express them through my work.

### What is your most treasured lesson?

Don't let fear get in your way.

### Why did you become an artist?

I feel art influences society, and I wanted to make a positive impact.

### What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?

I feel we are more intertwined with the people around us and carry each other when we need help.



## joel metzler

Painting  
**E** jkmetzler.1@comcast.net

### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

Everywhere. I am barraged by beauty (and the ugly but interesting). The hard part is focusing the inspiration into an image I will actually create.

### Is there a purpose to your artwork?

**What is it?** Yes. My purpose is to make the viewer feel what I felt when I first saw the image that formed the basis of my artwork.

### How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?

I see an image that speaks to me and then I think about it, sometimes for a very long time, to build up my own context for it (or until I have the courage to try it).

### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"You can't rush art." *The Cleaner, Toy Story 2*

**Describe your artistic process.** I usually start with the image I wish to create and a challenge to myself to incorporate different media and substrates to keep it interesting (or frustrating). I pick an area and try to immerse myself in it. Invariably the plan for the whole changes many times as I build out from the starting point.

### What's been your most difficult decision?

The most difficult is deciding which of the myriad ideas knocking around in my head gets to be painted next.







### marjorie hoffer schwebel

Mixed Media | Painting | Photography  
**E** schwebelm@aol.com

#### How did you get started in art?

In childhood. I loved taking photos and drawing.

#### What is your favorite subject?

Flowers.

#### What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

Photography gives me inner peace and joy. I find art to be therapeutic.

#### Three words that best describe you:

Trustworthy, nurturing, enthusiastic.

#### Three words that best describe your art:

Peaceful, joyful, beautiful.

#### What is your most treasured lesson?

Embrace life to the fullest each day.

#### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"Keep an open mind to grow and bloom where you are planted."

#### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

Mother Nature – capturing the uniqueness in creation.

#### What's some of the best advice you've been given?

"Give respect and human dignity to all" and "Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you."



### richard boschulte

Painting  
**E** drbosch@mtco.com

#### As an artist, where do you find inspiration?

On a drive in the country.

#### What's your artistic goal?

To create things of beauty.

#### What is your favorite subject?

The local landscape.

#### Does your art have a message? What is it?

Yes. Beauty is close at hand – accessible in overlooked and understated events within our immediate surroundings.

#### What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?

I love it.

#### Three words that best describe your art:

Quiet, color, mood.

#### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"All that is gold does not glitter; not all those who wander are lost."

*J.R.R. Tolkien*

#### What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

Take a long view, be resourceful, be determined, and persevere. Being an artist is a lifelong endeavor and often completely independent of how one earns a living.

#### What's some of the best advice you've been given?

When I first took my daughter to a softball pitching coach, the coach said, "You just be quiet and catch, I'll do the coaching."



### kathy sherman

Painting  
**E** Sherman\_Kathy@ymail.com

#### Why did you become an artist?

I believe it's in the DNA...a compelling desire or strain toward fulfillment.

#### How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?

I have begun to "see" differently and more creatively. What may appear real to the eye may translate differently onto paper, thus changing my perceptions and attitudes.

#### What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

The complete absorption into my art allows all worries and distractions to disappear and, for a moment, I live in another sphere.

#### What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?

Satisfaction is in the creation itself... anything else is a bonus.

#### If you could have dinner with any living artist (living or dead) who would it be? What would you ask them?

Michelangelo. Teach me!



### chris kukla

Ceramics  
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#### Who and what inspire you?

I am inspired by nature and I appreciate the work of Norman Rockwell – his scenes from everyday basic life.

#### What do you want your art to do?

To look pleasing and have a functional use and purpose.

#### What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?

That it was used for a long time and associated with good memories.

#### What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?

The happy/sad of finishing a piece.

#### Three words that best describe you:

Consistent, persistent, confident.

#### What is your most treasured lesson?

It is ok to be wrong.

#### What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

Be patient and persistent.

#### What are you working on now?

How does it link to what you have done in the past? Currently I am reworking old ideas with a new skill set.

#### What is your proudest moment/achievement?

I like it when kids show interest in my animal watering cans.



### jessica peterson

Drawing  
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**E** jessicapeterson09@gmail.com

#### What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?

Having an idea and then being able to make it a reality as a drawing or photograph.

#### Three words that best describe your art:

Expressive, poignant, reflective.

#### If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be? What would you ask them?

Stephen Gammell, illustrator of many children's books, including the series *Scary Stories To Tell In the Dark*. I would ask him how long it took for him to develop his unique style.

#### How did you get started in art?

As young as two years old, I would draw with my dad. Later, when I was given a digital camera, I found my love for taking pictures, especially creating photos that puzzle my viewers.

#### What is your motto and/or favorite quote?

"Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time."

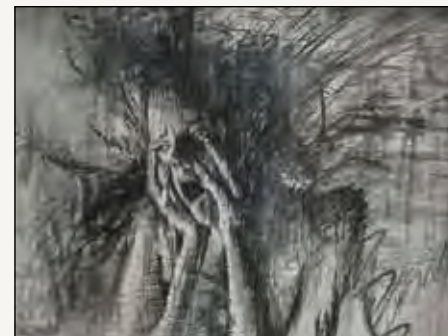
*Thomas Merton*

#### What was your most humbling moment?

The first time someone showed an interest in a couple of my self-portraits.

#### What's been your most difficult decision?

Selling one of my first drawings.



### michael mayo

Painting  
**E** michaeljmayo@mac.com

#### What's your artistic goal?

To never stop exploring... to never give up pushing and challenging myself.

#### Does your art have a message? What is it?

I create my work with a message in mind, but I realize the message is no longer mine as soon as the work hangs on a wall. This is a beautiful and frustrating aspect of art. It's exhausting when people say they "don't get it" when looking any kind of art or that it's over their head etc. When it comes down to it, some art is just plain gross, boring, or insignificant, and that's what makes it beautiful for some people. Conversely, some art is just pretty, shocking, or overwhelming and that's what makes it beautiful for some people. The world's a diverse place. It's a good thing there are artists to help others remember this.

#### How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?

Art has been the impetus for a number of important relationships in my life. Falling in love for the first time, where to go to college, meeting my wife, choosing grad school, and more... all because of my love for art. In my attempt to create, my life has forever been impacted.







### nikole cooney

Mixed Media | Painting | Sculpture

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**N**ikole Cooney had been accepted at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and was awarded a scholarship when her husband started battling cancer. She quit school and became his primary caregiver until he died at age 38.

"The Art Institute had been my dream, but we had two kids, and I couldn't do everything," she said.

But even then in 2006, she didn't completely give up on her dream, and today she's able to work full-time on her art.

Cooney, 39, grew up in Green Valley and enjoyed art throughout grade school and high school, but when it came time for college, she thought she needed something more practical. Her parents did not view art as practical. She earned an associate's degree at Parkland Community College in veterinary technology. She didn't walk away from art, though, and took art classes at Parkland and at Illinois Central College and had an apprenticeship under Preston Jackson at the Contemporary Art Center.

She now has three children and sometimes collaborates on art projects with her second husband, Eric Cooney. They both have studios in their home, and she also has a studio at the Contemporary Art Center. Their home is filled with the art of friends and admired colleagues, including Preston Jackson, Janet Jackson, Pat Whalen Keck, and Morgan Elser.

"Having all this art makes us feel like we are surrounded by friends. It encourages us and stimulates us," Cooney said.

Her work is introspective, surreal, sometimes disturbing, sometimes foreboding, but often with a sense of hope.

"It's easier for me to paint than to put into words what my paintings are expressing. They have layers of meaning and symbolism. I have plenty of experiences to draw from," she said. "I put a lot of emotion into my work, and it scares some people. Others cry. It's my way of reaching people."



THEIR OWN WORST ENEMY

Oil  
24" x 20"

**E**ric Cooney asserts he never touched art in elementary or high school, preferring electronics and technical training. After graduating from Pekin Community High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and traveled throughout the United States and Japan. He took photographs everywhere he went. After six years, he took time off before re-enlisting. During that time off he got a job at Midwest Grain, married, and had a family to support. He never physically returned to the military, but his art explores notions of service to country, war, tragedy, and the power of prayer.

It wasn't until he married his wife, an artist, that he started to express himself visually.

"I grew up in an extremely rigid childhood. My mother died in a car wreck when I was six. My dad worked at Caterpillar and never remarried," Cooney said. "After high school, I wanted to experience life and see the world."

After his marriage, he and his wife took sculpture classes with Preston Jackson at the Contemporary Art Center. Cooney now works primarily in steel and found objects. He took several pottery classes with Jacob Grant in exchange for work he did rewiring Grant's furnace and air conditioning.

He's currently working on a piece with bullets piercing through the door of a Humvee but not passing completely through because they are stuck by coils of prayers wrapped tightly around them. He's also working on a piece representing the American flag made with 241 dog tags representing some of the 3,600 Medal of Honor recipients, the youngest of whom was 14 and fought in the American Civil War.

The couple regularly visits galleries in Peoria, Chicago, and throughout the region. They both will have pieces in an upcoming show at the Jackson Junge Gallery in Chicago.

"Art is now essential to me. It is a huge area of expression for me. I've probably got 11 pieces going right now," said Cooney, 46. "I did not live with art before Nikole, and it has changed me completely. I'm able to express what I'm thinking and feeling. I'm no longer afraid of boundaries of expression. I'm not afraid to make it tangible for others to see."

### eric cooney

Mixed Media | Sculpture

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### STICKS AND STONES

Mixed Media  
72" x 42" x 34"







### joe couri

Photography  
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**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** National Park scenes, local historic buildings, statues.

**Why did you become an artist?** Helps keep my sanity, which is challenged by my occupation of medicine!

**Who and what inspire you?** Ansel Adams' work in the parks.

**What do you want your art to do?** Move people to want to go to where I've photographed and take up photography.

**What is your proudest moment/achievement?** Having some of my national park photos exhibited at Lakeview when there was an Ansel Adams exhibit; having a larger exhibit of them at the Peoria Art Guild.

**What was your most humbling moment?** Photographing moon rise over Half Dome in Yosemite! Very exciting to think I was able to do that and stand about where Ansel Adams stood!

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "You can do anything you put your mind to – the sky is the limit" from my dad, an amazing Renaissance man.

**If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be?** Ansel Adams; to show me his camera and his techniques.



### barbara hoffman

Photography  
E hoffmbh@mtco.com

**Describe your artistic process.** I photograph subjects in simultaneous series over many years, returning again and again to the same subjects and, in some cases, locations.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Keep looking.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** I'm a contemporary realist. Despite all the technical tools available, I do very little manipulation. This preserves the immediacy of capturing what I saw.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Realistic, deep, open.

**Who and what inspire you?** I'm a student of photographic and art history. I'm inspired by artists who made significant contributions to our cultural understanding.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** The entire process is important and satisfying. Capturing the image, putting it into the context of other work I've done, and framing and hanging are all critical parts of the journey.

**Three words that best describe you:** Focused, observant, open.

**How did you get started in art?** I've been drawing and painting since I was about five, and have been a photographer for about 30 years.



### thomas a. speciale

Painting | Drawing  
E mlspeciale@sbcglobal.net

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Everywhere – ancient buildings, craggy faces, people of all ages, exotic locations, and historical locations.

**How did you get started in art?** Grade school. I didn't become an artist – I've been an artist.

**Why did you become an artist?** Personal satisfaction.

**What's your artistic goal?** My goal is a selfish one because creating art fulfills me.

**Describe your artistic process.** Lines on paper, inspiration, paper, canvas, sketching, and filling in the details.

**What is your favorite subject?** Architecture.

**What's your favorite piece?** The piece on which I am currently working.

**Do you have a favorite style?** I appreciate all styles and types of art.

**What are you working on now?** I am creating a mixed-media portrait of my wife.



### josh pitcher

Painting  
E cheffjosh@yahoo.com

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** Abstract Expressionism because, although my paintings are well reasoned, I try to place emphasis on the process of making art.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Most of my ideas are not necessarily directly translated onto the canvas. I try to use my ideas as a jumping-off point, and I react to the paint, marks, gestures, etc.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** Working. Starting is the hardest part (getting rid of the white canvas), and I never really know when a piece is finished. I often revisit paintings years later or repaint over them.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Work for yourself. Your art is an expression of yourself and your ideas.

**Describe your artistic process.** I tend to work at a quick pace. I work and rework a piece to react to mark making and to avoid preconceived notions about what the final product will be.



### dave seay

Painting  
E Dseay51@yahoo.com

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** My style is realism because it's very challenging when trying to capture a time and mood of the day.

**Who and what inspire you?** I've been influenced by James Winn and Harold Gregor, two very accomplished Midwest landscape painters.

**What's your first piece of art you produced and why do you remember it?** It was first grade. I drew a picture of Mighty Mouse and the teacher taped it to the blackboard. After that, who needed spelling and math.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** The creative process, the challenge to complete a painting regardless of the time required until I'm satisfied.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** It's a very demanding subject, often with a flat horizon. Using the sky and weather conditions helps solve many compositional problems.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "You don't have a problem, you have an opportunity."

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Learn to draw first.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** Knowing that people enjoyed a painting and remember it.

**What is your favorite subject?** Landscapes in Illinois and Wisconsin.



### patricia whalen keck

Sculpture  
E patricia.keck@sbcglobal.net

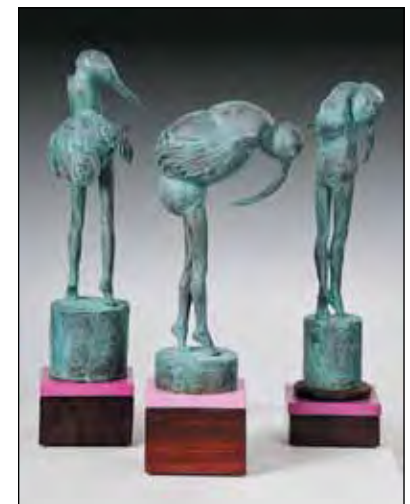
**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** Expressionism and Surrealism – they best convey the mood and idea of my work.

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** The greatest hurdle had been to simplify my thoughts to focus on only a few elements and principles.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I most enjoy doing the surface work, the skin of the piece, and the beginning of a work when the attitude is established.

**What has inspired you?** Many things inspire me. The first is acknowledgement by those who view my work – many viewers will make a connection with experiences in their own lives that parallel mine. Time spent in the studio when the work starts to come together. Music, especially new forms, jazz fusion, and more contemplative sounds. Watching other artists work.

**What do you want your art to do?** To express an emotion or attitude – a moment caught in time.







### fisher stolz

Sculpture

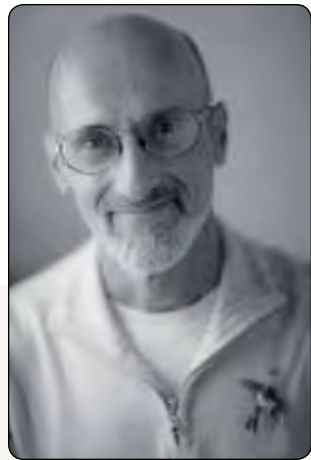
**W** fisherstolz.com

**E** fisher@bradley.edu

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** The creation of sculpture engages both mind and body. I make decisions about concepts, forms, and materials. Some materials require physical effort and several skill sets. Since each work is unique, there are always specific solutions to be determined when bringing an idea into a physical presence.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** As the sculpture professor at Bradley University, I work with aspiring artists all the time. "Art ain't easy." If someone thinks the art courses at Bradley are going to be a simple path to padding their grade point average, they are in for a surprise. It takes attention in class, time outside of class, understanding the concepts of visual language, and training the eye how not to just look but see. There is much to learn about technique, history, contemporary perspectives, and developing a personal voice in the field that relates to our culture and society.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I like the Midwestern appreciation of craftsmanship and success earned through hard work. There is less of a flight to the latest fad; things here need to be time tested and proven.



### gene mialkowski

Sculpture

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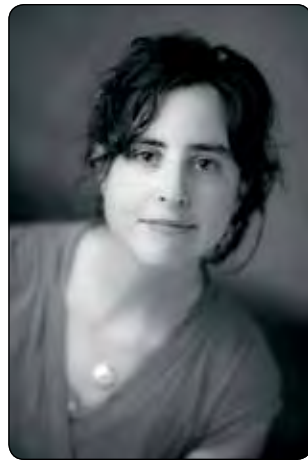
**What do you want your art to do?** Inspire, entertain, be fun. Spread joy and touch the senses of those who are receptive.

**Three words that best describe your art:** Fanciful, organic, inspirational.

**What is your motto or favorite quote?** Be grateful to God for every moment. Be a good family member in whatever your role. Be good to others, helpful and true. Follow the Tao teaching; its wisdom is boundless. Be a good artist and artful in all that you do. Do your work and then let go – it is the only path to serenity.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Early in my art career, Nita Sunderland told me, "If you think because you're an artist you can escape reality, forget it!" I've learned that she's right. If anything, as an artist, you have added responsibility on top of the calling to be an artist.

**Why did you become an artist?** I've always been an artist of sorts and it manifested itself in play in my building projects. In 2002, it became my calling.



### nicole klinge

Mixed Media

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**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** From nature, from sacred art, from traditional mandala design and thangka paintings, from quilt design, and from visions.

**What's your artistic goal?** To transform the negative energy of wasteful, disposable, short-sighted consumerism and to inspire people to do something positive about it.

**Describe your artistic process.** I get a glimpse of a vision, I sketch it, and then I use whatever technique I need to make it manifest.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** I make art out of trash, stuff that would end in the landfill, because there is so much of it. It is colorful, shiny, and beautiful. A color palette like no other.

**Who and what inspire you?** I am inspired by the possibility that humans will wake up into consciousness, realize our interconnectedness, and live with respect, love, and integrity for all.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** Saving materials from an imminent death in the landfill.



### stephen prather

Drawing

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**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** I enjoy realism. I find life is in the details and in the intricate play of shadows and texture.

**My life as an artist won't be complete until I...** am chosen for the Federal Duck Stamp Contest.

**Describe the space where you create your art.** Any corner or bare space, any time, anywhere.

**Does your art have a message? What is it?** I capture a moment in time in my art, and you can return to it and experience the emotion over and over again.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** My wife and I enjoy going out for photographic excursions in cities, small towns, and parks to collect moments in time.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** In living things – people and animals.

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** As an introverted person, art has allowed me to express myself without feeling vulnerable.

**What is your favorite subject?** Mostly people and animals as I find living things to be expressive.



### richard kirchgessner

Mixed Media | Painting | Sculpture

**E** dickster5819@sbcglobal.net

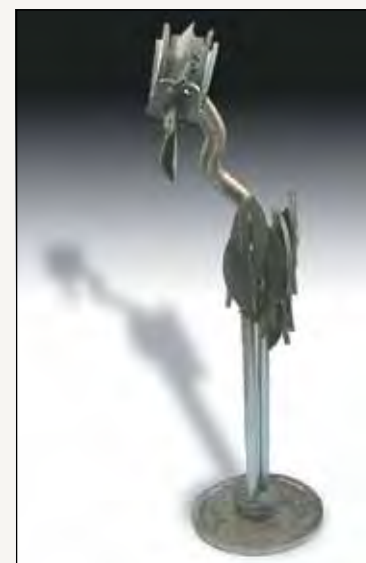
**Why did you become an artist?** I'm an incomplete person if I don't create art.

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** I like to work in both plaster and steel with found objects. My audience will see objects in my art that they may see everyday, but I put a twist on how they view them.

**How did you get started in art?** When I was about eight or nine years old, I would sit around and draw the cartoons in the Sunday paper. I had my first formal art training at Illinois Central College.

**What's one thing you should throw away and haven't. Why?** I found a twisted chrome spoked wheel cover. When the right time comes, it will be included into a sculpture.

**What are you working on now?** I am welding steel using discarded scraps and objects, combining them with plaster relief casts made from found objects.



### susan galloway

Drawing | Painting

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**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** It has helped me work through the tough times and helped me celebrate the great times. It is a great outlet for me.

**What is your favorite subject?** People – I love capturing a special expression or moment in time.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** I just finished some dancers. They are less detailed than the homescapes and portraits I had been working on previously. This gives me a chance to be more expressive with color and brush strokes.

**How did you get started in art?** My family's encouragement. My siblings are engineers and corporate sales V.P.s, but they were (and are) very supportive of my artistic endeavors.

**Describe your artistic process.** When I get an inspiration for a painting, I start sketching ideas until I have something I want to experiment with and then I start painting. For an illustration, I listen to what the client wants and we discuss options, then I'll send a sketch of the idea before starting work on the final artwork.





## doug and eileen leunig

Photography  
W purposedrivenart.org  
E dandeleunig@gmail.com



ciAo

ciAo

They were married in 1998, and it is obvious to everyone they are superbly well-suited for each other. They had been friends for years. What came as a surprise was their professional collaboration. Both Doug and Eileen Leunig saw with their first project together that their individual work improved, and they discovered they liked working together. The realization came when they were at Caterpillar Inc. in different departments and were assigned the job of producing a slide show for the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. From the beginning, they agreed they didn't want to focus on death, loss, betrayal, and revenge. Their production, "We Hold These Truths," highlighted America's core values, how this country rebuilds after disaster, comes together in unity during heartbreak, and grows stronger and more cohesive as a nation of immigrants.

The Leunigs formalized their collaboration by starting Purpose Driven Art, with the goal of producing photography that changes the way people see the world. After-tax revenue is donated to causes of common good, including the Sun Foundation's Art & Science in the Woods and Clean Water Celebration and community arts organizations.

The Leunigs have both retired from Caterpillar, but their collaborative work continues. They've photographed water in Minnesota and Argentina, landscapes around the world, and wildflowers in Peoria. They use a photographic method they call painting with light.

Doug Leunig was born in East St. Louis and moved to Peoria when he was three and his father, a commercial artist, began his own firm. In fifth grade, Leunig earned recognition for his drawing but had little formal art instruction. After graduating from Richwoods High School, he started at University of Iowa in pre-dentistry, soon switching to art and earned a BFA with an emphasis on photography and minors in drawing and sculpture.

After graduation, he came home to Peoria and showed his portfolio at Caterpillar. The company wanted to hire him but didn't anticipate having an opening for five years. Leunig freelanced during that wait, doing work for *National Geographic* ads, and ultimately had a 30-year career with Caterpillar.

"It is a basic human need to create. That's what drives people and helps them feel fulfilled," said Doug Leunig, 63. "When we look through the eyes of other artists, we see the world differently and we gain new understanding. Art is a creative problem-solving process."

Eileen Leunig grew up in Peoria and her parents always arranged for classes at Lakeview Museum and the Peoria Park District. She remembers her grandmother telling her that she "had art in her veins." Her mother would counter "No, she has blood in her veins." Art was not viewed as a viable occupation by her parents, but an aptitude test at Bradley showed she had proficiency as an art critic. After graduating from Richwoods High School, Leunig went to Western Illinois University with a declared major in art but switched to clothing and textiles with a minor in journalism. Back in Peoria she worked for local publishers before moving to Minnesota to work for a textbook publisher. She later joined Caterpillar Inc. in Peoria.

"Art helps us understand ourselves better. When we spend time with something, we investigate it further and our understanding evolves. The more we understand, the more we appreciate," said Eileen Leunig, 59. "My self-confidence wasn't strong enough to stay in the art program in college, but with Doug's encouragement I've found my voice. Trust is a big part of our collaboration."



SEEDS OF CHANGE  
Photography/Digital Art  
24" x 36"



AWAY #5

Pastel on Postcard  
3 1/2" x 5"

Ann E. Coulter grew up in a central Illinois family who relished vacations in the Rocky Mountains, Canadian Rockies, Tetons, and Adirondack Mountains. Those vacation spots instructed her eye. She learned to see beauty there, not in the infinite horizons and expansive skies of the Midwest.

It wasn't until she was living 2,000 miles away in one of America's iconic cities that her eye began to see the Midwest landscape for the first time.

As she was growing up, her mother worked hard to fill the gaps in the art instruction Coulter received in Joliet public schools. Mother and daughter took oil painting classes together. They made frequent visits to the Art Institute of Chicago. Coulter tried to pursue an interest in nursing, but two queasy days as a candy striper ended that. All the while, her mother kept encouraging her to follow her talents. During Coulter's senior year in high school, a student teacher from Illinois State University worked at her school and taught about the Impressionists. He took students on a tour of the art facilities at ISU. Coulter was hooked, applied there, and was accepted.

She graduated from ISU with a BS and a major in studio art. One of her instructors, Harold Gregor, arranged for Coulter and another recent graduate to sublet an apartment in New York City. But rather than go to New York, Coulter got married and her husband accepted a job in San Diego. The couple moved to California, and Coulter earned an MA at San Diego State University with a major in painting and an emphasis on drawing.

It was on a trip home from California that first July for a family wedding that Coulter started to change her vision of the world and, by extension, her thinking. Central Illinois looked lush, green, and verdant compared with the California desert. Rather than overt beauty, there was subtle beauty that rewarded the viewer for the effort of discovery. Every visit home brought new discoveries.



ann e. coulter

Drawing  
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"San Diego has no seasonal markers of time. Here there was spring. Here there was winter. I learned how significant the seasons were, and I missed them. I learned the smell of late summer was important to me," she said.

After about four years in California, the couple moved back to central Illinois, and Coulter began teaching at the Peoria Art Guild, later becoming assistant director. She left when her two daughters were born. She set up her studio in the Phoenix Building in Peoria Heights, three blocks from her home, and developed the routine of working in her studio from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. before her husband left for work. Later she was asked to join the faculty at Bradley University and worked there for 15 years as a part-time drawing instructor.

When the family moved from a home on Prospect to an old Italianate farmhouse outside Elmwood, Coulter found herself immersed in a landscape she had once only observed to a landscape she now embodied.

In some of her current work, she's doing small landscapes positioned on pages of a pre-Civil War book *Practical Cyclopedia*. With absolute conviction, the book instructs how to do everything from cook and study to love and parent.

"The landscapes combine sense of place and sense of time with what we thought was true," said Coulter, 54. "What we thought was true then is really so far off, but how certain we were then. And how certain we are now."





### tammy prather

Photography  
**E** thewashburnwhisper@hotmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I find my inspiration all around me. I think all objects pose as artful expressions when you take the moment to view them from the right perspective.

**What do you want your art to do?** I hope it causes a paused moment of reflection in an overly busy world.

**What is the biggest hurdle you've overcome?** My own fear of inability.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** "Just go do it." That's my husband's response every single time I mention that I wish I could do something. "Stop wishing it and just go do it."



### carolyn kyle

Painting  
**E** carolynkyle3350@gmail.com

**Describe your artistic process.** I fall in love with an outdoor scene. Next, I paint it in my mind until the inspiration bursts with color and shape.

**Do you have a predominant theme? If you do, what is the reason for it?** My vacation spots, whether my backyard or Madeline Island. God created awesome views.

**How did you get started in art?** Painting enables me to communicate in a very exciting way. Color, form, and texture are so exciting.

**Why did you become an artist?** Creative process leads to freedom.

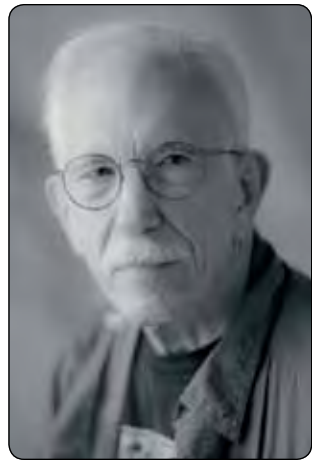
**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** My passions and personality reflect my life choices.

**What is your favorite subject?** Landscapes.

**What's your favorite piece?** "Milwaukee River."

**Do you have a favorite style? What is it and why?** Painting loose gives me complete ownership. I choose colors, shapes, and textures.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Nature.



### bob moulton

Photography  
**E** bobmargaretm@comcast.net

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** A slant of light, a flash of geometry, or something telling me to look, capture, and create.

**What's your favorite piece?** Others: "Pepper No. 30," Edward Weston. It is a glorious enigma. Of my own, it would be the last image I have made that I can live with!

**Have you been influenced by any particular artistic movement?** While dated, I found the images and principles of the Straight or Group f/64 schools to be central to my way of thinking.

**What do you want your art to do?** Through art, I can share my perceptions with others.

**What's your artistic goal?** To engage the viewer to look, view, study, and enjoy the image in its entirety.

**Who and what inspire you?** Sally Mann, Julieanne Kost, and George DeWolfe. Art sources are available if you open yourself to them. Trust your own creative judgments and not those imposed on you by others.



### john selburg

Drawing | Sculpture  
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**E** john.selburg@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** Outside.

**What is your favorite subject?** Eyes and strange things.

**What are you working on now? How does it link to what you have done in the past?** Currently I'm creating small ink drawings that have evolved from massive charcoal drawings and wood carvings.

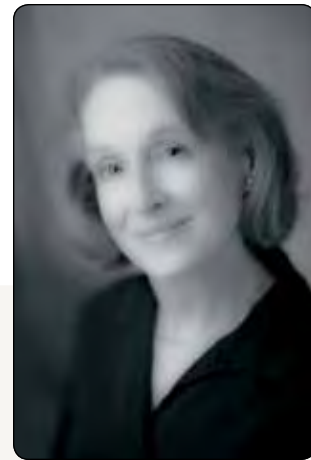
**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** Getting lost in my imagination.

**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** Dreams trigger art, but usually seeing a blank sheet of paper or a block of wood does the trick.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Trust yourself. Do what you want to do. Brush off all negative and manipulative advice.

**How did you get started in art?** I've been making art since I could hold a pencil. I began sculpting very young since my dad involved me in the process of carving wooden loons and ducks.

**Describe the space where you create your art?** I have a great studio overlooking the river, but I tend to create more often in my back yard, in the woods, or in a hammock.



### ramona gibbs

Painting  
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**E** rhgibbs2@gmail.com

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** I'm inspired by nature, from the smallest detail to the most sweeping vista. I'm intrigued by designs and patterns and by evidence of time passing in formations and layers of rocks. Sometimes I'm inspired by a sense of the unknown, as when a stream disappears around a boulder.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** The Midwest has it all – rural and urban areas in close proximity, both flat and sculptured topography, extremes of climate – all providing great subject matter for art. We're especially fortunate in having great farmland vistas that give such a sense of connection to the earth.

**Describe your artistic process.** I begin with a sketch with the intention of bringing out the subject's distinctive characteristics – the ones that appeal most strongly to me. That is followed by a subconscious balancing of visual elements through many stages until I'm satisfied that I've interpreted the subject in a way that works as a complete whole.



### tania thousand

Painting  
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**How did you get started in art?** Growing up in Madison, Wisconsin, I had a very creative mother who made sure we always had access to paper, pencils, and crayons. Since moving to the Peoria area, I have taken classes from or been most influenced by Jim Matarelli, Carol Quell, Jeanne Ledbetter, and Ken Clubb.

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "If you could say it in words, there would be no reason to paint." *Edward Hopper*







**michael mcgarvey**

Photography  
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**E** pizzazman@hotmail.com

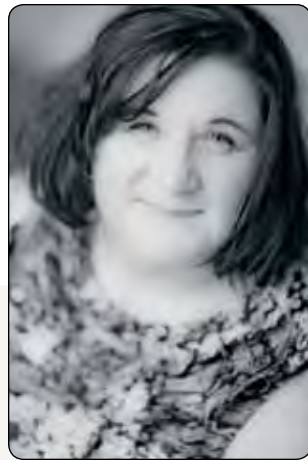
**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** In the world around me and, most of the time, it's in the garden in my own back yard.

**What's your favorite subject?** Macro photography of butterflies, bees, wasps, and any other garden plants or visitors that catch my eye.

**What do you want your art to do?** To provide close-up glimpses of these creatures from the garden. To surprise the viewer with the sheer beauty or detail of the subject I've captured on camera.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** While shooting photos in the garden, I'd say it's the thrill of the hunt. It's the expectation of finding something unexpected and then actually capturing it for everyone to see.

**Does your art have a message?**  
**What is it?** Slow down. Take a closer look. There are amazing things all around us.



**amy lambert**

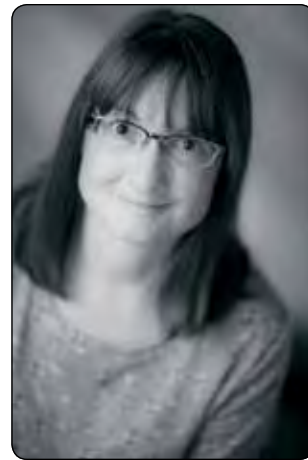
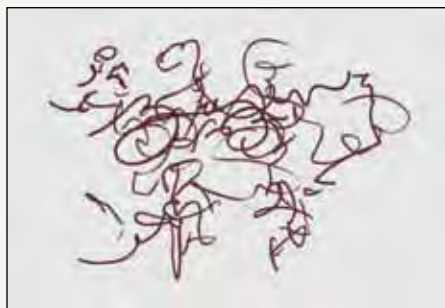
Drawing | Mixed Media  
**W** eighmmie.com  
**E** eighmmie@gmail.com

**Describe your artistic process.** In order for me to complete anything, it takes one of two things: extended isolation or lively collaboration. My long-term project "Medusa" requires a very difficult carving of time to move mindfulness from the disciplines of design to expression. Prior to the working, I begin with sketches and collect inspirations to help construct the vision and pinpoint details.

**Is there a purpose to your artwork?**  
**What is it?** The purpose of my artwork is to be fully lacking of design. It is to hold a moment of pure emotion and expression, free of precision or thought. Its purpose is to hold the memory of a moment of a soul drenched in escape.

**If you could have dinner with any artist (living or dead), who would it be? What would you ask them?** Neil Gaiman and I would ask, "How can we ensure we do not lose our myths, stories, and cultures in a world that continues to fragment and amalgamate?" "How do you use sketching to help with story development?" and then follow with, "How does houndstooth taste?"

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** The working – there is nothing better than the energy of art grooving together.



**vicki berchtold**

Painting  
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**E** creative\_arts101@yahoo.com

**What's your artistic goal?** I love learning and experimenting with different media and techniques. My goal for a person viewing my paintings is for them to experience the "wow" effect or moment.

**What is your favorite subject?** I like to paint a variety of subjects – especially landscapes, sunsets, animals, reflections, and sun rays coming through the trees.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I love the painting process and the way in which an idea can take on a life of its own and develop into a beautiful painting.

**What would give you the greatest satisfaction regarding your art?** Teaching art classes and seeing the students stand back and look at their art while a huge smile comes over their face – they are pleased!

**What are you working on now?** At the present time I have many projects in the works, but I am finishing a brightly colorful fall scene of trees reflecting in the water.

**What's your favorite piece?** A painting called "Jaguar Coming," which is a close-up of a jaguar's face coming through some grass, possibly looking for something to eat.



**jack ryan**

Painting  
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**E** jackstillhere@gmail.com

**What is your artistic goal?** My goal is to move from one who can draw to one who can create a work of art. I've always been aware there is a difference. My goal is to render a common scene into a work of art.

**How did you get started in art?** I've been able to draw likenesses of people since grade school, but art was never something I enjoyed doing for any length of time and nothing I ever took seriously. In high school, it meant assignments, a yearbook, posters, etc., always with deadlines, and I constantly seemed to be in trouble for unfinished work on my drawing board. It was something I wrestled with throughout my life – the fact I was "given this gift" and was not using it. "Good old Irish Catholic guilt," some people call it. Then two years ago, while house and animal sitting for a friend in Eureka I began to see a strange beauty in the mostly flat Midwestern countryside with our full range of seasons and how things look at different times of the day. I was especially impressed by the stark contrast of the enormous grain elevator I would pass to and from Peoria. Within the boredom of this solitary retreat, I decided to draw, then draw again, then paint this monster, emphasizing its contrast to the flat surroundings. Plus, it's hard to make a grain elevator uglier than it already is. From there I rented a studio at the Contemporary Arts Center and even had a business card printed.



**edna nugent**

Photography

**What is your motto and/or favorite quote?** "The question is not what you look at, but what you see." *Henry David Thoreau*

**How did you get started in art?** I began photography because I would see something meaningful or beautiful and wanted to capture the essence of it to remember and share.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I can take my "artist's supplies," the camera, with me almost anywhere.

**What do you think about being a Midwestern artist?** I love wandering the Midwest. It is full of beauty and wonder. I especially enjoy old farmsteads with rusty equipment and weathered buildings.

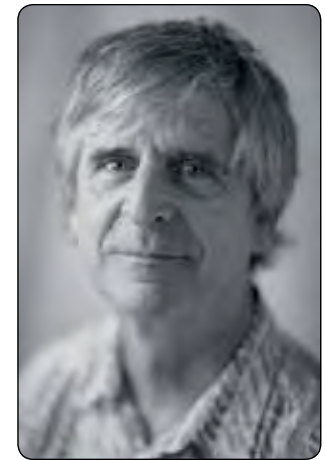
**How do you get ideas of what you want to do next?** I try to keep open eyes and an open mind. Sometimes things just call out to me.

**What is the best part of the artistic process for you – starting, working, or finishing?** The excitement of discovery is the best part of the artistic process.

**What's some of the best advice you've been given?** Keep doing what you love, then share it.

**What is your favorite subject?** I like to take pictures of anything that gives me a shout of joy or wonder.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?** Enjoy the work of others. It will lift you, give you greater vision, and spark your curiosity.



**david gregory**

Painting  
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**E** gregoryart@hotmail.com

**How has your artwork influenced different events in your life?** Art has enabled me to travel, to meet interesting people, and to make friends in faraway places. I've been to Saudi Arabia to teach a watercolor workshop; printed an art book in Singapore; organized a Hawaii Watercolor Society Exhibition; and traveled to Italy with my wife to find renewed inspiration for painting.

**Why did you become an artist?** I've been fascinated with art since childhood. While studying architecture at the University of Illinois, I discovered that my favorite classes were watercolor and oil painting. With the encouragement of my art instructors, I decided to focus on fine art.

**What's the best thing you enjoy about what you do?** I have been fortunate to paint full-time for over 30 years. It has allowed me to work from home and remain close to my family, enjoy a flexible schedule, and have the freedom to travel to exciting places. Of course, this is only accomplished by disciplined work habits.

**As an artist, where do you find inspiration?** As a representational painter, inspiration comes from the world around me, though I adjust reality to fit my vision.







joel timm

Photography  
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E joeltimm@hotmail.com

Do you have a favorite style?

**What is it and why?** I shoot primarily in HDR (high dynamic range) photography. I love the high contrast and bold colors that the style offers.

**Who and what inspire you?** I love old buildings and anything abandoned. I feel that these subjects have a story to tell, and I want to help tell that story.

What do you want your art to do?

I want my photography to make people stop and look around. Art surrounds us, and we pass by it every day. Just slow down and enjoy the beauty around us.

Is there a purpose to your artwork?

**What is it?** I like to stop people in their tracks. I like them to question whether it is actually a photograph they are looking at. If they have to stop and squint at the work and ask, “What is this?” I know I did my job well.

What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

**Simply, be visible.** This was the advice I got when I started. When a client buys your artwork, they aren’t just buying your art; they are buying you. The client wants to know that you are an active member of the art community they are buying into.



kiley beecher

Illustration  
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How did you get started in art?

I’ve drawn since I was able to hold a crayon. I would create my own characters and worlds... all within my imagination. As I grew older, I thought it was interesting how a simple line can simulate shape, texture, and form.

Is there a purpose to your artwork?

**What is it?** I enjoy entertaining people, rekindling old memories, and bringing people together through similar interests.

**My life as an artist won’t be complete until I...** win an Eisner Award!

What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

**Never give up!** Be passionate about your art and never put a pencil down. Keep drawing, each and every day. Study your techniques and, when you find something you like, log it, keep it, and move on to try something new. Art is an evolution; a constant process for personal improvement.



Central Illinois Art Galleries

Dunlap, IL

PEARCE GALLERY

202 N 2nd St  
Dunlap, IL 61525  
**P** 309.265.6094  
**W** pearcegallery.com

Washington

MCKENZIE RIVER POTTERY

308 N Main St  
Washington, IL 61571  
**P** 309.444.3573  
**W** mckenzieriverpottery.com

Princeville

I STILL BELIEVE

103 W Main St  
Princeville, IL 61559  
**P** 309.385.1515

Peoria

EXHIBIT A GALLERY AND FRAMING

5901 N Prospect Rd  
Peoria, IL, 61614  
**P** 309.693.6180  
**W** exhibitagallery.net

FROGS POND GALLERY

3225 Prospect Rd  
Peoria, IL 61603  
**P** 309.265.6733  
**W** frogspondproductions.com

JUNCTION GALLERY & FAST FRAME

4700 N University St  
Peoria, IL 61614  
**P** 309.689.0456  
**W** junctiongallery.com

PICTURE THIS GALLERY

4607 N. Prospect Rd  
Peoria Heights, IL, 61616  
**P** 309.681.1865  
**W** picturethispeoriaheights.com

JONATHON ROMAIN

1919 N Sheridan  
Peoria, IL 61604  
**P** 309.713.3744  
**W** jromain.com

STUDIO 621

621 SW Commercial, Suite 1A  
Peoria, IL 61602  
**P** 309.676.1754

Morton

JEFFERSON STREET STUDIO & GALLERY

(opening Nov 2012)  
206 W Jefferson St  
Morton, IL 61550  
**P** 309.696.9015

Pekin

SPEAKEASY ART CENTER

353 Court St.  
Pekin, IL 61554  
**P** 309.620.1860  
**W** facebook.com/pages/Speakeasy-Art-Center/115548505125980

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in central Illinois with regularly scheduled gallery exhibitions:

BRADLEY UNIVERSITY

Peoria, IL

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE

East Peoria, IL

EUREKA COLLEGE

Eureka, IL



CIAO Locations



THE ATELIER  
1000 SW Adams St.  
Peoria, IL 61602  
W ciaopeoria.com

BACKSPACE  
606 (Rear) West Main St  
Peoria, IL 61606  
W wearebackspace.wordprint.com

CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER  
OF PEORIA  
305 SW Water St  
Peoria, IL 61602  
Ph: 309.674.6822  
W peoriacac.org

THE CORNERSTONE  
321 Madison Ave.  
Peoria, IL 61603  
W ciaopeoria.com

MURRAY CENTER  
FOR THE ARTS  
100 Walnut St.  
Peoria, IL 61602  
W ciaopeoria.com

PEORIA ART GUILD  
203 Harrison St  
Peoria, IL 61602  
P 309.637.2787  
W peoriaartguild.org

PRAIRIE CENTER OF THE ARTS  
1506 Southwest Washington Street  
Peoria, IL 61602  
309.673.5589  
W prairiecenterofthearts.org

STUDIO 825  
825 SW Adams St.  
Peoria, IL 61602  
W ciaopeoria.com

STUDIOS ON SHERIDAN  
933 Sheridan Rd.  
Peoria, IL 61606  
W ciaopeoria.com

TORAASON GLASS  
506 Evans St.  
Peoria, IL 61603  
W ciaopeoria.com

WHEEL ART POTTERY STUDIOS  
1101 SW Washington St  
Peoria, IL 61602  
W facebook.com/WheelArtPotteryStudios

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