

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
2022

design **Style**

A STUDY IN STYLE

DESIGNER LAURIE LEBOUF HAS A PASSION
FOR HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE.
IT'S ON DISPLAY THROUGHOUT HER NEW HOME.

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A LIFE IN BLOOM
A floral artist tells
her story p.11

ON MATTERS OF ART
We visit local artists, collectors,
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A LIFE IN ART

Three St. Louis artists
share the stories
behind their work.

BY NICHOLAS PHILLIPS

BETTY TOLER TURNER

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Turner grew up an artistic child in a small Georgia town, then studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and School of Design, graduating in 1967. She and her husband, Gerald, and their two kids moved to St. Louis when Gerald, who worked for IBM, was transferred here. After some years as a full-time mom, she went back to school and earned her master’s degree in art from Fontbonne University. For two decades she ran an interior design business. But even before Keita Turner began putting the art online, many people had viewed Turner’s work, which has been exhibited in more than 60 showings around the U.S., including eight solo shows.

These days, Turner paints in her basement, in Maryland Heights, using mostly oil and acrylics. “I’m not that tall,” she says with a laugh, “so I have to stand most of the time to see proportions and get my scale straightened out.” She prefers to paint people. She lets their moods and personalities flow in, along with how she, the artist, feels about that particular person. On occasion, she’ll paint from a photograph, but uses it only as a rough guide, adding or subtracting elements until she intuits that it’s finished. Turner says she’s satisfied with her painting of the fur-coated woman on the sidewalk. “I hadn’t seen it around here,” she says, tickled. “I was surprised Keita had it!”



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STEVE HARTMAN

Three years ago, Steve Hartman went looking for trash. His full-time job is with Werremeyer Creative, a marketing firm with healthcare industry clients, but at that time he was feeling an urge to create pop art in his free time. He’d just milled around an exhibit at the Saint Louis Art Museum, *Graphic Revolution: American Prints 1960 to Now*, which had featured works by Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. That stirred a desire in Hartman to play around with templates and screens and spray paint. So he needed discarded shapes.

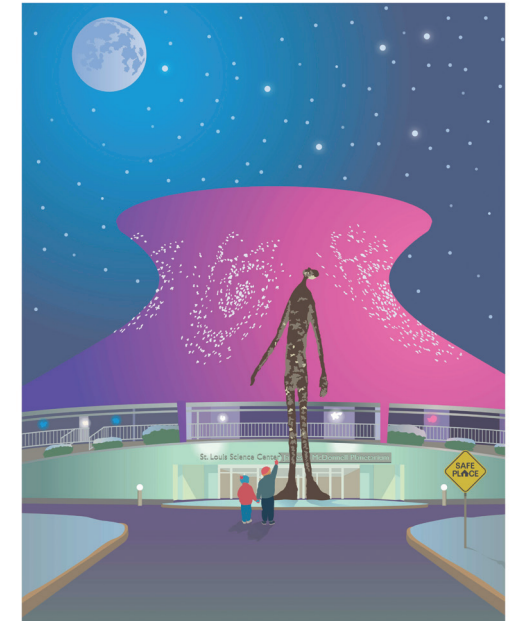
Hartman knew that his friend Dave Thomas would have some. Thomas owns a sign-making company in Edwardsville and cuts letterforms from 4-by-8-foot acrylic panels. The unused material usually gets recycled. Hartman gathered some shapes, took them home, dropped them on the floor, and started spray-painting—“a lightly controlled random process,” he says. He made about a half dozen, watching the colors interacting with one another. (Hartman used watercolor to activate the empty spaces.) His mind drifted to race relations, the world at large, his place in it. “It’s not something I ever talk about with people,” he says. “It’s not a statement piece for people in the arts. It’s a meditative process for myself.”

But these days, people are indeed seeing these works—many, many people. Hartman’s wife, Shawna Flanigan, works at COCA, and she learned that the Lambert Art & Culture Program, an initiative to exhibit local artwork at the airport, was soliciting submissions. So she alerted Hartman, who submitted six pieces he collectively calls the *Graphic Abstracts Series*, and the committee selected them for display. They finally went up in Terminal 1 in late September. Friends have texted him photos of the exhibit; one told him it reminded him of travel posters from the 1940s. “That was never in my mind,” Hartman says, “but could be something the airport liked.”

Certain pieces in *Graphic Abstracts* are named after things they resemble—for example, “Pierced Starship” and “Dirty Martini.” But other titles, such as “Cosmic Rainbow” and “Salt Water Taffy,” occurred to Hartman as he looked at the finished work and free-associated.

“It’s probably the biggest deal I’ve had on the fine-art side,” he says. Countless people have seen his designs for the healthcare industry, he adds, “and nobody has a clue that I’ve done it—but this has my name on it. It’s almost like a billboard.”

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JANET MUHM

Janet Muhm didn’t set out to create a calendrical love letter to her adopted hometown of St. Louis. The Omaha native arrived here decades ago to attend college, settled in South City, then moved out to Ballwin in 2016, working in marketing all those years. But one day in 2017, while between jobs, she returned to her previous neighborhood, Holly Hills, and captured digital photos of her beloved Carondelet Park. At home, she opened them in Adobe Illustrator, wanting to try her hand at illustrating. She’d done graphic design before, but this, she recalls, felt different: “It was like a dream state.”

Liking the result, Muhm created another, this one of Ted Drewes, and realized: She was building a calendar. She made more and named the collection *A Year in the City*. She printed and bound the calendar herself, then took the finished product around to various shops. “I didn’t really know whether this would take,” she says, “but the reaction was immediate and almost frightening.” By this time, Muhm had taken another job, but she decided to quit and do artwork full-time—a lifelong dream for Muhm, who as a child had stared at the hallucinogenic drawings of Peter Max (illustrator of The Beatles’ *Yellow Submarine*) and Milton Glaser (co-founder of *New York Magazine*). The work was so successful, it prompted the creation of prints, T-shirts, and holiday cards.

Muhm has her process down to a science. She drives around the metro area, on both sides of the river, hunting for places with multigenerational appeal. (Her customer base spans age groups, she says.) She tries to match a place with an appropriate month—for example, a photo of sledgers on Art Hill is January 2022. Once she selects a place, she takes a handful of photos for reference, then uploads them into layers in Illustrator, moves things around, and freehands her illustrations with her mouse, spending about 25 hours on each. Eventually she deletes the underlying photos.

One of her favorite works is the McDonnell Planetarium at the Saint Louis Science Center. One night after a tap-dancing lesson, Muhm and a friend visited the site and took photos. Later, when Muhm illustrated it, she included the sculpture of the person looking up at the sky and added two children looking up at the sculpture. “That was my friend and me,” she says, thinking back on that special night. “There was just something very precious about that moment.”





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BY NICHOLAS PHILLIPS

JANUARY 6, 2022

6:00 AM

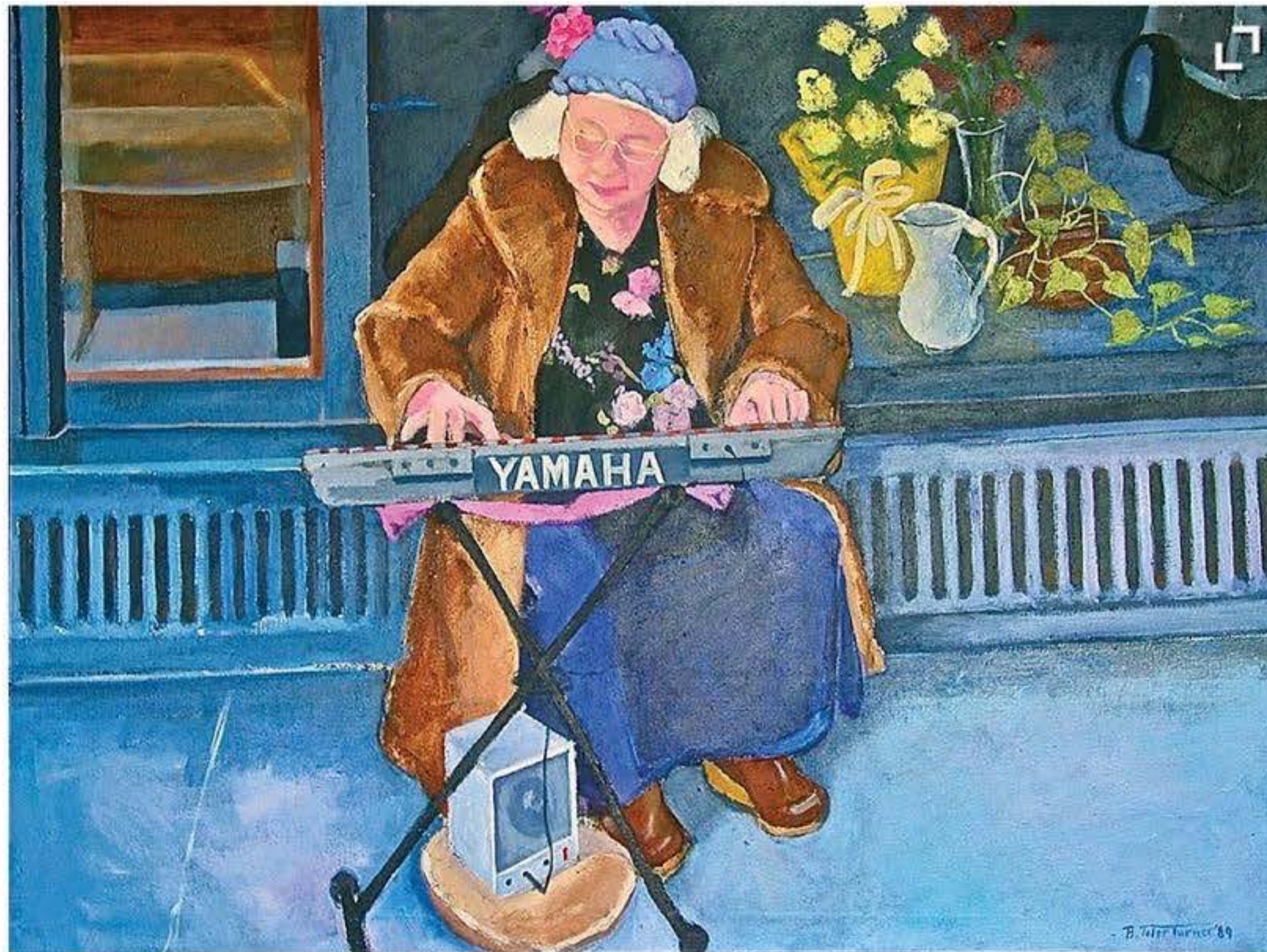


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