

electriccity

CREATIVE



EXPAND
Issue 3
Autumn 2010

AUTUMN 2010

Editor Letter: EXPAND	3
Road Trip: HELENA GALLERIES	4
Ambassador: Photographer STEPHANIE ELLIOT	8
Photo Editorial: SCENES FROM HOME	12
First Friday: MUST BE THE WEATHER	18
Live Show: PO' GIRL at MACHINERY ROW	28
Liner Notes: I'VE GOTTA HUNCH	32

*Electric City Creative is a Habein Studio Production
All content remains copyright to individual creators
Main logo and plug graphic designed by John Dalke*

Electric City Creative is:

Sara Habein: Editor/Publisher

Tyson Habein: Photographer, Contributing Writer

Cover Photo: "Big Sky, Big Top" by Tyson Habein

Liner Notes Photo: "Adam David" by Tyson Habein

*Submission queries, suggestions, and comments:
electriccitycreative@gmail.com*

EXPAND

I am not a photographer. At least, I do not primarily consider myself one. My husband Tyson, on the other hand, lives and breathes the art of visual composition in the same way I do regarding the written word. We're of different artistic mindsets, but here's the thing — We won't settle for one field of interest. If you go through this issue and ones past, you will see that I have photos and he has writing featured within the pages. It's not just for lack of staff (though please, I'd like a staff!), but rather an unyielding need to flex our creative muscles.

It's important to expand our world view now and then. When we become too accustomed to our everyday environment, it becomes too easy to forget what other opportunities are out there. I'm not only talking about artists dabbling in another field — though that does have a way of bringing new inspiration. Everyone, no matter their field, could stand to learn something new now and then.

Seeking out the unknown is not only an act of bravery, it is an act of health.

Travel. Learn. Expand.

Thanks for reading. Happy New Year.

Sara Habein

(This issue brought to you by: Mad Men and Rubicon, Doves, Moose Drool Brown Ale, Roxy Music's "More Than This," guilt, and one great party on the edge of town.)

Note: You may have noticed that our issue is dedicated to only one season rather than a single month. Due to staffing numbers and other commitments, Electric City Creative will be a quarterly magazine until further notice. We'll see you again at the end of February.



Photo by Tyson Habein

SMALL TOWN ART RISING

Notes from Helena's art galleries



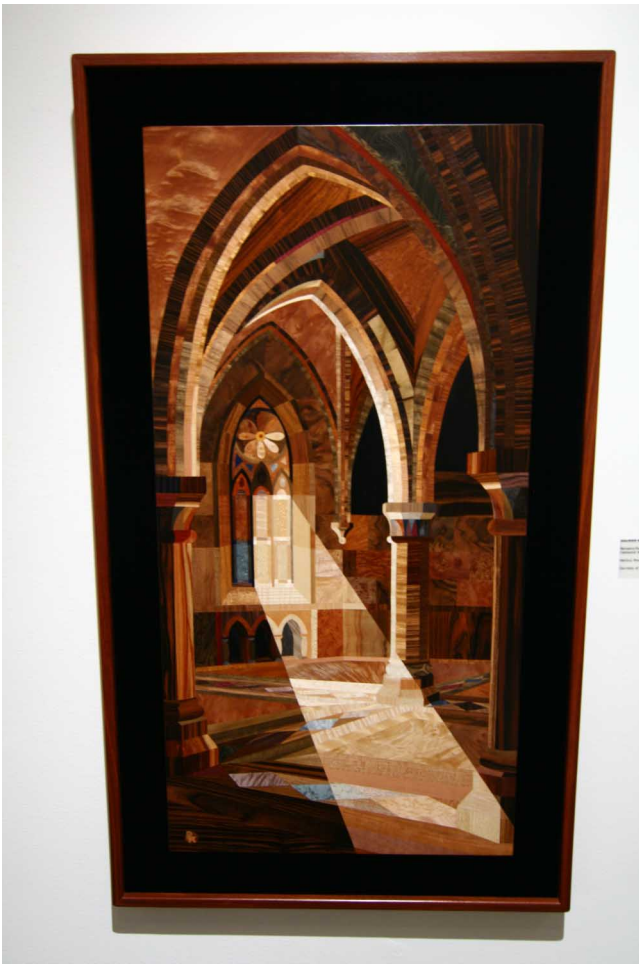
On the streets of downtown Helena, there are banners welcoming you to “The Best Small Art Town in America.” This is a bold claim. Someone once claimed that “America is all small towns, and the rest is just what’s in between them.” I don’t know if that’s entirely true, but Helena has no small amount of competition out there to be making this claim (along with the help of corporate sponsor Qwest, apparently). With small towns on both coasts that have economies entirely evolved towards the goal of selling art, Helena asks much of its creative community.

In many ways, Helena’s creative set delivers. And in the ways it doesn’t? Well, it’s good to have goals.

The **Holter Museum of Art** (12 E. Lawrence St.) made no small inroads towards this goal. It provided room after room of art ranging from photography to painting to sculpture to multi-media when I visited late this summer. What impressed me about the museum was how much of the art was engaging to me personally. I’ll be honest, most of the time if I walk through an art museum the size of The Holter, I expect to find perhaps five pieces that I leave continuing to think about. At that particular time, The Holter was filled with items that made me stop in my tracks over and over again.

Shortly after entering, I was drawn to the work of **Jennifer Li**. Her series of solar plate etchings, entitled “Dramatis Personae” are both beautiful and eerie in their simple portrait style. The characters in these images — and they are most certainly characters in every case — stare back at the viewer in a way that leaves both the subject of the etching and the viewer vulnerable. They aren’t photorealistic, and I don’t think solar plate etchings truly can be, but

(continued)



they feel real regardless. In pieces like “Trixie’s Place” I can honestly say I know the cold stickiness of those vinyl seats and the smooth, worn formica top of that diner table. This show ended on the 19th of September, so b present publishing time, you’ve likely already seen it, or missed it all together. Do yourself a favor and go look up Jennifer Li’s work elsewhere. She is worth your time.

I also looked at **Barry Hood**’s work in his show “Flow.” Though I’m generally not one to become too interested in glass pieces, Hood’s glass work coupled with sand castings, etchings and natural elements of wood and horse hair had me coming in for a closer look. The detail was wonderful and deep, though not overdone. Hood’s sense of placement and positioning kept each piece clean and viewer friendly.

“**Outside the Box: The Art of Wood**” was a display the kept me bouncing back and forth from one item in the room to the next. Hand-carved pieces, traditional turned wood, high level sculpture and furniture give a small taste of a wide range of techniques. The impressive work in this display ranges from Montana-based artisans to international woodworking masters from as far as Hungary.

“**Montana Landscape: The Eye of the Beholder**” is something that if put in the position of having to make decisions, I would have skipped over. I would have made a mistake in that choice. Far from a large scale display of traditional Montana landscapes that we’ve all looked



at since we were small children, this show focuses on the latter side of the colon in the title. Each individual piece is a glimpse at the state's landscape from the view-point of the individual artist. No two pieces are alike and in that regard, the large room full of art can almost be overwhelming. It's in a good way, as I found several pieces that pleased me, including of **Dudley Dana**'s photograph "Square Butte, Montana" and **Russell Chatham**'s "Winter Evening in Silver Bow" lithograph among others.

After my extensive visit to The Holter, I made a quick stop to check out **Turman Larison** contemporary. The show for the month, "Natural Causes," included the work of **Christine Joy**, **Phoebe Toland**, and **Linda Stoudt**. When I arrived, the show was still in the process of being set up, but it seemed to be headed in the direction of providing work that was entirely different from everything else I had seen in Helena up to that point. Variety is most assuredly the spice of art consumption and I'm glad to see Turman Larison seasoning the pot a bit.

I'll say it in a very direct manner: contrary to what Helena's tourism board and Qwest would have you think, Helena isn't likely the "best small art town in America." However, they're making a good effort in positioning themselves as a top notch art town. With venues and artists like this, they're going to continue to be on the rise.



“SOAK IN EVERY SECOND”

Great Falls native Stephanie Elliott takes her photography abroad



How did you get your start in photography?

I had always loved shooting my friends with disposable cameras. That began in college, but I never took it very seriously. I began painting around then as well. In high school, I had always been very caught up in academic success — I never really thought I had time for art. Now it is all I want to do.

My interest really began when I traveled to London on a study abroad course in college. My mother forced me to get a ‘real’ camera, rather than the disposables I insisted I was happy with. It was the instant results of the digital camera combined with an excuse to shoot every day that really made me notice the potential behind a camera. I’ve always loved finding beauty in the everyday. For some reason, until then, it hadn’t dawned on me that photography was the perfect medium.

You’ve done quite a bit of traveling around the world. How has that affected your photography? And where are some of your favorite cities to shoot?

I really like observing a situation from a distance, allowing it to unfold, and capturing that, rather than getting involved. It is what I am most comfortable doing, and what I think is the purest form of photography. I have done some modeling shoots, where I have to take more of a directorial role. It was strange, and against everything I thought photography should be — but I did enjoy the new potential. It is still possible to find those naturally beautiful moments; you just have to juggle a few more tasks at the same time. You also have to take more responsibility for the product, which is a little scary.

(continued)



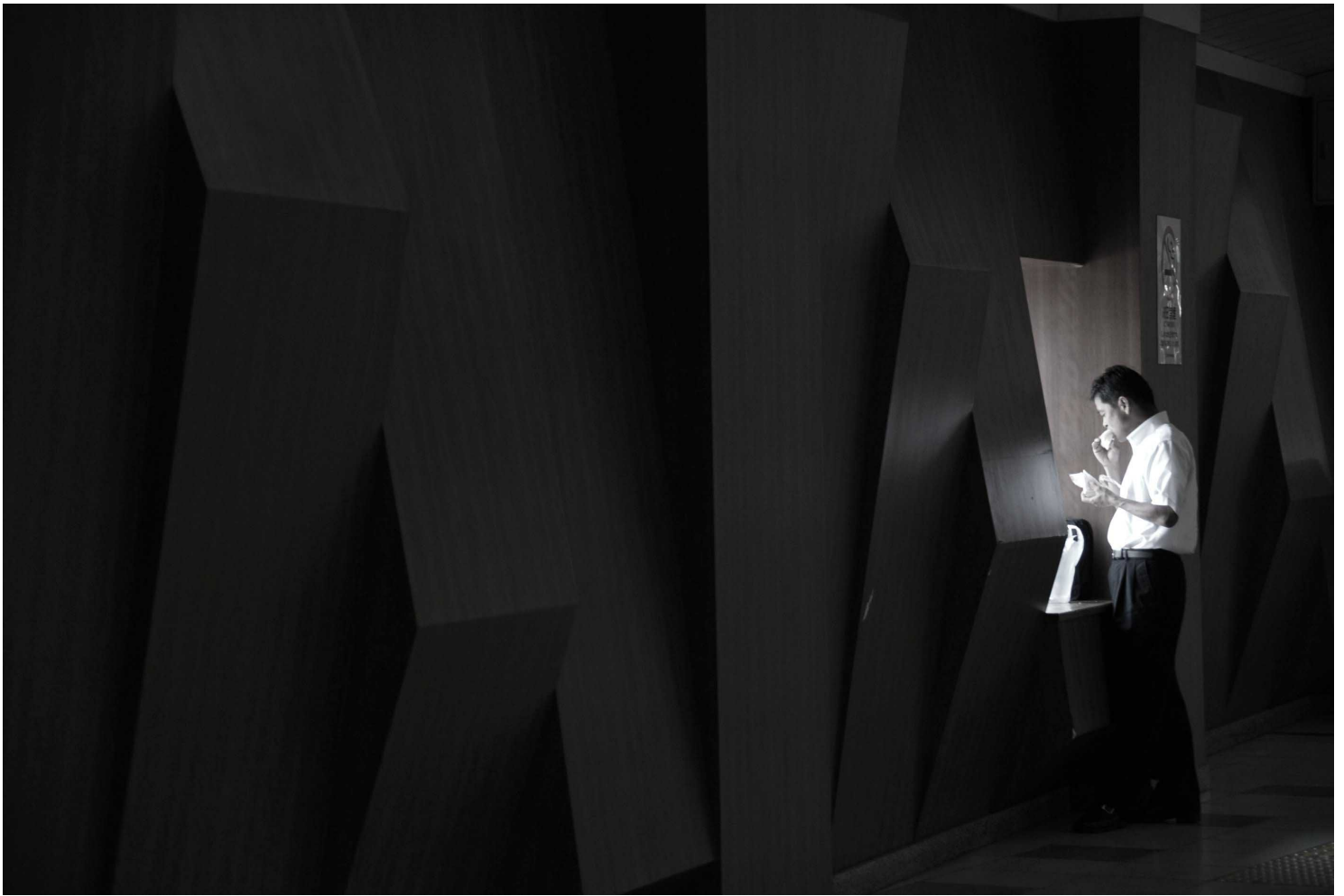
That being said, there is nothing like exploring a new city with your camera. It is what makes me most relaxed. I think Osaka has been my favorite city to shoot so far. Or maybe I am just happiest with some of the shots that have come out of there.

What projects do you currently have in the works?

After all that talk about the purity of the found moment, I have to admit, I have begun to move into portraiture. I guess you really can't knock it until you try it because it is quite fun. My portraits are really informal and tend to consist of me shoving my husband in front of something I think is pretty, still attempting to hold on to the concept of a 'found moment.' He grudgingly — lovingly — obliges. I think people always add interest to a photo, even if I am just using them as a silhouette.

I will always be interested in reflections. I think they say a lot about the idea of photography and the distance between the subject, the photographer, and the viewer. The reflections add a depth that a flat image cannot always convey.

Of course, I will always love street photography. I hope I never stop that — it does take an element of bravery that sometimes I lack. I don't really plan projects when I go out, and I



can't decide if it is because I am lazy or because I don't want to limit myself. Probably a combination of both.

With a recent trip to Great Falls, I tried to shoot my old home with a new eye. My husband and I just moved to London, so I felt like I needed to soak in every second, every diner, every cowboy hat while I was home. I didn't come close to doing it justice, but I would love to take an extended trip home just to shoot and travel.

Now in London, I'll probably go back to mostly street photos, though to be honest, I haven't gotten hold of a project yet. I think I am still in the awe stage of my move.

Being from Montana, what's the silliest stereotype or misconception you've heard regarding your home state?

There is a fascination with America in the UK. In particular, they love to romanticize our blue collar, down home values. Montana fits perfectly into that and I was trying to shoot that nostalgia when I was home. Being a nation the size of Montana itself, there is an admiration for our space, our ruggedness, and to a degree, our wholesome naivety. I find myself buying into that, and seeing how true it can be. I can't wait to go home again. 🏡

SCENES FROM HOME

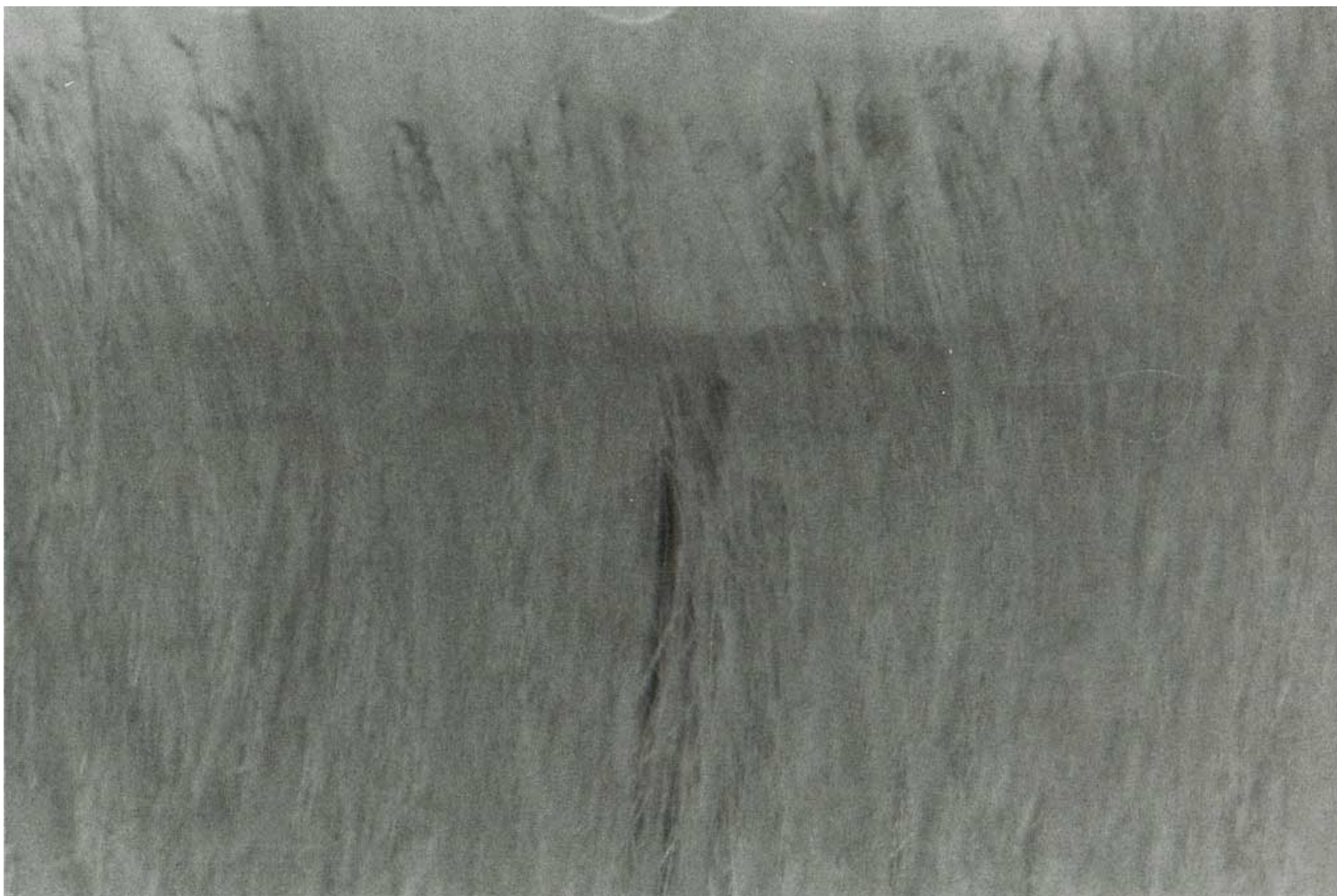
Photo editorial by Stephanie Elliott













To view more of Stephanie Elliott's work, visit www.stephanieees.com

MUST BE THE WEATHER



Paris Gibson Square hosted a **Spirit of Women** health event during October's First Friday. Providing wine, appetizers and guest speakers, visitors were able to collect information specific to women's health while also viewing featured artists at the museum. The Square is a work of art in itself, and this was the perfect venue and perfect night to hold such an event. By combining three things that people often "mean" to do, people perhaps felt greater motivation to attend. Despite Paris Gibson Square having free admission, I wonder how often your average Great Falls citizen remembers to check out the new exhibits. Co-hosted events like these bolster everyone's visibility.

Meanwhile, the **Great Falls Arts Association** hosted a group display in **Times Square**, one of Great Falls' most underused pieces of downtown real estate. Featuring sculpture, photography, painting and textiles, the artists offer demonstrations and also have affordable, accessible work for sale. During more than one First Friday, they have set up tables in the shopping center's walkways. Fliers provide more information about their organization, and it is criminally underattended compared to other arts venues on the same night. The few remaining businesses in that building, especially the wine shop, should consider extending their hours on First Fridays. With the amount of wine and appetizers served during these events, it couldn't hurt their business. Perhaps by donating a bottle or two to the Arts Association show would inspire people to come buy what they've sampled. Heck, let's make a further leap -- people enjoying wine and art and their pleasant Friday night might also be inspired to peruse John's Jewelers, also located within Times Square. Maybe they won't make a purchase that evening, but the seeds of Christmas, Valentine's, and anniversary presents have to be somewhere.

The Downtown Association has done amazing things with promoting the businesses and events in the area, including starting a few new traditions of their own. I applaud their community involvement, and I hope to see them improve even more as time goes on. While they have done a lot aimed at the more affluent over-30 set, might I also suggest they promote or organize events aimed at the younger crowd. High schoolers and those in their early twenties routinely complain about having "nothing to do" in Great Falls, eagerly awaiting the day when they can leave. And maybe they need to leave for university or some other matter, but while they are here, it shouldn't be so hard to work with them and provide a good time. Can we work something out?



Winston Publishing often features artists that are also profiled in one of their magazines, *Signature Montana*. Artist **Harry Koyama** and photographer **Ali Winberry** have both held exhibitions within the company's artistically-encouraging front room. All visitors are encouraged to leave their mark on a wall-encompassing chalk board.



Paris Gibson Square Curator of Art **Bob Durden** has several pieces hanging at **Portal Gallery**. While I love this particular work, as I'm a sucker for sheet music or text collage, every time I've visited Portal, there has been no one to greet me within the first few minutes. Eventually, someone wanders out from a back room and appears somewhat startled to have visitors. Still, it's worth poking your head in there now and then.



Gallery 16 hasn't been around forty years for lack of effort. Every time I've stepped inside their spacious storefront, at least three or four of the artists with work on display have been present, available to answer questions. They also take an interest in their customers. Upon seeing a camera, their first question was whether I was an artist. I explained the publication for which I was covering their First Friday event, and they remained welcoming and enthusiastic regarding the idea of more arts coverage. During September's First Friday, I found myself drawn to **Hallie J. Wilson's** jewelry. Inspired by gems, stones and Native American culture, she creates some truly one-of-a-kind pieces.

Also during September's events, **Paris Gibson Square** hosted a "**Speed Painting**" event, where participants were presented with five different large canvases. The museum provided various materials including different sized brushes, oil paints, acrylics, paint thinner and, of course, a fine selection of smocks. Given just ten minutes at each canvas, participants were encouraged to contribute to the already present image, causing each canvas to dramatically change over the course of the evening. Flowers blended into cars, a swath of brown became a football field. The finished products were displayed during The Square's fiber arts weekend, and then remained in the museum's basement, near the classrooms. For my part, about all I can draw are flowers and palm trees, but I did manage the snail seen in the lower righthand of the painting pictured on the opposing page. I loved that so many high school students participated in their spontaneous creation.





Deeling Gregory displays her paintings from month to month, above the shelves at **Amazing Toys**. On First Fridays, she can be found also selling jewelry and greeting cards to store customers. Her whimsical scenes of childhood and animals fit the environment, and I would hope that other non-gallery venues will be inspired to make use of their wall space in this way. For Amazing Toys, it wouldn't hurt to have a more regular rotation of artists to encourage more visitors-turned-shoppers.



One of the things I like best about **Lodestone Gallery** is their ability to draw a crowd. I don't know if that speaks to the popularity of artists like **Chuck Fulcher** or **Echo and Ron Ukrainetz**, or if they are all quite good at promoting their shows, but the small gallery always has a lively bunch of people talking, eating and drinking, and judging by the need to rearrange the art month after month, they do sell their work. While I've misplaced the name of this particular artist, these were two of my favorite paintings this past September.



Cathy Marquard at Gallery 16



More and more, I find myself drawn to functional artwork. Perhaps it is because my family and I are between permanent living situations, but I have been paying more attention to art I can wear or use in some other way. Clothing accessories, jewelry, and pottery do more for me when, at the moment, I do not have my own walls on which to hang work.

Gallery 16 and area antique shops like **Homestead Treasures** offer much in this area. Either made by crafters or industrial designers who wished their products to not be disposable, even something as small as an old tobacco tin holds possibilities, quite often for less money than canvas paintings or other more “typical” art.

Unfortunately during the long gap between publication times, I have misplaced my notes on many of the individual artists participating in First Friday since late summer. This does a disservice to them, and I do apologize. Even those of us attempting to organize and shed light on what our area has to offer will fall short sometimes. But never forget: Art is always out there. It does not need our permission, nor will it only exist when we pay attention. The very least we can do as viewers is honor that commitment. 🌱

Pottery demonstration with Judy Ericksen outside Kaufmans Menswear

“WE’RE SO HAPPY TO END IN MONTANA.”

Canadian four-piece Po’ Girl play Machinery Row



Braving the first bad snow storm of the season, Po' Girl drove from Salt Lake City, Utah straight to Great Falls for their November 18 gig. "We almost cried when we got here," singer Allison Russell said.

"Have you guys heard of snow plows?" bandmate Awna Teixeira added. The crowd laughed knowingly. Yes, it takes quite a bit of snow for the plows to bother, but Machinery Row still managed to fill, due in no small part to Root Boy Productions' heavy promotion of the band both in print and online.

Despite the weather shake-ups and despite having to be in Bozeman early the next morning, the Canadian urban roots band were, in short, brilliant. Each member of the band played more than one instrument --- including clarinet, banjo, dobro, "Sofia" the accordion, and the "stick and a rope," a gut bucket bass. Guitarist Benny Sidelinger makes his own guitars, including a hollowbody acoustic called Gretchen, stolen just weeks before in Edmonton.

To label them simply "urban roots" does a disservice to their complexity, as some songs venture into dreamy jazz territory, while others sound as though Ani DiFranco got mixed up with Nickel Creek. The joyful, enthusiastic handclaps in their "Old Mountain Line" filled the entire club with little more than a banjo backing them. One song came across as traditional Rroma crossed with Edith Piaf, complete with French lyrics. Even after months of touring and Teixeira fighting a cold between songs, they bantered with the crowd without fatigue.

"A round of applause for Matt the sound guy," Russell said near the end of their first set. "He's not condescending to girls, and we really appreciate it."





With so many instruments on stage, I was glad that both they and Matt the Sound Guy took the time to check the levels of each one, turning certain mics “warmer” and adjusting the volume on others. After years of attending gigs where even more widely known acts have suffered at the hands of an inexperienced sound crew (Pete Dinklage and Weezer? UM Adams Center staff, I mean you), it takes a professional act to remind me of how much more the rest have to learn. To not know every facet of your sound equipment, especially in regards to the room in which you play, is to invite laziness. Po’ Girl knows what they are doing.

Somewhat predictably, the Machinery Row crowd reacted most strongly to the song “Montana.” Written about “one of our favorite states,” the song is a clarinet-backed, breezy afternoon. “*Things will be just fine,*” Russell and Teixeira sing. “*Don’t waste your time.*”

“Other states get a little mad when we play this one,” Teixeira said.

After Bozeman, the band took a short break from their extensive tour schedule, though Allison Russell and drummer Mikey Lightning have continued to play gigs with recording partners JT Nero. This January brings the band back out promoting their 2010 album, *Follow Your Bliss*.

Hey, Root Boy Productions? Bring this band back. Reward them with a late Springtime gig, when we’re unlikely to get snow --- though any weather is possible around here, as we very well know --- and next time? Lose the dorky rows of chairs up front. Po’ Girl is not your daughter’s elementary school holiday program. Lose the chairs, and I bet next time, the crowd will get up and dance. 🍷

For more information on Po’ Girl, visit www.pogirl.net


I'VE GOTTA HUNCH

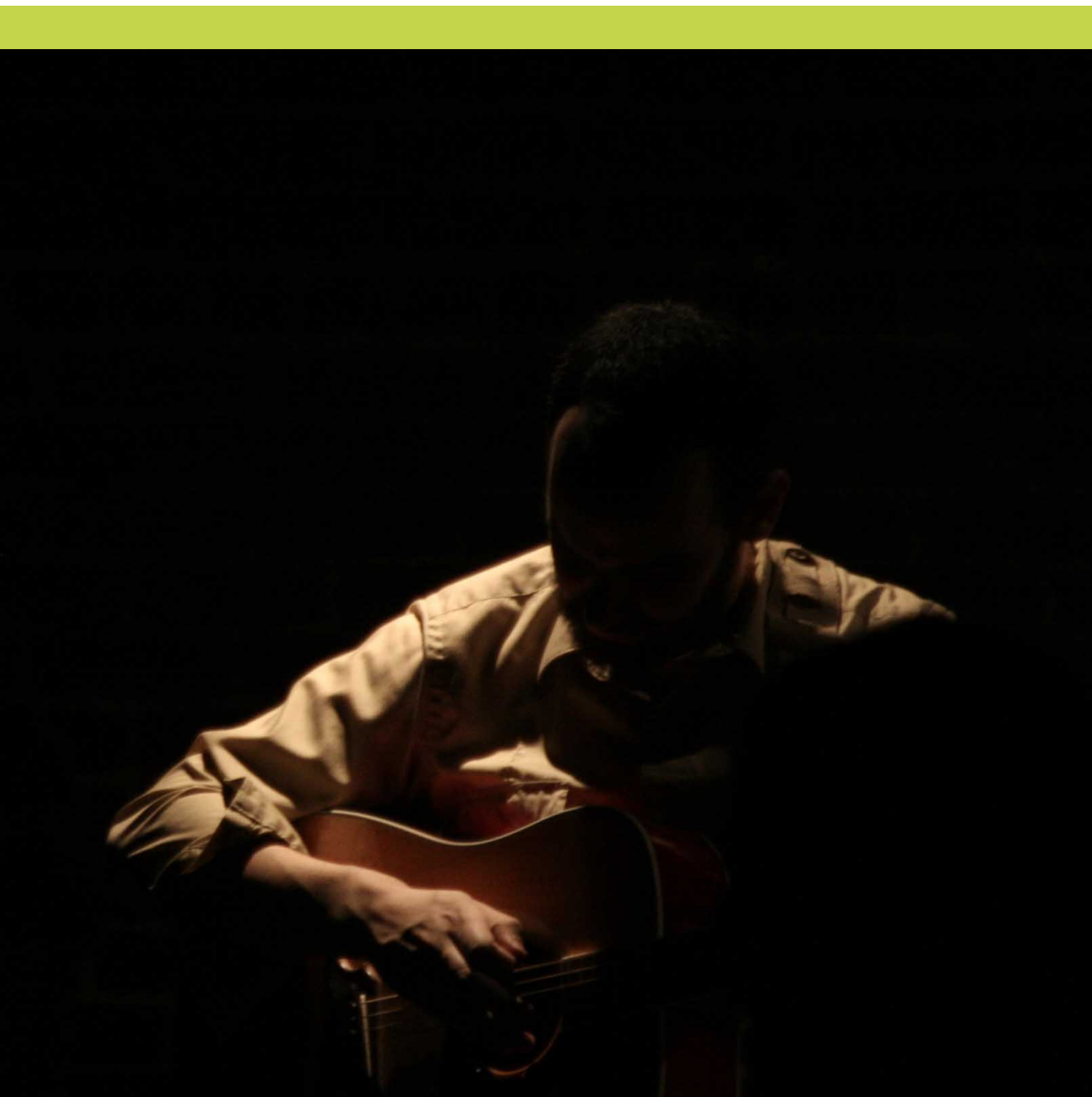
Have you ever looked at an album cover or seen a band name and thought, “I know I am going to love this?” That is to say, you’ve never heard the music before. Something — be it the album title, the artwork, some shift in the weather — compels you to buy that music, knowing your world is about to change. I wouldn’t say it happens to me regularly, but often enough to note the phenomenon.

The oddest sources bring these musicians to me. In early high school, I flipped through a friend’s *Seventeen Magazine* and read a capsule review of Beth Orton’s *Trailer Park*. The unusual name mixed with my predilection for British music sent me straight to Hasting’s the moment I had a spare \$15. *Seventeen* is not the harbinger of alternative culture, and yet, there I was with a new favorite album. Now I own three more Orton albums, and her song “Feel to Believe” is one of my all-time best. She’s accidental magic.

Sometimes I wonder what effect download culture has on musical hunches. On one hand, there are less people perusing the discount racks at music shops, and less people are buying print magazines. However, YouTube, MySpace, and free download opportunities at sites like Reverb Nation and Noise Trade make it easier to sample artists’ work. We are at a point where it is all too easy to find something new, except the field is so massive, it can be hard to narrow the search. In my idealized, slightly dino-rific world, online discovery wouldn’t come at the expense of physical discovery, but I realize that the ship has mostly passed. Vinyl sales are up, sure, but that’s a different animal — and also helped by including free download copies along with the vinyl album.

I’m not going to pretend that I’ve never illegally downloaded music, either. When you’re broke, addicted to music, and have access to broadband, it happens. However, I’m a proponent of artistic karma: download a few songs for free, see how you like it, and if you do, find another way to support the artist. Purchase the full album, see them live if you can, visit the merch booth. It’s just good manners. Bands have caught on to this sort of promotion, offering free downloads on their own sites and other legitimate source, and it appears to be helping. Smaller labels are able to make a name for themselves and more bands are self-releasing. Costs have come down from the \$20-per-CD that we saw in the late 90s. Social networking makes it easier for friends to share an actual song rather than just drop the names of who they’ve listened to lately. The field may be massive, but the connections keep getting easier.

Follow your hunches and support the little (and big) guys when you can. You never know where you will discover the next song you love. 



LINER NOTES *Written by Sara Habein*

To see and hear some of my current suggested gems, please visit glorifiedloveletters.blogspot.com

YOUR AD HERE
FOR A VERY REASONABLE PRICE.

SUPPORT THE CAUSE.

Contact Electric City Creative
for advertising rates.

electriccitycreative@gmail.com

