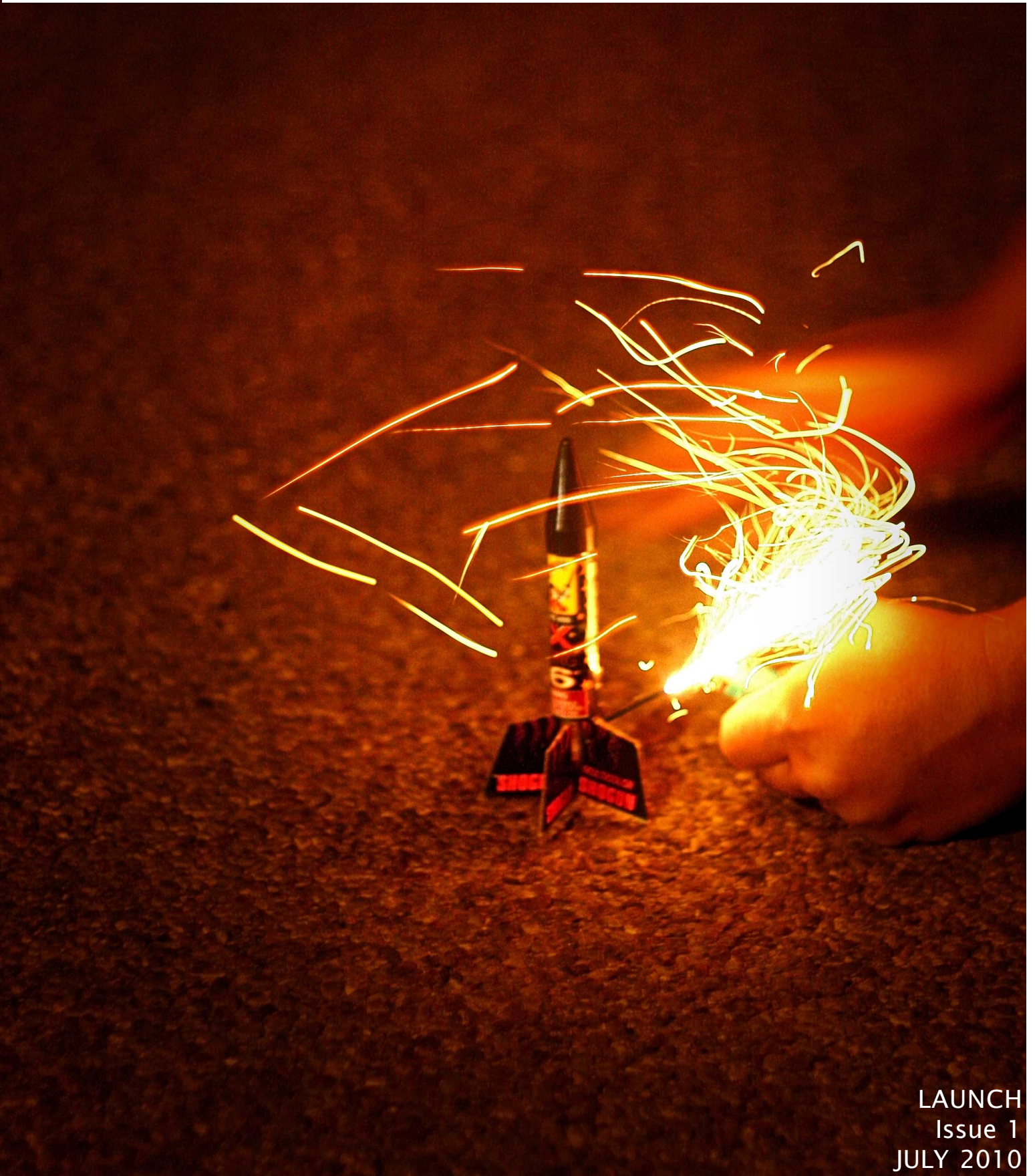




# electriccity

CREATIVE



LAUNCH  
Issue 1  
JULY 2010



electriccity  
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# JULY 2010

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# LAUNCH

While this issue is titled “Launch”, it is also a bit of a landing for me. Seven years ago, Sara and I moved from Missoula to Spokane, Washington. Why? Because it was a bit bigger, and we had no real reason not to. At the age of 20, it doesn’t take much more than that.

But in all the time I spent in Spokane, I always felt like a Montanan. I grew up in Billings and went to school (very... very briefly) in Missoula and it always felt as if something was pulling me back here. Prior to meeting Sara, I hadn’t spent any time in Great Falls outside of brief high school sports trips. But Great Falls, like most places in Montana, has some sort of draw for me. There’s something about the state (and this city) that pulls me to it.

So, seven years later with two young children, we find ourselves in Montana again. We’re different people than when we left. Obviously, having children will do that, and a person is always different in their late 20s from their first years as legal adults. But we’ve grown in other ways as well. Both Sara and I have developed a certain view of life that tells us that it’s not about what a place has, it’s what you bring to it. It’s not about what a place has in store for you, it’s what you can pull out of it.

When informing people that we were moving back to Montana, they understood. When informing people that we were moving to Great Falls, I was often greeted with raised eyebrows and an alarmed, “Why?”

I’ll tell you why: Because Great Falls has something for creative people. We need to push ourselves to do more and not wait for someone else to do it. Too often, creative people in places like Great Falls will say, “There’s nothing here.”

That’s simply not true. Artists, musicians, and writers are working here every day.

We’re here. Our hopes and dreams and creative thoughts and impulses are here.

We can always do better. We have to put out our best work for Great Falls, for Montana, and for the rest of the world. I say “we” not meaning only Sara and me. This is too big of a job for two people. We can start this magazine, but it is up to every individual who considers themselves creative or who wants to support creativity in all of its forms. Do the work.

This is going to be a team effort. When people ask, “What’s in Great Falls?” let’s show them. Help us launch a more robust, energized, enthusiastic, and interactive creative community in the Electric City.


*Tyson Habein*



# “ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES”

*Author Jamie Ford on success, his writing life and Great Falls*





Landing on the New York Times Bestseller List might feel like an unlikely dream for any author, but Jamie Ford managed to do just that with his first novel, *HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET*. In it, Ford tells the story of a first generation Chinese-American, Henry Lee, who we first see standing outside of the Panama Hotel, located in what used to be Seattle's Japantown. The building's owner has just discovered the abandoned possessions of Japanese families who were forced into internment camps during World War II, and Henry is certain that the belongings of his long lost love are still in the basement. Bouncing back and forth between 1986 and 1942, it's a fascinating read about heartbreak, family and our country's past.

Published in 2009, it went on to receive at least a half dozen accolades, including the IndieBound NEXT Selection List, and it was the #1 Book Club Pick for Fall 2009/Winter 2010 by the American Booksellers Association. Anyone who thinks that creative people can't have a career from Great Falls should take note — Talent and success can come from anywhere.

With that in mind, Jamie and I had a quick chat over email, discussing the book's past and life as a working author:

**When did the basic idea of *HOTEL* come to you, and how long between that and the finished novel?**

The novel began as a short story back in 2006. I wrote it at a writers' workshop in Virginia and everyone seemed to like it. The workshop leader talked about this concept of a "noble romantic tragedy." He said he loved them, but could never figure out how to write one. I took that as a challenge and gave it a go.

*(continued)*

I had a finished draft of HOTEL in early 2007 and sold the book that summer at auction to Random House. From contract to publication was about eighteen months. The gestational period for novels seems to be from 12-18 months, which included pre-launch publicity, catalogs, advance reader copies, etc.

**Into how many languages has your book been translated? What was the most surprising?**

So far HOTEL has been sold into 23 different languages. As far as most surprising, that's a toss up between Norway, where it's been the #1 bestseller for several weeks, and the UK, where it hasn't been sold at all. I think UK editors perceive the book as "American History," which isn't big there.

**At what point did you decide to leave advertising for full-time writing?**

There really wasn't any big moment, per se. But lots of little ones that certainly pointed me in that direction. One was when I queried agents—I had five offers in about ten days. That was a good sign. When I sold the book at auction, another good sign. And of course having a contract for my second book was another indicator that I could make it as a full-time writer. Plus, as you know, the cost of living in Montana is amazingly low. If we were living in the Bay Area I'd have to give plasma on the side to pay my mortgage.

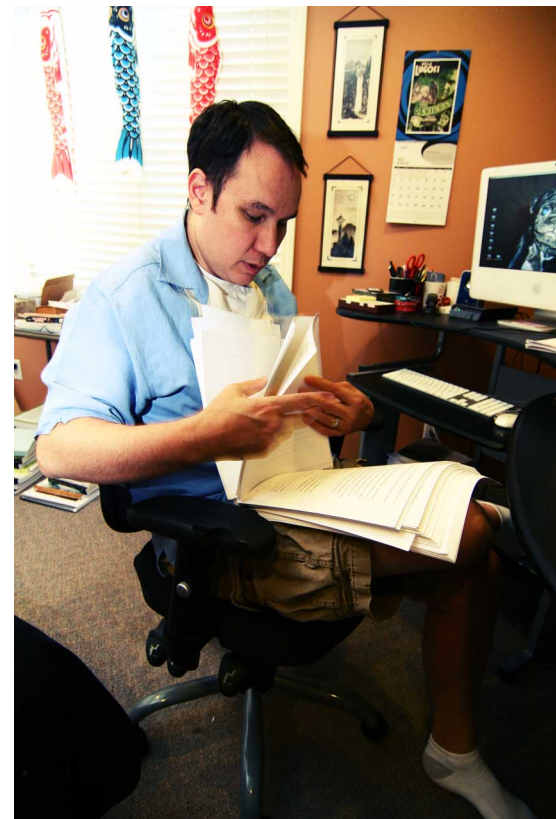
**How did you approach the publishing business? Did you look for an agent first, or did you have other contacts?**

Unfortunately, most large publishers won't even look at unagented manuscripts, so I went to AgentQuery.com to find prospective representation. The great thing about living in the Internet age is that most literary agents accept email queries. (So you can email an agent and get rejected in the same hour!)

In 2007 my agent received 28,000 email queries and ended up signing 2-3 new clients. I was one of the lucky ones. Then she pitched editors that summer and we were off to the races.

**Are you an outline-beforehand kind of guy, or do you like to see where the story takes you?**

I work from a premise--basically a beginning and an ending, and I make up the juicy middle as I go. But that ending is incredibly important to me—it becomes my magnetic north. If I love a chapter, but can't weave my way to the ending, I cut those pages, backtrack and find another way.



Stephen King talks about sitting with a blank page and just writing extemporaneously. I love to do that, but I invariably end up with 80 pages leading to a dead end. For us mere mortals a little preplanning is probably a good idea.

### **What's a typical workday like for you?**

When I'm really writing, I go into what my wife calls, "Storyland," where I'm constantly preoccupied with the book. I just park my brain and live there, writing every single day. Creativity is like a diesel engine, it takes a while to warm up, but once it's going, you just let it run. Somewhere around 1,500 words a day is a good pace, basically one scene per day. I can write a lot more, but I tend to burn out. Better to step away from the page and be dying to get back to it the next day, than to binge on the story.

Beyond that, I have kids, so my productivity soars when the school bus leaves and crashes when it returns.

### **Tell us a bit about your next project.**

Just turned in a new manuscript to my editor. It's tentatively titled WHISPERS OF A THUNDER GOD--another historical, multi-cultural love story of sorts, set primarily during WWII, in Japan. For a book with war as a backdrop, WHISPERS is actually a book about peace and forgiveness.

### **Why live in Great Falls?**

That's the funny thing--once I got published there was this perception that I would somehow pack up and move to New York City. I love New York, but I wouldn't live there at gunpoint. With all the travel I do now, it's a pleasure to come home to Great Falls where I can relax, unwind, and be somewhat off the literary grid.

### **What do you like about the Great Falls creative community? What more would you like to see?**

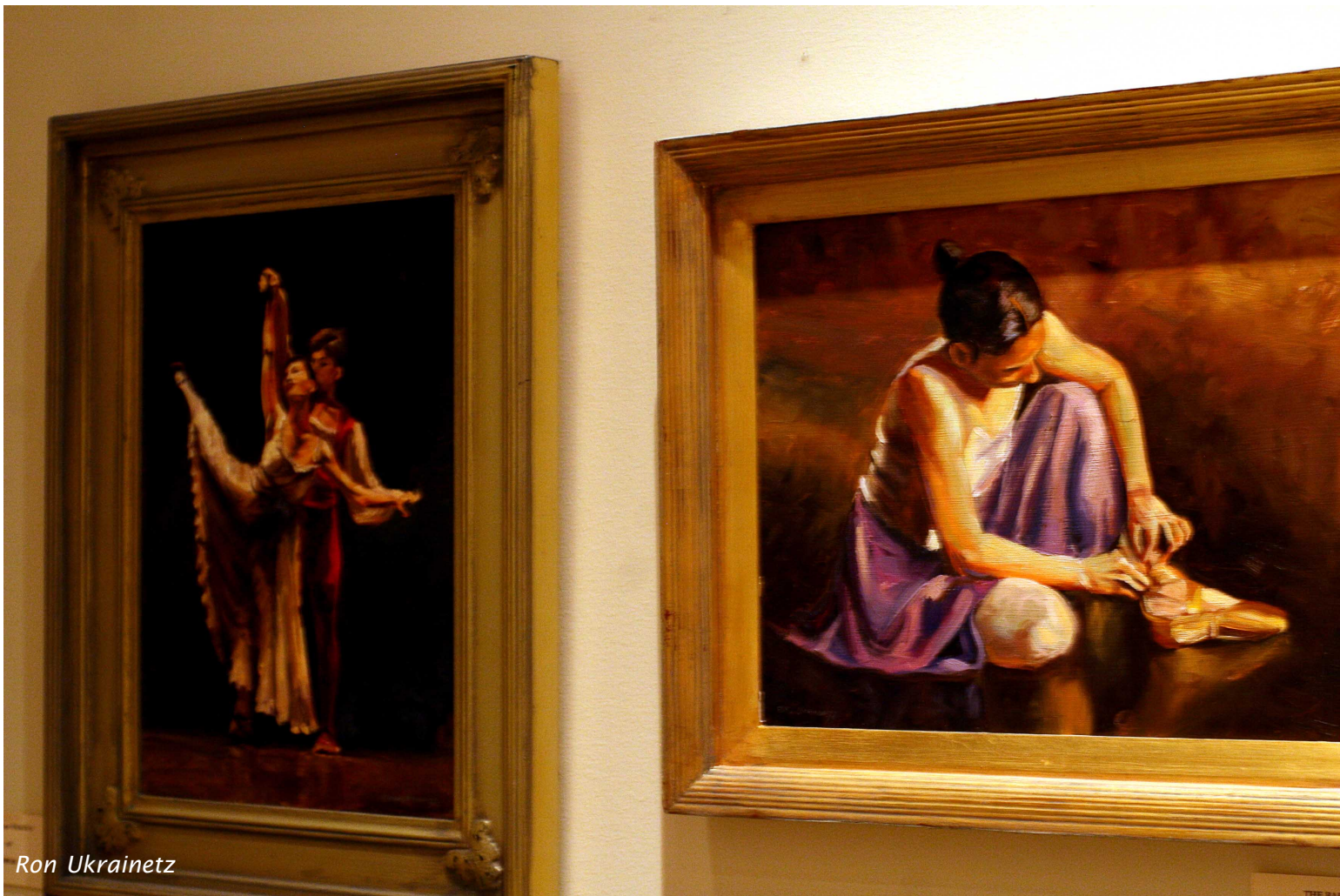
I'd love to see more of everything--theater, music, film, art, prose and poetry, you name it. There's the Paris Gibson Square, the First Friday Art Walks are wonderful, Hastings has poetry and prose readings (of which I've participated), Charles Fulcher's gallery is cool, but Great Falls is a stagnant economy and with that, everything creeps along at that pace.

I don't think it's realistic to expect dramatic changes in the arts when little else changes. Economic vitality contributes to artistic vivacity. And we're just not there yet. But then again, that lack of growth means no traffic, less crime, less stress, which all contributes to a pretty fine quality of life. So I'm not complaining. 🌱





# CELEBRATE YOUR INDEPENDENCE





Any city can have a First Friday, but far be it from Great Falls to let its version pass without a flashier theme. This month, “Celebrate Your Independence — Buy Local in Downtown Great Falls,” featured both new and established area artists, and more importantly, an immediate sense of community.

At Lodestone Gallery (318 Central Ave), **Ron Ukrainetz** displayed his detailed, nature-centric paintings alongside rather beautiful pottery from **Beth Enloe**. KRTV interviewed Ukrainetz for the ten o'clock broadcast that evening, and in the b-roll, viewers may have caught our children hitting the snack table.

Down the street, The Blue Rose (419 Central Ave) acts as a high-end retail store and art venue. This month brought **Lisa Easton's** mixed media work, encaustic on welded oxidized steel, rich with texture. They also had more of Ron Ukrainetz's work, a series of lovely ballerina paintings, displayed in one of the dressing rooms. Between the interesting art and the good sale rack, The Blue Rose is worth checking out.

What I like about Gallery 16 (608 Central Ave), is that they make art accessible to the casual shopper. While there are still \$800 pieces, one can also purchase something handcrafted for under \$10, and that range may be one of the reasons they've been in business forty years. They had one of the largest crowds; regulars chatted with staff and some of the artists on hand. I will have to return for one of **Megan Eaves'** custom hardcover notebooks.

Over at the Four West Art League (1601 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave North), artists opened their studios and displayed their most recent work. English teacher **Tim Willey** gave his first poetry reading, performing selections from his work periodically throughout the evening. His writing was full of nostalgia for youth and family without being overly sentimental, and I found the poem about his now-deceased father especially touching.

(-Sara)



Jolene Monheim



Lisa Easton



At Gallery 16, I specifically wanted to visit because I had heard positive things about the work being done by **Jolene Monheim**. Her work is the sort where the viewer is often unsure if they're looking at a digital manipulation of a photograph, a toned film print, or some combination therein. This is often the type of work I am to which I am drawn. It is lovely work, regardless of the methodology. The models in water seem to hover, weightlessly posing for the camera.

Her images have the mood of some classical painting. The piece "St. Pete and Nolan" reminds me of an illuminated Rembrandt in its use of color and light. Along with "Ophelia's Mother" it was the color highlight of her pieces.

However, the overall winners in this collection of work have to go to the sepia toned images. The smoothness of the mid-tones and the shadow depth are wonderful while maintaining a high contrast "pop" that is hard to do. "Transcendent Bride" was likely my favorite.

Elsewhere in the gallery, I had the opportunity to view the watercolors of **Mercedes Brown**. Her work is pleasing in its quiet simplicity. There is a peaceful beauty to her carefully chosen brush-strokes. In this regard, it reminded me of a contemporary, western, color Sumi-e.


At the very front, I was drawn to **Theresa Gong**'s cups, teapots, bowls, and saucers. These are truly beautiful pieces. Looking at the amazing blues, greens, browns, and

*(continued)*



Theresa Gong





crisp lines of the birds, butterflies and leaves on the pottery, I immediately thought of a half-dozen people I wished were there to see for themselves. The pieces have an ethereal “texture without touching” look that I love in a dish. In all of the art walks I’ve done in Spokane, Portland, and Billings, I can’t say I’ve ever seen pottery pieces that stuck in my mind the way Gong’s have.

At the Four West Art League inside the Columbus Building, we viewed work from a huge range of artists. Photography, watercolor, collage, and sculpture were all present. The highlight? **Darlene Sanford**’s postage stamp paintings. The amount of detail found in her landscapes, filled with the orange and yellow and red hues of sunset, amazed me. I fear that work of this scale may often be overlooked, when other artists are choosing the opposite route and often making gigantic canvases of less than stellar paintings. While I’m not one for landscapes in a general sense, Sanford’s work drew me in almost immediately. I spent a fair amount of time staring at the tiny brush lines leading away from lakes and up to mountain peaks. I look forward to seeing more from her in future art walks.

(-Tyson)

*Next month’s theme is “A Night At The Movies,” August 6<sup>th</sup>. See you there.* 





*Darlene Sanford*

# RADIO GA GA

I'd just finished vacuuming my room when I heard the K99 DJ say, "Be caller number nine!" Pausing long enough to what I thought equaled eight calls, I dialed their number. I was ten years old.

"Hi, you're caller number nine! Do you have your Pepsi Flamingo card?"

I froze. "Um. No, I don't, uh . . . Have what?"

The one and only time I have ever been caller number anything, and I'd missed the details. My face burned, hearing my stammering coming from the bedroom radio. The DJ, perhaps inferring my young age, took pity on me.

"You know what? Why don't you come down to the station and you can pick out a free CD or tape, all right?"

This was how I came to own Janet Jackson's *janet*. I didn't have a CD player, and so I spent hours compulsively rewinding songs like "If" and "Again," pleased with my good fortune. It remains one of the few prizes I have ever won.

Like a lot of people now in their mid-twenties or older, I grew up listening to the radio and understood the potential magic played therein. Unless we were blessed with particularly cool parents or older siblings, MTV and the radio were how we heard new music. No one had yet (shortsightedly) shamed us away from pop tunes. We recorded our favorite songs onto cassette and shook our fists at DJs who insisted on talking over the intros. We could dive across the room and hit 'record' within seconds of hearing the right song. To call in a request and have it granted was transcendent — now the world heard what we wanted.

I knew all the DJs' names. JJ in the Morning and Bert the Flirt were popular at the time, and the entire fifth grade at my school could not contain our excitement when these two came to visit one afternoon. It was some program where local celebrities — and to us, they were — read books to students and then answered questions. JJ read to our class, but both men signed K99 bumper stickers for everyone. I had mine stuck to my bedroom door for years. I remember thinking that Bert was nowhere near as good looking as someone with the word "Flirt" attached to him should be.

As we grew older, Dan DeWitt, then Nick Northern ran the evening slot. A friend of mine



went to the prom with Dan, and “Nick” (whose real name is otherwise) frequented the punk shows at the Rec Center. The way we listened to the radio and our music tastes had changed, but radio has always seemed to be of greater significance in the Great Falls area. Maybe this city’s more dino-rific than some, but moving back, I was both surprised and pleased to hear that the stations still employ more than one DJ. Perhaps it’s a difference in style between parent companies Fisher and Clear Channel — whose Spokane-area stations are almost all DJ-less — but I like knowing that there’s a real person behind the music, pushing buttons in a room somewhere.

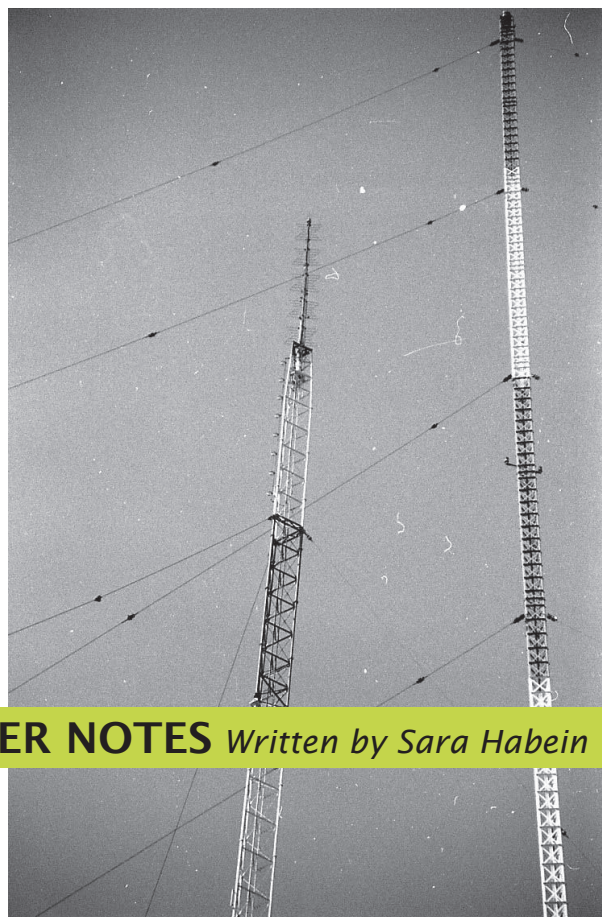
Having someone introduce the songs creates community. Even when the format is nothing but national Top 40, there’s a sense of ownership. Even if we flat out *hate* the DJ’s on-air personality, that personality is still Great Falls-specific. When K99 or any other station has a booth at the State Fair, we know who mans it. Is it the level of glamorous employment as our ten-year-old selves believed? Perhaps not, but one could do worse.

I still listen to radio in the car sometimes, and I’ve already reprogrammed my settings to something similar to my high school days. Would I have a greater selection with satellite radio? Sure, but there’s something to be said for free music, for giving yourself over to someone else’s playlist. I bounce between K99 and the classic rock on 93.7 most of the time. I loathe just as many songs as I love, but at least when someone asks me why I think Katy Perry is an abomination to pop music, I’ll be able to provide specific examples as to why. Indie-kids and hipsters may grouse about the Top 40, but then in the same breath proudly say they never listen to the radio. I wonder then, how do you know you hate it? You know, they play Modest Mouse on the radio now. Take off the blinders now and again.

Radio reinforces our musical beliefs. Like any other opinion, it’s best when fully informed.

Besides, you never know when you’ll want to be Caller Number Nine. 📻

*To read about five songs that remind me of those radio-listening days, please visit [glorifiedloveletters.blogspot.com](http://glorifiedloveletters.blogspot.com)*



**LINER NOTES** *Written by Sara Habein*

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