



# The Downtowner

The Newsletter of Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville

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## Frank Easterlin – An Appreciation

# A Man Who Was Everywhere

Like the Lord, Frank was everywhere ... or so it seemed, at least in Louisville. I say that without intending any irreverence, though maybe a little humor. Truly Frank seemed to be everywhere – of course at the bank, but also pedaling from St. Mary Magdalene to Pansy's after church on Sunday, ambling up and down Mulberry Street at twilight, in the mornings working in his garden of daylilies behind the big house, at Kiwanis at noon on Tuesdays, in the Gallery for every opening and many ordinary Saturday afternoons, at Emily's back in the days of Emily's, then at the Bistro, and at the Christmas parade and every other public event.



Frank and Lillian Easterlin at a recent Gallery opening

When we say that a man is a *public figure*, we commonly mean he is someone set apart from, and in some way above, the public. Of course, all of us have private lives – something we hold back for ourselves and our families. Undoubtedly Frank did so, and his family has the special privilege now of keeping those memories. For the rest of us – Frank's public – what remains is something also extraordinary, something genuinely unusual – the memory of Frank the public figure, whose life in Louisville upended the modern sense of that term.

In the beginning, long ago, Frank was a transplant. Good fortune – his own and Louisville's – brought him here to his unlikely paradise, and he never lost his enthusiasm for the place. If we call him *an ambassador*, we convey something too formal. *Evangelist* seems too tinged by zeal. There was something simply boyish – excitement! – in his love of Louisville, something childlike – delight! – in his insistence that there was no good reason to go anywhere else.

Louisville never lost the luster of a new discovery, the promise of an adventure, for Frank. Whether something unique in Louisville kindled Frank's affection or something unique in Frank made Louisville lovable is unimportant. Anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of Frank's insistent entreaties to move to Louisville or buy a house in Louisville or join the Louisville Kiwanis club knows that.

Neither *ambassador* nor *evangelist* is quite right. *Host* is better. Frank was the host of Louisville. Always cheerful and nattily dressed for the part, he attended to his guests – who were all of us – by sharing the abundance that Louisville was to him. That is to say, he shared his stories of Louisville. They were only ordinary sorts of stories, but they seemed so much more by the merry light in his eyes. You might even say that everywhere he went he acted like he owned the joint, but not meaning it

in a bad way – first, because *acting like he owned it* only means he cared so much for it, and, second, because in owning it he shared it generously.

So Louisville has lost its most public man – the man who knew it best because he knew it day in and day out at eye level, from the sidewalk up – the man who loved it best – the man who was everywhere – the host with most. There's really no telling the toll of a loss like that, not now, probably not for a long time.

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# The Downtowner's Image of the Month



Friends' board convenes at president Helen Aikman's blazing house on Mulberry Street (photo courtesy of board member Parish Howard)

## *"Where there's art, there's fire!"*

### *New Meaning for Gallery Slogan in House Fire on Mulberry Street*

How many fire houses are there in Louisville, anyway? In late December, an alert passing motorist noticed smoke and flames coming from a home under renovation on Mulberry Street and called for help. The next call went to Helen Aikman, president of Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville and a part-time resident in town. Ms. Aikman, away at the time, answered from her apartment in Washington, DC.

"Helen! Helen!" shouted board member and long-time fire-fighter Robert Yonchak. "Your house is on fire! How can we get in?" Surprised while working by the mid-day call, Aikman replied with the first thing that came to mind. "Break a window!" she said.

"After that, he hung up," she explains. "It turns out they broke in through the front door. Tim Goodson, who's managing the work on the house, went by after and said the fire-fighters really didn't do much damage getting in. The door itself was fine."

Ms. Aikman was lucky in other ways. "I'm sure the fire put a damper on the season," said Friends board member David Irwin of *The News & Farmer* up the street and was also present at the blaze, "but it's very fortunate the fire department was on the scene quickly. Once the vinyl started burning it escalated and would have been much worse in minutes."

"Parish got the shot of the fire," Mr. Irwin added. "You couldn't see for the smoke within seconds after the picture was taken."

In addition to Mr. Irwin and Mr. Howard, other Friends board members who visited the smoky scene included Lil Easterlin and Hulet Kitterman; and intern Maiben Beard from The Fire House Gallery also came by to see what was going on. "A few more members down there and we could have ratified the 2008 by-laws," jokes Ms. Aikman, relieved that the damage was fairly well contained.

The fire may have been started by an errant

heat gun used to remove paint from a floorboard in the dining room (the external wall of which is pictured in the photograph). Even this implement has a Friends connection, as it was lately loaned to the workman doing the paint stripping by chagrined Friends board member Hulet Kitterman.



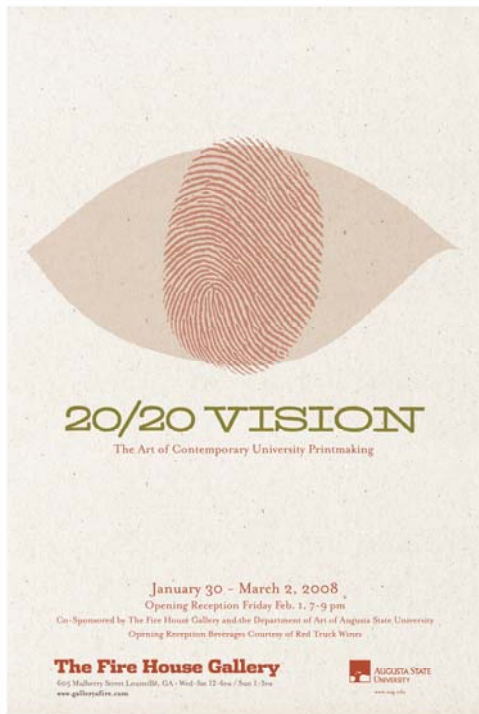
*Heat guns can be dangerous!*



## News From

# THE FIRE HOUSE GALLERY

## 20 Universities to be Represented in Upcoming Exhibition



### ***“20/20 Vision: The Art of Contemporary University Printmaking”***

*Jan. 30 - Mar. 2, 2008*

*Opening Reception Friday Feb. 1, 7-9 pm*

In what is perhaps its most ambitious undertaking to date, The Fire House Gallery, collaborating with the Department of Art at Augusta State University (ASU), will co-host later this month a wide-ranging print exhibition curated by award-winning printmaker and ASU associate professor of art Kristin Casaletto. This group show, titled “20/20 Vision: The Art of Contemporary University Printmaking,” will bring together a body of work produced by leading university printmakers from twenty states throughout the South and Midwest.

Prof. Casaletto has selected one outstanding faculty printmaker from each of the twenty featured states. Each of the chosen faculty printmakers in turn submitted a print from his or her portfolio and, at the Gallery’s invitation, one piece from the portfolio of an especially promising student.

An artistic survey of sorts, this exhibition tackles interesting questions about the place of artists in academia. Prof. Casaletto begins to list the first ones that come readily to mind:

“Can professors really be artists when so much of their energy must go to the classroom? And are artists-who-teach really managing to produce anything good in the studio?”

She continues, “In print, generally more than in other art media, there’s such profusion of technical possibility that there’s danger of a printmaker bogging down in the minutiae of the craft and forgetting to make art. Could this be especially true in the academy, where teachers have a duty to relay all of print’s traditions and techniques?”

With questions and challenges like these in mind, Prof. Casaletto determined to seize this opportunity to “take an objective look at those who teach and their imprint on the next generation.”

She is pleased with what she has found. “The level of craft is high throughout,” Prof. Casaletto notes of the gathered and quite varied work. The representation across public and private institutions is good; and top-caliber artists from each of the selected states agreed to participate.

Of the work itself, Prof. Casaletto continues, “There is fine use of expressive marks unique to printmaking; and mastery of what’s great about the print tradition while avoiding what’s persnickety about it.” She adds, “Many artists in this show are using printmaking as a base and involving other means freely: hand coloring, found objects, installation elements, etc.”

Taken together or examined individually, this is exciting work. “The show trends toward the large-scale and colorful,” Prof. Casaletto suggests, “acknowledging, perhaps, an ongoing rivalry with painting.”

Considering the challenge posed by new computer-based media, Prof. Casaletto also feels that, “By now, most printmakers seem to be over the panic and deftly to be folding digital means into their art.” What this new work shows is “a tendency to build an image by utilizing many layers” – a feature indigenous to printmaking. “There’s also some

evidence of the pace and look of electronic or time-based media and even advertising affecting these prints,” Prof. Casaletto concludes.

States represented in this exhibition include: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Fire House Gallery Co-Director Helen Aikman points out that, “This exhibition also continues a vibrant transformative partnership between the Gallery and ASU, which was forged in the summer of 2005 and has already occasioned half a dozen important community-enhancing collaborations for both institutions.”

“The Gallery and ASU,” she adds, “are devoted to making their partnership a model of urban-rural cooperation in a state and region where urban and rural interests too often work at cross purposes.”

Adding to the ambitious nature of this show, the Gallery is producing its first catalogue featuring images of each of the twenty students’ and professors’ works as well as two images of works by the curator and her selected student. This catalogue was designed by Dave Bias, a graphic designer and long-time partner of The Fire House Gallery. The Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center in the production of the catalogue. All works from the show are available for preview online at the Gallery’s website ([www.galleryafire.com](http://www.galleryafire.com)).



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### **The Fire House Gallery**



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## A New Look for The Fire House Gallery's Logo

As The Fire House Gallery enters its fourth year in early 2008, one of its professional graphic designers – David Bias of New York City – suggested a new look for the Gallery's traditional shield logo.

"Simpler is better for this kind of thing," offered Mr. Bias, "And something a little more sleek and modern would be a nice update the look and feel of the web-site and other Gallery publications."

Co-Director Helen Aikman was pleased with Mr. Bias's proposed design and applied the new logo and font for the Gallery name

throughout the Gallery's online web pages ([www.galleryafire.com](http://www.galleryafire.com)).

"It's clean and spare, just as Dave suggested," Ms. Aikman notes, "and it's more professional and zippy than our first image. I'm really happy with how it looks on the revamped web-site."

The revised logo arrives just in time for the Gallery's first professional publication, an exhibition catalogue depicting the work of forty-two printmakers from twenty-one universities throughout the South and Midwest.



### **This Month**

## **At The Pal . . .**

January shows were not available when this issue of *The Downtowner* went to print. For up-to-date information, call The Pal at 478.625.9998 or visit Friends online at [www.ourlouisville.com](http://www.ourlouisville.com).

Show Times – Fri., Sat., Mon., and Tues. at 7 p.m.

## **. . . and The Bistro**

- Weekend entertainment and dinner start at 7 p.m. at The Bistro on Broad Street (128 W. Broad St.)
- Sign up for shag lessons starting in January

For more information, visit The Bistro's web-site at [www.seeyouatthebistro.com](http://www.seeyouatthebistro.com), or call 478.625.1522.