



The Downtowner

The Newsletter of Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville

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Lee Little Romer – An Appreciation

Louisville Loses an Adventurer Who Never Lost Heart

Through kindness of mutual friends and some good luck, I had an opportunity to get to know Lee Little Romer during the last months of her long and wonderful life. By the time we met she unable to stray far from her bed and easy chair and oxygen condenser, but still what a lively impression she made!

Though born in Louisville and a long time downtown resident – Louisville's oldest living native, she liked to claim – Lee Little Romer, was at heart an adventurer, a traveler, and a cosmopolite.

What better way to discover the sights and sounds of Depression-era New York City than through Lee Little Romer's vivid stories of her move there after graduation from the University of Georgia? After talking her parents into allowing this adventure – and I have often thought I'd like to have heard that conversation! – and convincing her father to spring for train fare, Lee Little

Romer promptly bought a less expensive bus ticket and took off for the big city with a girlfriend who was bound for Philadelphia, the two of them riding shotgun the whole way up front by the driver. Was she afraid? Certainly not! Was she tired when the bus finally wheeled into Manhattan? Exhausted! What was her biggest worry on the long trip to that foreign world? That she would lose her new high heels along the way. Intrepid in the canyons of New York as everywhere, Lee Little Romer shared a Greenwich Village apartment with two older working girls and pounded the pavement looking for work in the Depression-stymied economy. She waited tables and then found office work. And then she met Kinsley Romer.

A debonair accountant 18 years her senior, Kinsley Romer first saw her when he came to play bridge with her roommates. Later he would tell her he fell in love with her the moment he saw

her, and that is not hard to imagine. After a whirlwind romance and a wedding at the Louisville ARP Church, the Romers honeymooned in exotic Havana, Cuba, enjoying that city's notorious pre-revolution night life. Kinsley Romer too enjoyed travel and adventure, as his young wife discovered when he announced to her amazement that, though a WWI veteran and beyond the reach of the draft, he would enlist to serve in WWII, leaving her to resettle with an infant back in Louisville.

Though the couple lived out their married life and raised their remarkable family there – first on Walnut Street and then in the unique house on East Seventh, they found opportunities to travel together when they could, and always remained citizens of the world.

Here is the first story Lee Little Romer told me about her travels, and it will always be my favorite. As a girl of eleven or twelve, celebrating the completion of U.S. 1 through the Jefferson County, she asked her mother's permission to roller-skate to Wadley. Permission was denied. How did Lee Little Romer respond? She roller-skated to Wrens instead!

When Lee Little Romer befriended me, she was sick and very old and confined to a nursing home – she was someone close to her own death. Still she welcomed a stranger with warmth and grace, sharing the most valuable thing she had – that any of us ever have – her stories, with generosity as expansive as the great wide world she lived in.

Helen Aikman

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Lee and Kinsley Romer at Sloppy Joe's Bar in Havana, January 1936

The Downtowner's Image of the Month



The Market House Takes a Hit, but Stands Strong

Last October the Georgia Ghost Society reported paranormal activity in the vicinity of Louisville's historic Market House. This March, there was another close encounter downtown, this time of the very terrestrial (if momentarily airborne) kind. On Sunday evening, March 25th, a vehicle careening south on Mulberry Street ran the stop sign at Broad Street and struck the tiered retaining wall of the Market House,

roaring under the structure and out the other side, before plowing into the Comcast building.

Driven by a Louisville resident who apparently experienced a medical crisis while driving down Mulberry Street, the wayward missile of an automobile did less damage than it might have, essentially threading a needle between the Market House's ancient timber pillars. Two of these will require repairs.

The City has already contacted a contractor with substantial historic preservation credentials to assess the damage to Louisville's signature historic structure, which, as it happens, also serves as the logo for Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville and this humble publication!

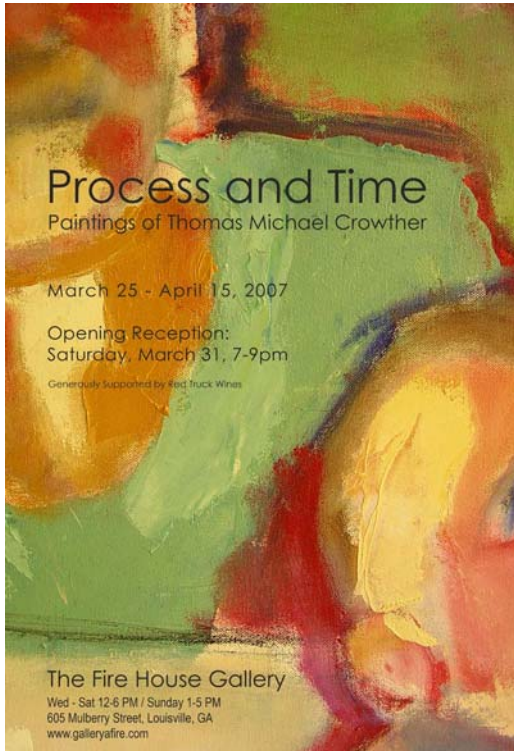


News From



THE FIRE HOUSE GALLERY

Thomas Crowther Making His Marks



**Process and Time – Paintings
by Thomas Michael Crowther
March 28 through April 15
Opening Reception, Saturday,
March 31, 7-9 pm**

Thomas Michael Crowther was born in northwest England and spent his early years in North Wales before emigrating to the United States with his family at thirteen. They settled in Augusta, Georgia, where Mr. Crowther graduated from high school, studied locally, and earned a Bachelor's degree at Augusta State University (ASU) in 2002. He went on to Radford University in Radford, Virginia for an MFA and was invited back by his alma mater to take an adjunct professorship at ASU, where he's currently teaching painting, drawing and humanities.

"It was nice to come back to Augusta State and teach with faculty that I'm so familiar with," Mr. Crowther said. "Augusta has a really good art community; and people really support each other and go out to shows. It's especially nice now working with The Fire House Gallery where we've had a few student and faculty exhibits. I definitely owe the school a lot for bringing me down here again and believing in me."

Mr. Crowther added that part of what makes the return to ASU special is that "I was a student there so I'm very close to all of the faculty – people like Tom

Nakashima, Philip Morsberger, and Janice Williams. I owe a lot to Janice because she helped to set me up with a place to paint; and now I'm spreading like kudzu!"

Having a chance to focus on his art is another part of the appeal. "It's nice to have a place to paint and make art again. It's amazing how when you get out of it you adapt to just doing your work and going about your life."

The pieces in this show, "Process and Time – Paintings by Thomas Michael Crowther," depict "two aspects of time: process – the time during which a painting travels from bare canvas to being hung on a gallery wall, and chronological time – layered nostalgic symbols that represent a journey." Thus perspective lines and sketch markings are visible through the finished surfaces of the art. "I layer images that not only relate to my passage of time," Mr. Crowther says, "but also relate to other people's lives."

"I get affected a lot by moving around – whether it be from England or DC, to the mountains of Virginia or to Augusta; and I use a lot of imagery that relates to my surroundings. There are a few pieces I've done that have those huge irrigation systems that you see in fields and I've incorporated a few of those in my pieces – going from

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Arts Guild's Spring Exhibit Marks Two Years for Gallery

April 18 – 29, 2007

Artists Reception, Friday, April 20, 7-9pm

In the middle of this month, art lovers and practitioners from across the county and beyond will convene in Louisville for The Arts Guild of Jefferson County's largest annual event: the Spring Arts Exhibit. Art enthusiasts also may note the two year anniversary of the opening of The Fire House Gallery, now two-dozen exhibits into its tenure in town.

Timed to open its doors for the 2005 Arts Guild Spring Exhibit, the Gallery enjoys its highest number of visitors during this local event and is host to a surprising and impressive variety of art in various media – from paintings and drawings to ceramics and sculpture.

It's an exciting time for downtown Louisville and a chance to recognize part of what makes this county so remarkable: the activity and talent of its residents, and the encouragement and appreciation of friends and family.

The 2007 Spring Exhibit promises to be another crowd-pleaser, with a post-Easter celebration of the season and the creativity of Guild members.

Esteemed Georgia Printmaker Visits Gallery in May

Jackson Cheatham is an accomplished instructor in Studio Foundations and Printmaking at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia (UGA). An artist who favors the interplay of representation and abstraction, Mr. Cheatham takes an adventurous turn with his spare graphic compositions in a display next month at The Fire House Gallery.

Over countless morning walks to class along a stretch of Jackson Street in Athens, Mr. Cheatham noticed something captivating in the most unexpected of places.

His latest prints chronicle the art of everyday life: a series of wonderful and

striking images formed by interlaced lines of tar along the pavement he so regularly traveled.

Captured with an artist's eye for composition, these marks form nearly iconic shapes (such as the forward-leaning "Running Man" or another image resembling the ankh symbol of eternal life). Printing on handmade paper lends richness and depth to these prints and subtlety to the hues.

The Fire House Gallery is delighted to continue forging strong and lasting ties with faculty members at UGA; and Louisville will doubtless enjoy the playful gravity of Mr. Cheatham's "Jackson Street Chronicles."

It's Smart To Do Art!

Little Ones Exhibit Artwork in Louisville Academy's Own Gallery

On March 2nd, the doors to the Kindergarten hall of Louisville Academy were opened and visitors were allowed to tour Louisville Academy's first art gallery. Almost one hundred pieces of art by Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students hung on the walls. The idea for the art gallery was that of Pre-K teachers Kari Wilcher, Mary English, and Alicia Harmon. "It was a fun way to incorporate the state curriculum into the classroom," said Head Teacher Donna Borders, "Both the teachers and the students were very enthusiastic about the project."

The purpose of this gallery was to introduce the kids to well known artwork. After studying famous paintings by artists such as Jackson Pollock, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent Van

Gogh, the teachers had them paint their own version. Each child exhibited three to four pieces of art. "All of the teachers helped with matting and hanging the work," said Borders, "The whole school was involved – it was a lot of work!" But the result was astounding. Louisville Academy has its fair share of budding Picassos.

The partnership between The Fire House Gallery and Louisville Academy has brought hundreds of kids to downtown Louisville to view artwork by Southern and rural artists. The Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes have yet to experience this. But the process of creating their own art gallery will prepare them for future visits. They will come to The Fire House Gallery to view "Process and Time – Paintings by Thomas Michael

Crowther."

The artists' reception was a success. Invitations were sent out to parents, community members, and members of the Jefferson County Arts Guild. Attendees were able to talk to some of the young artists about their work, including topics such as their subjects and color choices. In typical gallery opening fashion, milk and cookies were served.

Because of the success of Louisville Academy's first art installation, it's possible that future students will be able to exhibit their works of art in this way for the community. Currently Louisville Academy principal Hulet Kitterman and parent Stacey Hughes are designing a way to preserve this batch of art for posterity by creating a large quilt to hang in the lunchroom.



Parents, teachers, and students tour the art on display in Louisville Academy's first student art exhibit



A budding young artist shows off her work for onlookers and an appreciative, attentive audience



Louisville Academy students and parents standing proudly in front of the children's artwork on display



Gallery visitors take in the plentiful and colorful art on display in the school's hallway gallery

Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville



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Thomas Crowther ... Painting for Paint's Sake

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sketches of DC back to rural Georgia again. It's traveling through places as well as traveling in time."

One especially nice work is "3rd and Grove," which Mr. Crowther termed "more of an architectural image, with a lot of mapled yellow in it, of buildings and railroad ties. I like that piece because it was really a turning point in my work. Before that I was doing more traditional placement of figures in neutral settings and then I started to look at layering the canvas in a collage type of way."

"I like strong vivid colors," Mr. Crowther continued. "If you've seen the flyer for the show, you'll recognize it as a detail from one

of my paintings. The reason I chose that is I like to see paint for paint's sake – paint representing images, texture, and thickness, even if it's just thick paint next to thin paint. I like to see the process; it's why I use tools like palette knives and drywall scrapers. When I paint a person, for example, I don't care if I get a strong resemblance: I'm more interested in breaking down the form into blocks of color. When I go to a gallery that's what I notice right away is color and texture. I'm drawn to the aesthetics first."

Mr. Crowther's vibrant colors and shapes will catch the attention of visitors to The Fire House Gallery from March 28 through April 15.



Pool No. 1, by Thomas Crowther

This Month

At The Pal . . .

- March 31 – April 2 – Norbit
- April 6 – 10 – Amazing Grace

For up-to-date information, call The Pal at 478.625.9998 or visit Friends online at www.ourlouisville.com.

Show Times – Friday, Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday at 7 p.m.

. . . and The Bistro

- Saturday, March 31 – Pete Love, Sean Foy, and Friends
- Friday, April 6 – Prime Rib Dinner
- Saturday, April 7 – Fred Taylor Country Classics and Karaoke with Lasagna and All You Can Eat Spaghetti
- Saturday, January 27 – Danielle Lavender, 7 pm