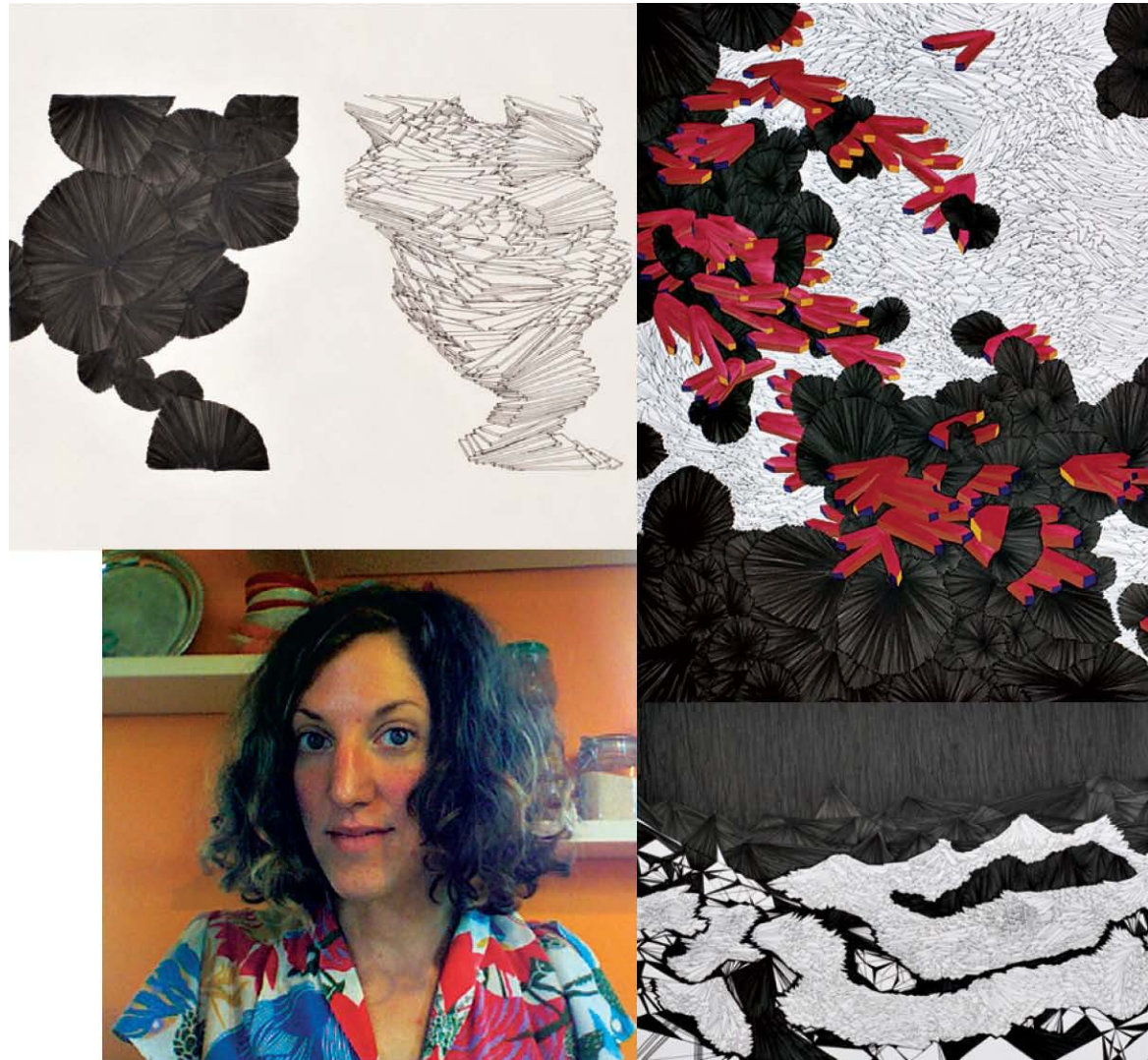


portfolio

Today's artist doesn't need to sit alone in a garret, suffering for his work. Grassroots efforts and funding have built a substantial network of artists; the following three are just a microcosm of the community that's working together to raise awareness of Kansas City's cultural value.



STORY BY Blair Schulman

Sarabeth Dunton

Clockwise from top left: "Same Way, New Look #1," "Lewis Clarke's Rondo," "Same Way, New Look #4," and "The Geometric and the Natural—Ode to Thomas Church" were carefully crafted with pen and marker.

New Orleans transplant Sarabeth Dunton (sarabethdunton.com) and her husband, musician Phil Diamond, recently began the Herculean task of restoring a 120-year old home on the Westside. It's a labor of love that influences Dunton's work: "The position of home ownership at this moment in history is in a very interesting place," she says. "The American Dream is mutating."

The forms in her work reflect Kansas City's evolving landscape. Working with pen and ink on paper is an intimate process that begins on a conceptual level; the nature of these materials creates intuitive, organic results. The repetitious mark-making becomes meditative, producing a second look at the organic form of our own biology and the complex structures that we create to protect, transform and utilize our environments.

Dunton furthers her analysis of home and self by working to make sure her art and her husband's music do not become isolated from one another. The two are forming a performance group that will appear in both music venues and art-related spaces.



Clockwise from top left: “Robske the Eclectic” was molded from porcelain and slip ceramic. “BP Solution,” is a 20-by-16-inch painted porcelain and china piece used to prompt change and dialogue. “La Diferencia de Nosotros,” a porcelain and slip ceramic piece, offers more than the food served upon it more than the food served upon it.

Roberto Lugo

An interdisciplinary artist, Roberto Lugo (robertolugoceramics.wordpress.com) uses clay as a canvas. His functional ceramic objects spotlight societal issues such as race and status.

A native of Philadelphia, Lugo grew up surrounded by graffiti. He incorporates the brilliant colors, line work and gestural qualities of this street art into his work, contrasting the precious ideology of porcelain ware.

Lugo uses his art—a combination of functional and non-functional ceramics—to work in community service. Although he enjoys the idea of people being able to eat and drink from his artwork, he has begun to put more emphasis on the subject in order to promote change and begin a conversation about urgent issues.

This summer Lugo is traveling to Alabama to work with production potter Tom Jones; he plans to donate the pieces he creates there to “Neighbor to Neighbor,” a nonprofit project that feeds and shelters Kansas City’s hungry. Lugo’s functional work will be used for food service, and the decorative work used for the organization’s fundraising projects.

In the fall, he’ll intern at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art as a teachers’ assistant in the New Dimensions Program, which encourages children from different social classes in their pursuit of art and art history.



Cheryl Toh

Working with several mediums concurrently, Cheryl Toh's (cheryltoh.com) drawings include graphite and colored pencils; gouache, a method of painting using opaque watercolors; and sewing elements. Her paintings incorporate encaustic (wax paint), graphite drawings and fibers, and she also experiments with mixed media installation works.

Toh draws inspiration from various sources, from nature and organic forms to more ephemeral concepts like community, communication and connectivity. Her work also considers line, form and repetition.

The Urban Culture Project recently granted Toh a studio residency in downtown Kansas City. These spaces are awarded free to artists through the Charlotte Street Foundation, which has supported and encouraged area artists since 1997. For Toh, having a studio outside her home has been an excellent springboard for trying out new ideas, presenting mini-exhibitions and receiving feedback. This experimentation has allowed for a stronger focus on incorporating her work into arts programming for the greater Kansas City community.

"Daydream Reflection," (top) crafted from encaustic paint and mixed media on panel, measures 32 by 66 inches.

"Untitled Silently 4" (bottom) employs a variety of artistic mediums on paper including graphite, colored pencil, hand-stitched silk organza and cotton thread.

