

Hidden Passions, Creative Lives

What a fabric artist, an unusual brand of storyteller, and a map collector have in common.

Most of us have more than one interest or talent. If we're lucky, we get to pursue at least one of them as our "day job."

And what about those other callings? For many of us, they're hobbies. But for some people, they become something serious—more akin to a second area of expertise.

Since March 2015, the Memorial Art Gallery has been on a mission to discover such people and bring them to the museum to share their pursuits as part of a series called "Hidden Passions: Inspiring Conversations about Hyphenated Lives."

Jonathan Binstock, the Mary W. and Donald R. Clark Director of the Memorial Art Gallery, says that what unifies participants in the series is the unique expression of a creative impulse.

He established the series as a first step in a mission to place the museum at the center of a regional conversation about creativity. He calls it "an opportunity for the public to share their visions for a creative world with us and with each other."

Now in its third season, the program includes presenters from throughout Greater Rochester. Here are a few examples from the University community who have shared their "Hidden Passions." [®]

For more about the series, visit the museum's website at <http://mag.rochester.edu>.

FABRICATIONS: Melissa Matson, principal violist in the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, creates "improvisational" monoprint and screen-printed fabrics. She sells and displays her work at shows and in galleries throughout the region.





Fabrics with Flow

Melissa Matson '78E, '80E (MM) has always liked to “make stuff.”

Growing up in northern California, she made forts in the walnut trees on her family's property. She followed along when TV's Captain Kangaroo brought out his shoebox full of craft supplies and embarked on a new project using a milk carton or another found object. She learned to sew at a young age, and looked forward to family trips to Britex, a fabric store in San Francisco where she would “bask in all the fabrics.”

Matson is principal violist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and an associate professor of orchestral repertory at the Eastman School of Music. But she hasn't stopped making things. These days she finds a creative outlet in making colorful artisan-dyed fabric and garments—something she's been doing for about 15 years.

Inside the second-floor studio in her Honeoye Falls home hang dyed pieces of many sizes and colors, as well as completed jackets and scarves. She honed her skills at a screen printing workshop with Jane Dunnewold, whose book, *Complex Cloth*, first got Matson interested in the art. Dunnewold uses ordinary household materials such as masking tape, glue, and flour paste on her screens before dyeing, depending on the desired effect. She calls her method “improvisational,” and it's an approach Matson has embraced.

“I just keep experimenting and see where it goes. Each piece is unique,” Matson says, proudly. Some are inspired by the rhythm of poetry. Some are the result of experimentation with color and texture. Some have more of a personal touch.

Matson pulls out a jacket and gently fingers screen-printed images of her mother and grandmother as little girls—they are enveloped by the bold, gold pattern covering the piece. She says her mother supported her interests and encouraged her to experiment on her sewing projects as a child.

Her background as a musician sometimes influences her creations. “People say that my fabrics look musical,” she says. “I think that has a lot to do with the flow and emotion that come when I play [music]. The fabrics I've made that I like the least are the ones that just sit there and don't really have any motion.”

She's found parallels between being a musician and a fabric artist. She says she's always striving to find a better way to make music—a richer phrase or more interesting color in her playing. She takes the same approach to dyeing fabric.

There are differences, too. For example, playing music with the orchestra is more collaborative than the solo work of dyeing fabrics.

“This is a little freeing, but also adds more responsibility, because it's all me,” Matson says about screen printing. “If it's great, it's me. If it's ugly, it's me.”

“What's nice about fabric making is that it frees me from the fear of making mistakes. There are no mistakes when I'm dyeing fabric. If I do something unexpected, it could be a really great discovery or it could be really bad.

“But I can always dye it again. I always say that if at first you don't succeed, dye, dye again.” —Jennifer Roach

MATERIALS ISSUE: Matson uses materials such as masking tape, glue, or flour paste—and even pine needles—to create visual interest in her fabrics.





Hidden Passions: The Series

Designed as a way to showcase the creative lives of Rochesterians, the Memorial Art Gallery series “Hidden Passions” highlights the ways in which people in the community pursue their talents and interests. For series organizer Debora McDell-Hernandez, curator of engagement at the Memorial Art Gallery, an important aspect of the series is to inspire others in the Rochester area to think about ways to develop their intellectual, artistic, and cultural passions.

McDell-Hernandez says the museum is the perfect place to host such conversations, part of a larger effort to establish MAG as a hub for creativity in all its manifestations.

“A museum is more than just a place for visitors to view creativity on display,” she says. “With ‘Hidden Passions,’ visitors take center stage. It is our hope that hearing people tell their stories about creativity will nurture people’s creative sides.”

Launched in 2015, the program has hosted a wide range of guests. Here’s a sample:



Catelyn Augustine, a massage therapist who runs a gourmet ice cream business, Eat Me Ice Cream.



Emma Lo ’15M (MD) made portraits of people served by a project she launched as a student at the School of Medicine and Dentistry to provide health care to Rochester’s homeless.



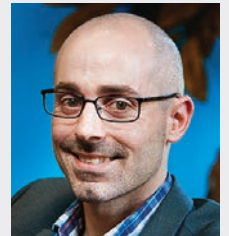
Ian Wilson ’99M (MD), ’04M (Res), ’06M (Flw), a Medical Center radiologist who leads a public art program called Wall\ Therapy, which aims to transform the urban landscape, inspire, and build community.



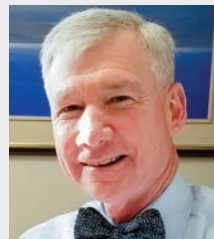
John Beck, a professor emeritus of percussion at the Eastman School of Music who has been making wine for more than two decades.



Agustin Ramos, a private investigator who also crafts cuatro guitars.



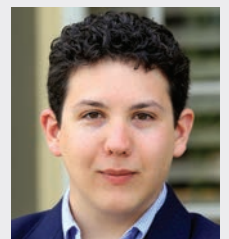
Mike DiCaprio, a media strategist who grows carnivorous plants.



Joe Carney, director of advancement for the Memorial Art Gallery, who teaches in the English department at Monroe Community College.



Josh Owen, a professor of industrial design at the Rochester Institute of Technology who sculpts bonsai trees.



Spencer Christiano, an archival film projectionist, is also a playwright whose

‘A Story for Everyone’

It's windy and cold at the Rochester Public Market, and the black box that houses Karl Smith's 1926 Underwood typewriter keeps falling to the pavement. As Smith picks it up, he spots a couple walking past crates of apples, pumpkins, and gourds. They're among the few customers shopping on this blustery Tuesday morning.

"Would you like a story?" Smith asks with a smile. "Just 10 cents a story."

The couple looks unsure.

"Or," he says, "I'll do it for free."

Sitting on a folding chair, tapping away on his 90-year-old typewriter, Smith creates stories on demand, for a mere dime. Since September 2013, the 27-year-old has set up shop at the market, the Rochester Museum and Science Center, the Strong Museum of Play, a cocktail lounge in Rochester, and even in Manhattan this past summer while serving as an American Association for the Advancement of Science mass media fellow at *Scientific American* magazine.

"I can't describe what I feel when I'm writing," Smith says. "It does something to me. It's like I was put here to do this. I want to make the world a stranger, more whimsical place."

A PhD candidate in biophysics, Smith studies glass filters 10,000 times thinner than a human hair as part of the Nanomembranes Research Group. It's because of his rigorous academic schedule that he began the 10-cent project. "I wanted something to keep me sane at the end of the day when I left the lab," he says.

The Pittsburgh native has written more than 900 stories, each roughly 500 words, on half sheets of paper. Strangers give him a prompt, and he pecks away. He's crafted stories about lost loves, lost dogs, sea lions, flying princesses, and frogs who jump over the moon. Stories about babies, treehouses, aardvarks, and dancing polar bears. Stories about murder.

"It's dizzying the stories I've been told," he says. There was the woman who asked him to write about being unable to tell a man she loved him. The reason? "I'm married," she told Smith.

He says "writer's block is not an option." And neither is Liquid Paper. If he makes a typo, he backspaces and types over the word with capital X's.

Smith has long been fascinated by typewriters and began collecting them while studying physics and English at Allegheny College. He found his current one on Craigslist for \$30.

"I use a typewriter because it's impossible to ignore," he says. "The tapping and the ring of the bell is a draw. And when I'm done, I have a one-and-only physical object."

He catalogs each story by taking a photo of the finished product on his phone. He posts several each week at 10centstories.com and Facebook.com/10centstories, where he also lists his upcoming appearances.

Why 10 cents? "When my dad was in second grade, his brother told him that he needed to collect dimes," Smith says. "'Pennies are worthless, nickels are too heavy. Dimes have the best value-to-weight ratio.' And my dad took it to heart. When he asked my mom to marry him, he paid for the engagement ring with dimes."

"There really is a story for everyone," he says. "I don't know what my future holds, but I know I want to keep doing this. I feel it's a calling."

—Jim Mandelaro



READER MEETS AUTHOR: Karl Smith, a PhD candidate in biophysics who also collects typewriters, creates stories on demand for a mere 10 cents. At the Rochester Public Market, Marilyn Belle-Isle, of Webster, New York, asks Smith to whip up a story for her granddaughters.



work has been performed by the University's International Theatre Program.



Danielle Raymo, an office manager who cofounded Rochester Brainery, a community classroom and event space that offers classes to the community.



Nita Brown, a strategic planner who owns MansaWear, a custom clothing company influenced by Brown's Ghanaian roots.



Gene Olczak, an optical engineer, makes Karma Sauce—a homemade hot sauce that he sells in stores and online.



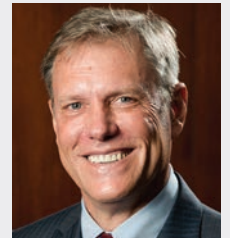
Laura Fox, an urban planner who also is a rooftop farmer.



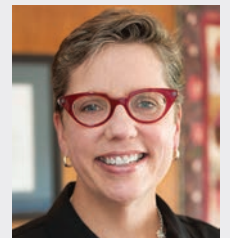
Steven Schwartz, an accountant and beekeeper.



Ramon Ricker, professor emeritus of saxophone at the Eastman School of Music, who restores Jaguar cars.



Andrew Ainslie, dean of the Simon Business School, who is an avid cave diver.



Anne Kress, president of Monroe Community College, who is also a quilter.



Wendell Castle, a renowned sculptor who plays folk guitar.

A Maven of Maps

“Serendipitous” is how Seymour Schwartz ’57M (Res) describes the evolution of his interest in historic maps.

As an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, during World War II, he took a typical pre-med curriculum. With the exception of introductory English and a three-credit course on Shakespeare, every class was in science, says Schwartz, who holds the title Distinguished Alumni Professor of Surgery.

“I had no particular interest in history until I saw some maps,” he recalls, sitting beside a reproduction of the first known map to include the Americas, which hangs in his office at the School of Medicine and Dentistry. “Maps provide a palatable way of learning history.”

He acquired his first map—a 1795 map of the state of New York—in 1963. His collection has since grown to become one of the most acclaimed assemblages of rare maps in North America. His holdings focus on the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries—documenting Europe’s earliest contact with, and understanding of, the New World.

“My surgical personality speaks to developing a specialty,” Schwartz says about his decision to focus on a specific region and time period.

As his interest in cartographic history grew, he discovered few examples of scholarship on the mapping of America. So he took on that role. He’s authored seven books on cartography, including the definitive reference work, coauthored with Ralph Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America* (Abrams, 1980). He has served on the boards of the National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution and the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress.

Schwartz has donated parts of his collection over the years. In 2008, he bequeathed more than 200 of his rare maps to the University of Virginia. In 2010, he donated some of the earliest maps and drawings of western New York to the River Campus Libraries’ Department of Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation. The Schwartz collection at Rochester includes the first map printed in the colony of New York, dated 1733, as well as the earliest known drawing of the region, a circa 1768 etching of the Upper Falls of the Genesee River.

For Schwartz, maps not only offer a means of learning history; they also have aesthetic value. “Maps should be considered works of art,” he says, adding that a true collector should never sell his items for profit.

Since joining the Rochester faculty in 1957, Schwartz has written numerous medical texts, including the authoritative textbook *Principles of Surgery*, now in its 10th edition under the title *Schwartz’s Principles of Surgery* (McGraw-Hill). He’s also authored more than 300 scientific papers and edited several of the most respected journals on surgery.


He’s received numerous accolades during his long career. Many have recognized his accomplishments as a surgeon; others have honored his contributions to cartography.

“In the books I’ve written on cartography, the audience generally doesn’t know that I’m a surgeon,” he says. “In contradistinction, the readers of [*Principles of Surgery*] don’t have any idea about my interest in cartography.”

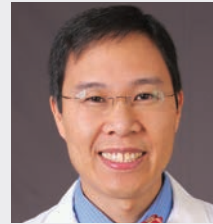
Two of his honorary degrees—one from the University of Madrid and one from the University of Wisconsin—were awarded for his contributions to both surgery and cartography.

“And that pleases me,” he says.

—Jennifer Roach

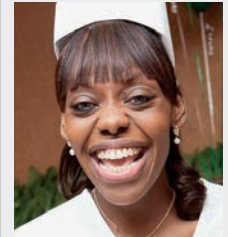


TWICE ON THE MAP: Schwartz, a noted surgeon, is also a prominent expert on historical mapmaking. Yet, he observes, the readers of his seminal textbook, *Principles of Surgery*, “don’t have any idea about my interest in cartography.”



Erik Rosenkranz '18, a mechanical engineering major who crafts long-board skateboards.

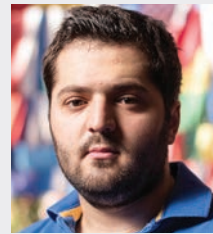
Jefferson Svengsouk, associate professor of emergency medicine, who is also a Native American flute player.



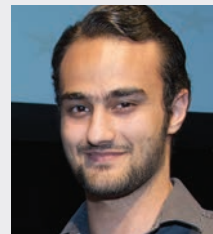
Bruce Ian Meader, an associate professor of design at Rochester Institute of Technology, who is a Beatles enthusiast.

Theresa Lou Bowick, a registered nurse who organized a grassroots neighborhood bicycling program.

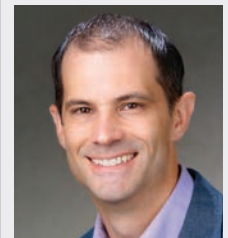
Rosemary Janofsky, a midwife and clinical assistant in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, who is also an innkeeper.



Nannette Nocon, a financial advisor who is also a children's book author.

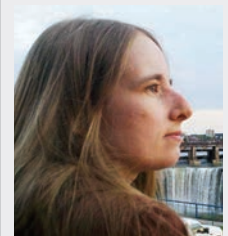


Omar Soufan '17, a biomedical engineering student (top), and **Ibrahim Mohammad '17**, a mechanical engineering student, who together have organized a rehabilitation center in Lebanon that tends to wounded refugees from the civil war in Syria.



Evan Dawson, the host of *Connections*, a daily talk show on WXXI public radio in Rochester, who also writes widely about wine.

Daniel Hargrove '17, an international relations student, who has an interest in coral reefs.



Aprille Byam '96, '97S (MBA), a market researcher who is known as Storychick.

—Jennifer Roach