

## VISUAL ART

## A FOUNDATION FOR CREATIVITY

**After 15 years, Charlotte Street Award winner Andy Brayman plays with conventions and violates the boundaries of studio art pottery in his KCK studio, the Matter Factory. Above is his "Double-Stem Vases With Blue and White" (2010).**

By ALICE THORSON  
The Kansas City Star

Over the last 15 years, Kansas City's Charlotte Street Foundation has awarded close to \$500,000 in grants to more than 74 visual artists. Along the way, the awards program has also managed to reveal what a deep and ever-renewing pool of talent the city enjoys.

The 2011 award winners, chosen last week by a five-member awards selection panel, offer a case in point. They encompass two peripatetic area natives and one fairly recent transplant — all at the top of their game.

The recipients are Independence-born Peggy Noland, an internationally exhibited designer whose home base is in the Crossroads Arts District; painter Ricky Allman, a Utah native who moved to Kansas City from Rhode Island in 2007 to teach painting and drawing at University of Missouri-Kansas City; and Kansas City-raised Andy Brayman, a University of Kansas alum who earned a master of fine arts

from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University before returning here to set up a studio.

In 2005, Brayman established the Matter Factory, in Kansas City, Kan., where he makes his own work and collaborates with other artists on a range of projects, including the Artstream Nomadic Gallery, which circulates exhibits of ceramic art in an Airstream trailer.

Brayman is not your typical studio potter — his domestic wares often come with a twist. Selection panelist Michael Rooks, curator of modern and contemporary art at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, was intrigued by Brayman's ongoing project that involves grinding salvage from tornado-struck Greensburg, Kan., into powder to use in glazes.

For another project, Brayman is using data from sensors in the Missouri River that track depth and flow. "I can now link that to artwork I create in the computer and have the depth of the river control the decoration," he said.

Brayman has had shows in Aspen, Colo.; Philadelphia; Phoenix; New York and Portland, Ore. Although he has occasionally shown work in the Crossroads, not a single Kansas City exhibit appears on his resume.

That will change this fall when Brayman, Noland and Allman show new works at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art at Johnson County Community College, in the an-

nual Charlotte Street Foundation award-winners exhibit.

Each artist received a \$10,000 grant from the foundation, which they may use however they wish.

"I didn't see this coming. This is great," said Allman after learning of his award. "I was running out of all sorts of supplies; I'll be able to replenish those, and I think I'm going to

rent a bigger studio and start a really large painting."

Another awards selection panelist, Kris Kuramitsu, an LA-based independent curator and curator for the collection of Eileen Harris Norton, said she was impressed by Allman's "enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity and energy."

Allman, 32, said the new paintings are about leaving the Mormon Church in which he was raised.

"It's a huge deal. It means forfeiting eternity," he said. "It's a very conservative organization. It was something that was a huge part of my life, and a few years ago it all came crashing down."

The decision "had a big impact on my thinking," Allman said. "It opened avenues I've never considered before; I'm more interested in science, evolution and history.

"I'm feeling so excited about discovering and embracing the future," he added. "It's no long-



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Designer Peggy Noland, winner of a 2011 Charlotte Street Foundation visual artist award, regularly enlivens her Crossroads boutique (left) with outlandish installations on themes that have included fast food, stuffed animals and fingernails.



er an apocalyptic future. You follow everything.”

Noland is one of Kansas City's most endearing free spirits — “a really original individual,” Kuramitsu said.

Noland's Crossroads shop at 124 W. 18th St. is a destination, not just for her outlandish fashions, but also for the over-the-top installations that serve as the shop's décor, inside and out. The Pitch gave her its 2010 award for Best Retail Weirdness.

Noland has designed costumes for bands and music vid-

oe's Kansas City-based Ssion group, Noland has shown in New York and Berlin and has had extensive international press exposure.

“Most recently I've been collaborating with the shoe company Keds,” Noland said. “They've asked me to create a line of shoes for them. They came here and shot some commercials and photos for print ads, which should be released some time this month.”

The Charlotte Street funds will enable her to “finish a lot of projects that I've been wishing I had a means to complete,”

she said, including a short fashion film.

Since the inception of the Charlotte Street Foundation awards in 1997, the list of potential winners has been assembled through nominations from invited members of the arts community. This year, the foundation initiated an open call, inviting all artists residing within the five-county area to submit images and information online.

In January, Rooks and Kuramitsu — with panelists Stacy Switzer, artistic director of KC's Grand Arts contemporary art space; Chris Cook, director/

“Free,” a painting by 2011 Charlotte Street award winner Ricky Allman, is from a series of new works inspired by the artist's decision to leave the Mormon Church.

curator of the Salina (Kan.) Art Center; and Jeremy Mikolajczak, gallery director and curator at the University of Central Missouri — winnowed 108 online submissions down to 10. Last week, they did studio visits with the 10 finalists and picked the winners.

David Hughes, Charlotte Street Foundation director, said the program will stick with the process for future awards.

“It's important for discovering people we might not know about,” he said, “and we've wanted to do studio visits, ex-

posing regional and national curators to 10 artists' work. Additionally, the in-person sessions offer “important learning opportunities for artists.”

The process also brings logistical challenges. This year's awards announcement came a bit later than usual after February's snowstorms forced the out-of-town panelists to reschedule.

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PHOTOS FROM THE ARTISTS