



[The Bright Side Episode 2: Michigan Arts & Culture](#)

Produced by
CEDAM

Marcus McKissic Welcome to the arts and culture episode of The Bright Side, where we shine a light on the real Michigan. I'm today's host Marcus McKissic, and I'm coming to you from REO Town, the historical commercial district in South Lansing. REO Town was fashioned and envisioned by Ransom Eli Olds, and where auto factories used to roam, now there's a thriving commercial district that is reimagining itself through the graffiti works.

Where I now stand is the former site of the REO Town's Deluxe Inn, a seedy hotel that was home to crime and blight but now, a year and a half after it's been demolished, stands this REO Town sign which is a symbol of the hope and prosperity of the entire region.

In our first segment we're going to go to Grand Rapids and visit the Avenue of the Arts. We're going to take a swing by the Heartside Gallery where you can meet some unique local artists.

---Avenue for the Arts
Heartside Art Studio & Gallery---

Jenn Schaub Avenue for the Arts is the community that lives and works along South Division.

Sara Bakker As part of the Avenue for the Arts, we are involved in a lot of the activities that go on. So we're here during Arts Market, during the Urban Lights events, and also in this space, two levels above us is the live-work spaces for artists in the community.

Charlotte Ellison We're here at Heartside Ministries in our art studio and gallery and that's on 54 South Division in Grand Rapids. A busy place.

Jenn Schaub About six or seven years ago you wouldn't have seen a lot of businesses along South Division, and so Dwelling Place started looking at the possibility of what can we do with these spaces, how can we bring people in, and they were struck by how many artists had been coming to them asking for affordable studio spaces and places to live.

Dwelling Place came up with a plan that would include live-work spaces for artists.

So we're going to go, we're going to stop in and check out this live-work space.

Alex Mcgrath Well, we live here. We've been here for about nine months and we live in the back part of the space and we play music in about the middle part of the space. And then in the front part we usually leave it clear, open and nice for our shows or music shows or any other kind of community event that somebody wants us to host.

Ashley Mcgrath Grand Rapids to me feels like everyone's just like, "Yeah! I'm excited about what you're doing." And I get excited about living here for that reason, really.

Rodney Osip All of the art you see here is made by self-taught people.

Sarah Scot So we consider this a drop-in studio for folks who are in the Heartside neighborhood in one way or the other. So there are a fair amount of folks who might live in the neighborhood, single-room occupancy or there are apartments around. Some folks who are staying in the missions or at open door. Some folks who are sleeping at other random places that might not be missions. And so we just try to have it be mostly for the Heartside neighborhood.

Charlotte Ellison Well why are we doing art for people that don't have any money? I mean, that seems like such a luxury. But first of all, we're people. We're human. Human beings are creative. It's a fundamental part of our nature. To be able to be creative is to express the gifts that God gave us and to create something, produce something, be affirmed in that. Also to be able to find your own voice and speak your own truth as to what their life experience is – which is every bit as valid as mine or yours or anybody that's had training about how you should really use perspective or you should really make sure that the ocean's a darker blue than the sky.

When they're doing their art they know that it has value and it gives their life meaning. I can't think of a more important thing for us in terms of the work that we do.

Jane Van Dommelen I came across this place and I thought that this was a good place to stop on by since... since I couldn't do no sports since I was hit by a drunk driver in '98. So I decided to do something creative with my hands since I couldn't get around. I met a lot of new friends here and I've been doing pottery and paint and drawing.

Mike Tate These are my pieces on the wall, these five. One is called *Prayer*. The other one is called *Apostles*. That's called *My Family* the other one is *Our* and the other one is *Seek & Find*.

Denis Buekett I never thought I would be able to draw a stick man, let alone do art. But something happened to me where I figured it all out, and if you'd like to see the picture I'll show it to you. This is my latest picture. It's called *The Eagle's Nest*. It's kind of like what we're all about at Heartside, because we all look out for each other.

Charlotte Ellison The Museum of Everything in London discovered our gallery, contacted Sarah, wanted to see films of – images of – some of our artists. She did digitals, sent them on off.

Sarah Scot And from there they picked two artists. So Mark Wilson was one of the artists, and he passed away in 2008. But I knew, I mean we... I think everybody knew seeing Mark's artwork that at some point he would be discovered. And then the other artist is Willie Jones, and we have a lot of his work right now, and he's here working in the studio. He comes in every day. And he draws hotrods.

Willie Jones And I love drawing.

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic What's your favorite thing to draw?

Willie Really cars, houses, yeah.

Rodney Osip I look at those people that come here. They are very talented and capable people. Just because they're kicked down to the curb doesn't mean that there's nothing they can do. And a lot of the people that I associate with are really intelligent people. They just haven't had the chance to do what they could do.

Charlotte Ellison The people that we are with all the time are the most authentic human beings you will ever meet, and I think it's fair to say the whole staff believes it is our deep privilege to be here.

Dwelling Place

dwellingplace.org

To buy art, donate supplies or learn more about Heartside visit: heartside.org

Marcus McKissic In our next segment we're going to go to an event that's right here in the Capital City that highlights DJs and their artistry. This event is near and dear to my heart and in a second you'll see why.

---Capital City DJ Olympics---

Marcus McKissic It's not just a one-aspect DJ competition. So in a lot of DJ competitions we want to see who can scratch the best, and scratching is exciting, but it limits the amount of people that can participate and actually does not highlight the full versatility of a DJ, and so what the Capital City DJ Olympics does is you have to express yourself through mixing. So blending two different songs together and making it flawlessly sound like one song.

DJ Rod P We got the DJ Olympics tonight. We got Lansing's top DJs rocking it out for the championship for 2011.

Doctor Sketch The guys that have put this together have been phenomenal in creating an environment so those DJs and the DJs that can promote themselves to all come together with all different genres, all different styles, to do what they do best.

Patrick Duke Well there's half a dozen DJs each night. They each get a 15 to 20 minute set to display their talent. And you're going to see all different kinds of DJs and yes, you're going to see your scratch DJs, yes you're going to see the guy with the violin, yes you're going to see house DJs. People playing underground music that you're just not familiar with. You're going to hear people put together unique mashups of tracks that you just wouldn't think that... some 80's rock song with a hip hop beat behind it.

Marcus McKissic And we've had people turn out to be kind of DJ snobs from participating in the DJ Olympics just watching. Now when they go places they get a little upset if they see a guy that's just playing something off iTunes that they could do with their iPod. They want to see somebody actually putting work into their craft.

Patrick Duke It's helping to resurrect the DJ. Being a DJ myself, it is such a rewarding feeling when you drop that track and the crowd goes, "OHH!" You know, they're actually listening and responding. Somebody will come up, give you a pomp, "Yeah man, that's my track. Oh my God, I haven't heard that in so long."

Marcus McKissic Since we've started the DJ Olympics, we have generated about \$68,000 that has stayed in the local community.

Patrick Duke When you're talking about getting a DJ, you're looking to make a memorable night.

Marcus McKissic Now let's go out to Hastings, where we can see how art has transformed a small town into a cultural destination.

---Hastings Sculpture Tour---

Jacque McLean There's lots of special things about Hastings. Obviously I'm standing next to the sculpture. We have a great sculpture exhibit. This is our second annual year. It's turned into 20 sculptures and they're within walking distance of the downtown and you can walk from sculpture to sculpture enjoying the vibrancy of our beautiful little downtown Hastings.

So many people from all over have heard about our sculpture tour and come to visit. From the outlying cities: Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Lansing, Grand Rapids and other communities as well from Michigan. I had a lady who lives here in Hastings. She brings her two sisters every year. They come to visit every year and they think it's great and walk around and have lunch. So we're getting lots of exposure all over the state, so I think that's pretty exciting.

I would say one of the favorites is the horse, which is right behind you. That I love because of the fact it's... when you get up close to it, it's made up of all different kinds of pieces of metal. Like things that you would recognize. It's kind of neat to see those things and maybe some things that you see laying in a junk yard or different places that have no use anymore and now they do because they're part of the horse. And his name is Gaze.

John Hart, our Director of Community Development here in Hastings obviously is an art enthusiast. So that's where it all began and he researched Midwest Sculpture Initiative and that's how we began is he got one sculpture from them. Midwest Sculpture Initiative comes here and they show us a slide show of different sculptures that the artists have submitted to him to be in the sculpture exhibits. We chose to have 10. You can choose the amount that you want. You can have 15, 20. But we chose 10.

So what happens is those art enthusiasts and artists and actually different artists we have in town, art teachers, other community members, come on that day and then there's a vote about which ten that we will have downtown. So it's not chosen by John or I, it's chosen by the community of which ones they would really like to have in our downtown. And as you can see, when you walk through downtown there's a different variety of art here. Things that kids and adults both enjoy.

Business professionals, real estate developers, marketers throughout the state and within the region as well as our community members view the installation of the sculptures for what they are: art, a community, and economic development strategy. It's been pretty fantastic.

Hastings, Michigan
downtownhastings.com

Midwest Sculpture Initiative
msisculpture.com

Marcus McKissic In our next segment, we're going to go out to the MOSAIC Youth Theatre in Detroit, where we find out how theater is not only entertainment, but it transforms lives.

---"Experience Mosaic"---

Edmund Jones It's not just a place. It's not just a theater company. It's very much a family. It's very much the people that make it up. And just as in a regular mosaic, you have each individual piece that could stand on its own as a work of art, but when you put them all together it feeds into something so much bigger than us all.

Annette Madias We really saw there was a lot of potential in the city. There were a lot of young, really talented people who didn't have any opportunity in school or any place else to do theater.

A group of young people who are totally committed. We did with very little or no money, but it was based on the kids, on their energy. We started out wanting to do theater. You know, "Hey kids, let's put on a play." We started out with a bunch of really talented singers that we wanted to have people hear them sing. What we learned along the way that a lot of different cultures came together, that everything was done as a group, that the young artists had as much input as we did, that the material that we produced on stage was their voices as much as they were ours. It was the culture of the young artists that we're putting out there on stage.

Edmund Within the past few years we've helped over 1,000 young artists throughout the Metro Detroit area pursue their dreams.

Annette The people who are here still have something to say and the way that these young artists are able to say it is through their art.

Edmund There is so much more that we can do, just given the time and opportunity.

---Mosaic provides accessible theatre and vocal music training for metropolitan Detroit area youth, ages 7-18, reaching nearly 700 young artists per year.---

Edmund I just burst out into tears because I couldn't believe we had this fantastic facility with our own black box that had our name on it and Mosaic singers finally had their own room where they could practice. It's just incredible to see what it used to be and what it is now and I'm really excited for what the future holds.

---95% of the young artists who participate in Mosaic's Youth Ensemble graduate from high school and go on to college, many with scholarships.---

Edmund Going through this program, it has been very clear what Mosaic stands for with regards to professionalism, how you present yourself in public with regards to how you treat the people around you.

Simeon Newton I don't really believe I would have been inspired to follow my goals or my aspirations that I want to – or that I wanted to – growing up. Mosaic gives you that outlet to explore possibilities.

Edmund As a person, Mosaic has always represented a place that I can call family. I remember feeling this incredible sense of being a part of something really big, a part of something really special.

Simeon As an artist, it taught me so much that translated into my work in college and after work.

Annette It's changing lives by opening up minds and worlds.

---Mosaic Next Stage has been commissioned to create and perform original pieces by the Detroit Zoo, The Detroit Institute of Arts and The Skillman Foundation.---

Annette Where I see Mosaic in the future. There's always going to be young artists who need a place. Who need a place to come together and express their art and I think that there's always going to be a market for that. There's always going to be people who are interested in seeing that and experiencing that. But I know that the need will always be there.

Edmund The sky is the limit for Mosaic. It's nothing that Mosaic couldn't accomplish. What I would like to see is it to go so far that everyone in the United States knows who Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit is.

---Young artists come from over 50 city and suburban schools, and a variety of social, economic, racial, cultural and religious backgrounds.---

Annette Especially in times like now, in terms of the economic situation in the country and in the world and in the city, art is fluff. Art is frivolous. Art is something

that we will have money for after we pay for all the other basic needs. Art is a basic need. And I guess that's the one thing I would want to say. It's not something extra if you get a chance. It is a basic need just like air and food and drink and shelter.

Courtney Smith My name is Courtney Smith and I'm in the acting company at the Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit. If I wasn't in Mosaic I think that I would have dropped out of school. I don't think that I would be this close to college because I wouldn't have an outlet. Like, before I joined Mosaic, I was very quiet and angry. Just young and angry. Joining Mosaic opened me up. It has changed me for the better.

Mosaic
mosaicdetroit.org

Marcus McKissic Now let's stop by ArtServe Michigan and find out how some communities are using art as an economic development tool.

---The 411
ArtServe---

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic Hi, welcome to the 411. I'm Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic and we're here today with Cézanne Charles. How are you doing Cézanne?

Cézanne Charles I'm doing well.

Tiffany Great. So can you tell us a little bit about ArtServe and what you guys are doing?

Cézanne Sure. ArtServe Michigan is a statewide advocacy and capacity building organization. And what that really means is we try and provide advocacy as well as support and connections to the creative industries within Michigan. So our advocacy work is really focused a couple fold. It's really in terms of making sure that there's a voice in Lansing as well as a voice in Washington looking after Michigan's interest in the arts and creative communities.

Tiffany So you feel like art is a really effective economic development strategy?

Cézanne I do. I mean, there's all of the kind of – what we think of in terms of intrinsic ways that art is powerful in terms of economic development, from stats that we see consistently from things like the Ann Arbor Art Fair that are bringing people in to town to some of the stats that are coming out about film making. And those are intrinsic. Those are actual. We can verify them through statistically relevant means.

But then there's all of the other ways that the arts are a powerful incubator for people. They're a powerful message for people. I sort of think about the ads for Chrysler of all things, but when I see that ad I see music that is from here. I see a sense of place that's from here. They're showing off our public art. They're talking about something that is intangible that flows through Michigan and they're using art as a medium to tell that story even in a 30 second spot.

Tiffany So what kind of art do you do?

Cézanne So I work in art technology. I'm both left and right and maybe center brained or something. But so my work takes a lot of different forms but it normally involves some form of interactive technology. So I tend to work with a lot of censor based stuff. I build robots as art.

Tiffany Cool!

Cézanne I'm really engaged in rethinking design as part of where I see our culture heading in terms of consumer awareness about how to create more sustainable products. And so we do it through fictionalized robotic design.

Tiffany So if someone wants to get involved or find out more about ArtServe Michigan, where can they go?

Cézanne They can go to www.artstervemichigan.org. You can also find out more about Creative Impact Michigan by going to creativeimpactmichigan.com, and that's our e-magazine and I highly recommend everybody sign up for that. And through our individual artist work you can find us on Facebook at The Creative Many. So that's where you can find out the most about us.

Tiffany Great, thank you so much Cézanne. Thank you for doing the interview and [to audience] thank you for watching. This is the 411.

Marcus McKissic We've been all over Michigan and we've seen all different types of artists, but now we're going to literally watch artists who turn trash into treasure. Come with us as we go to Lansing's Old Town for Scrapfest.

---Fun in 5---

Olivia Courant I'm Olivia Courant, and this is Fun in 5. I'm standing outside the Friedland Industries Scrapyard in Lansing with a question. What do you do with all of this junk?

You make art, of course.

Here in Lansing, the Old Town Commercial Association hosts Scrapfest, an event where teams of artists get one hour to collect up to 500 pounds of scrap metal from the Friedland scrapyard. The artists then have two weeks to take what they collected and turn it into a sculpture.

Today we'll look at how last year's sculptures were made and then we'll take a tour of some of this year's amazing and useful sculptures at Festival of the Moon in Old Town.

Artist We do have a plan. We thumbnailed it out. We got an idea and a couple of ways to do it depending on what we found. So we kind of planned it out. It's just finding the metal that matches our plans, though. I think they're doing okay so far. It's a little bit hard to be the one watching and not out there, but. I think they're doing okay!

Artist I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm just going to take the collection that I've accumulated and make an assessment over the next couple of days and see what happens. [laughs]

Artists It's coming out so much like the drawings it's kind of scary because when we went to the junk yard, we seen everything there and it was just... there was nothing exactly we could put together in mind. But once we got back here, started putting all of our minds together, we got a great model we can go with. And everything's coming together really well. The team's getting along great. It's been a really fun experience.

Artist Still needs some eyes. What I do is I put the different shapes, like first the tangle iron for the face and the head. And you can see it more clearly on the gentleman here. You can see the angle and another piece of metal. You just bend around and weld and form and heat and bend and twist and bang with a hammer and we end up with the shapes we want.

Olivia Courant So at the Scrapfest, people get to vote for their favorite sculptures and it seems like it might be kind of hard to choose this year.

You could put cold drinks here, wine glasses here, candles and other accessories up on the table.

This sculpture is one of my favorites because it's a bike and it actually works.

I'm Olivia Courant and this has been Fun in five, four, three, two, one.

Old Town Commercial Association
iloveoldtown.org

Marcus McKissic It was Earnest Levy that said that man will recover when he values art as much as he does physics, chemistry, or money. Thank you for joining us here on The Bright Side. My name is Marcus McKissic. I've been glad to be your host. You can share your stories at brightsidetv.com. Thank you and have a great day.

---Outtakes---

Olivia Courant I'm Olivia Courant, and this is Fun in 5. Today we're standing outside... [laughs]

Olivia I'm Olivia Courant... [shakes head] and this is Fun in 5 [looks away].

Marcus McKissic Microphone check, mic-microphone check-ah. Microphone check, mic-microphone check-ah.

Patrick Duke You going to sing for the interview too?

Marcus McKissic It was Ernest Levy that said that man will recover when he values money.... [laughs]

Patrick Duke So tell us about how it got started. [starts beat boxing]

Olivia Courant Awww... [marble gets stuck on the path it's supposed to go down]

Tiffany Lemieux McKissic Oh no!

Jenn Schaub Oh no!

---Credits---

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Special thanks for sharing your videos:

Mosaic Youth Theatre

Old Town Commercial Association

Music

Tyler Vander Maas – The Bright Side Theme

Dan-O – “Love Letters,” “The Savoy Drift” (danosongs.com)

Dominic Tremblay – “Arabic Umbrella”

Kevin MacLeod – “Feelin Good” (incompetech.com)

hjcrbass – “Bossa Nova Loop”

Avenue for the Arts

Off-Camera Interviewer

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic

Filming and Editing

Olivia Courant

DJ Olympics

Off-Camera Interviewer

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic

Filming

BOXCAR Management

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic

Editing

Olivia Courant

Hastings Sculpture Tour

Off-Camera Interviewer

Tiffany Lemieux-McKissic

Filming and Editing

Olivia Courant

Mosaic Youth Theatre

Production

Mosaic Youth Theatre

The 411

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Fun in 5

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Old Town Commercial Association

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