





GREAT ADDITION

New Editions Gallery's move to Short Street
invigorates the downtown art scene

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By Vickie Mitchell / Photos by David Stephenson

Frankie York's personal color palette is understated and subdued, much like York, the owner of New Editions Gallery and Framing. She wears mostly brown and black. When her husband, Lawrence, attempted to brighten the 56-year-old's wardrobe at Christmas, she exchanged the colorful clothing he had bought her for a taupe tunic.



Gallery owner Frankie York represents contemporary painters as well as sculptors and jewelry makers.

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In contrast, York's taste in art is far from neutral. Her contemporary fine art gallery, at 500 West Short St. next to The Square, displays paintings and sculpture that pack punches of color, light, and emotion. Subtlety is scuttled. Cheerful, bright, and imaginative paintings and sculpture are positioned so as to be seen and enjoyed at every turn: in the sleek gallery, down a staircase, in York's office, in the wide win-

dowsills of the lower-level's high windows.

In her neutral attire York blends into the background, and the art she has carefully chosen commands the stage.

"Look at the art represented there, at her gallery, and you will have some sense of the content of her soul," said Houston-area artist Lesley Humphrey, an artist York represents. "Her gallery is her art form. It is how she brings art into the world."

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– Lesley Humphrey

Move downtown opens opportunities

York has been bringing contemporary fine art to Lexington for 20 of the past 28 years. She first opened New Editions in 1988, in a small space in Dudley Square. She later moved the gallery to 807 Euclid Ave. but then sold the business in 2000 to focus on raising her two sons. In 2008 she bought the business back, and 18 months ago she moved the gallery from Chevy Chase to downtown.

In its new digs, a brown-brick, three-story building that York has gutted and rehabbed, New Editions is larger, with a wider reach and a desirable location downtown, where, said York, "there is so much energy."

The larger space allows for more imaginative and interactive openings that incorporate poetry readings and musical performances.

The new location also gives York good reason to plan more exhibitions, as the gallery is now part of the bimonthly Gallery Hops. "One of the things I love most is putting together the shows," she said. "Now, the gallery can be a part of the Hop, which brings in people who might not come in otherwise. Children come with their families, and you feel like you are making a difference in the way they look at art. Museums can be very cold and austere, but in a gallery, there's often a friendly face, that says, 'Hey come on in.'"

Among those Gallery Hop patrons one might meet at New Editions are some of the two dozen artists it represents. Last year artist Teri Dryden of Louisville found herself face-to-face with a preschool-age art enthusiast. The child's face lit up when she saw one of Dryden's mixed-media works. As she was introduced to the artist, the little girl clasped Dryden's face, pulled her close, and bumped noses. "It made Teri's night," said York. "It was a chance



In addition to increased visibility, the gallery's new location allows York to plan more and varied exhibitions. It also has become a popular stop on Gallery Hop.

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– Frankie York

for a child to see that an artist is a regular person.”

Making and keeping connections

Those whom York represents say she's a regular person as well. “She's authentic,” said Humphrey. “Dedicated,” said artist Rodney Hatfield of Louisville. “She's not pretentious,” added Debbie Westerfield, a Lexington artist and friend.

York and part-time employee Julie Buchanan, who owned Raintree Gallery in Versailles and worked for Cross Gate Gallery and the American Academy of Equine

Art, handle myriad tasks. Like most other small galleries, New Editions does not survive on sales of art alone. It has always had a sizeable framing business and is known for its use of materials that help conserve art. The new location allows the framing business to be on the lower level, away from the main gallery. The gallery sells some crafts and jewelry, and 500 West Short also encompasses six studio apartments and a parking lot, making York a landlord.

Building relationships

Westerfield was York's business partner

for six years. Both were 29 years old, trying to run small shops in Dudley Square, when their landlord suggested they join forces so they could pay the rent. “We had a blast and learned a lot from each other,” said York.

Later Westerfield would sell out to York and pursue her first love, studio art, but the two remain close and when Westerfield is featured in New Editions' new show in May, only a handful of people, including York, will have seen the new ceramic tiles Westerfield has made.

Louisville artist Rodney Hatfield, known



York seeks artists whose art resonates with her and with whom she can have a collaborative relationship.

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in the art world as Art Snake, has also been represented by New Editions for a number of years. Hatfield spent a lot of time in Lexington performing blues harmonica as a member of the Metropolitan Blues All-Stars.

Unlike some others in the gallery business, York works with artists to make decisions, Hatfield said. She travels to his studio in Louisville, where together they choose pieces to sell in her gallery. “I have been in galleries where they would try to direct you,” he said. “Working with Frankie has felt like a total collaboration, and I think she works with all of her artists that way. She has quite a stable of really good artists because everybody enjoys working with her.”

Staying small, keeping a focus

Larger galleries might represent upward of 75 artists, but York prefers 30 or so.



FINDING THE CONNECTION

Art buyers and interior designers often turn to Frankie York, owner of New Editions Gallery and Framing, for advice on what to buy and where to display their fine art.

Jane Leake, owner of Ivy Downs Interiors Inc., of Lexington, is among New Editions’ most loyal customers. Leake brings her clients’ framing jobs to York; she also accompanies her clients to New Editions to look at art for their homes. “The art is probably what drew me in there,” Leake said. But it is York’s attentiveness, design sense, and quality work that bring her back.

“Frankie has a wonderful way with clients,” said Leake. “I can pick out art and have them come see it, or she will bring it to their homes.”

York offers complimentary consultations with clients in their homes, which gives her a chance to see the art they collect and make suggestions about ways to display

it. “I love to go to people’s homes,” York said, “I love to see the art in the spot.”

When it comes to advising people how to buy art, York is straightforward. She says, “If you want to buy something to enjoy, buy something that speaks to you and don’t worry about it. Who cares about what someone else does?”

Here are another couple of pointers from York:

- » “If you are being pulled into a painting, there is a reason for it. Over time, if you keep buying for that reason, there will be a relationship [among the art] in your home and it will be beautiful.”
- » “You never want the couch to match the painting, but the room still has to work. If you have something that drastically contrasts with your furniture, then it is not helping either side.”

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“I want to focus on those I have and try to place them into situations where I can really help them.”

To represent an artist, she must feel a connection to both the artist and their work.

“I have to have a personal reaction to their work to want to carry an artist, and I also want to enjoy being around that person, to have personal relationships.”

“She resonates with the kind of artist that she chooses to carry,” said Humphrey.

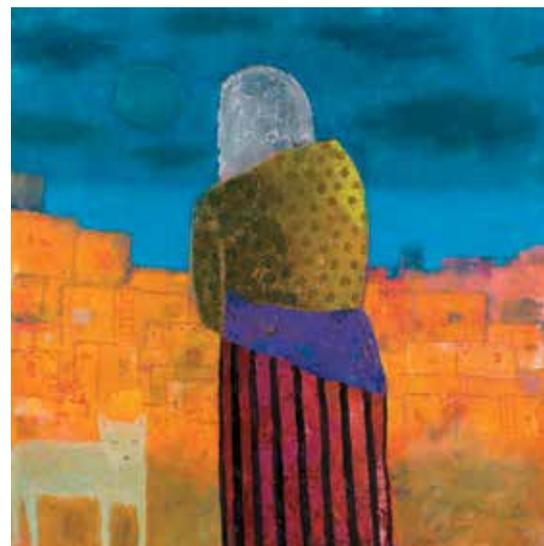
York also looks for artists whose work conveys a personal relationship with their subject. “When you look at the work represented here, it is all very expressive and is coming from some internal place in these artists.”

Among the artists with a strong connection to their subject is Jaime Corum, a Louisville-based equine artist. York, who once rode hunters and jumpers herself, immediately knew that Corum rode and cared for horses, in addition to painting them. “There is a romance and connection to the horse that most equine paint-

New Editions Gallery and Framing

500 West Short Street
(859) 266-2766
neweditionsgallery.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday
Closed Sundays and Mondays



ARTWORK COURTESY OF NEW EDITIONS GALLERY

Left, Teri Dryden's *Marmalade*; above, Rodney Hatfield's *Pueblo Woman*

ers don't have. She is connected to those horses in every way, and you see it in the work.”

Although the gallery does not specialize in equine art, York does one equine-themed show a year, and she does represent Corum and several other artists known for their equine work.

One of them is Humphrey, who had moved away from a traditional style of art to abstract when York contacted her. Humphrey's colorful, fluid interpretations of horses resonated with York.

“She told me ‘I would love to carry your work in

Lexington. It doesn't even matter if it is horses. It doesn't matter to me what you paint; I am just interested in your work,' ” said Humphrey.

A few years later Humphrey was chosen as the official artist of the 2011 Kentucky Derby. Derby officials discovered her because of an article written by a travel writer who had seen her work at New Editions and recommended that those who were tired of the “same old horse paintings” check out a little gallery in Lexington, said Humphrey.

Growing up with art

As a child, York was surrounded by art and artists. Her mother was preparing for her first art exhibition in Chicago when she died suddenly of an aneurysm. York was a youngster. Her paternal grandmother had her own interior design business in Lincoln, Nebraska, at a time when women-owned businesses were uncommon. Her stepmother was a quilting expert who



Above, ceramic tile by Debbie Westerfield; below, Lesley Humphrey's *Crimson Tribe*

operated her own quilt shop in Iowa City, Iowa, and was president of the National Quilting Association.

Her paternal grandfather was a doctor, as is her father. As a student at Hamilton College in New York, York thought she might follow her father and grandfather into medicine but quickly realized she was not destined for medicine. Still, seeing her father, John S. Thompson, an immunologist who continues to practice at UK at 87, at work has shown her how enthusiasm for and dedication to a life's work makes for a fuller life.

Ultimately, York most closely followed her grandmother's path, earning her degree in interior design from the University of Kentucky. Unlike her

mother, York is not an artist, but she seems to have inherited her grandmother's eye for art and design.

“My grandmother's houses were always gorgeous to me; she had artwork everywhere, but it was placed very specifically. It was beautiful original work, but it worked with the room as well.”

It's all about relationships

For York, gallery work is all about relationships — the relationships between the artists and their subjects, her relationships with artist and clients, not to mention how pieces of art relate to one another in her gallery.

“I don't like to put the work up in a straight row and not think about the relationships of each piece. I get everything out and start looking at what the relationships are — it is almost like the pieces start talking to each other, and all of a sudden you have created something very dynamic. Then, when you walk through the door, you find yourself wandering from one piece to another because the relationship is leading you.”

York has an affinity for the Southwest, particularly Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she lived and worked in an art gallery for a time. Westerfield believes her friend is bringing some of that great art community's vibrancy to Lexington. “In Santa Fe every gallery is breathtaking,” said Westerfield. “We need a breathtaking gallery. Frankie is developing that for Lexington.” **KM**

