

When we began to consider the look and feel of the public spaces in our new home, it became obvious that ordinary would not suffice. Enter Lanesboro native, Karl Unnash. It just seemed right to entrust this blank canvas to an artist – one with sensibilities similar to the artists of the Commonweal. We are delighted to share:



ARTIST STATEMENT:

“This installation is the result of culling the detritus of our local culture. As an archaeologist sifts through artifacts to discern the nature of a group of individuals, so I sought to do by amassing regional cultural debris, categorizing it, processing it, then displaying it as would a museum curator. In this case, the museum happens to be a performing arts center. Stories are processed and presented here – I set out to mirror this code when planning this art installation for the Commonweal.

I offer heartfelt thanks to the Commonweal for its interest, trust, and commitment in offering such a unique challenge to ply my trade as a working artist.”

KARL UNNASCH



BENCHES, WALLS & TRIM

Running the length of the lobby one will find a stone wall embedded with reclaimed objects and trimmed with old barn wood.

Commonweal patron Leland McMillen was a great help on this project. He donated the reclaimed red oak barn beams, the sawn walnut for the benches and the stone for the Diorama Wall. He also spent many hours helping construct the stone walls. Lee is a colorfully wonderful person to work with and our many conversations during the mortaring phase helped to influence the flavor of the work.

Within all twelve objects embedded in the wall are found small dioramas that refer to Commonweal productions pre-2007.

DIORAMA KEY

Starting nearest the box office

- Welding Helmet – *Master Builder*
- Oven – *Our Town*
- Mail Slot – *Gulliver's Travels*
- Keyhole – *Taming of the Shrew*
- Brownie Camera – *Zombies From The Beyond!*
- Tackle Box – *Greater Tuna*
- Birdhouse – *A Christmas Carol*
- Mailbox – *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged*
- Bread Box – *Quilters*
- Gas Can – *Ghosts*
- Oval Picture Frame – *Art*
- Rectangular Painted Mirror – *Much Ado About Nothing*

DONOR PANTRY

South wall of the lobby

Folks have saved their pennies, preserves, buttons, fasteners, etc. over the years and put them on a shelf to be saved for use later. Rather than an array of brass plaques or the like, this design of 250 Mason jars gives the capital campaign donors an opportunity to have some personal reference preserved in the history of the new building. *A special thanks to Don Brace, also known as the Pinball King of Rochester, for assisting with the electrical layout for this project.*



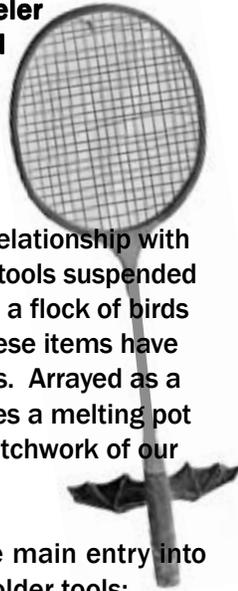
FOYER/BOX OFFICE

Here you will find reverse-mounted chairs, representing various lifestyle/personality archetypes from our region. As Commonwealth's base is the audience, what better way to pay tribute than to directly represent ourselves in a distinctly approachable manner?

Each chair, as a conceptual "refuge," has four distinct objects on or near it representing **Sustenance, Knowledge, Warmth/Safety, and Entertainment**. These combinations create mini-narratives illustrating the personalities of each "sitter." Discover:

Grandparent
Patient
Outdoorsman
Infant
Faithful
Administrator
Maker

Student
Home-comer
Academic
Mother
Traveler
Child



LOBBY

WINGED TOOLS

My work often represents our relationship with the natural world. The floating tools suspended from the ceiling are arranged as a flock of birds would move through the air. These items have former lives as utilitarian objects. Arrayed as a whole, the entire "flock" becomes a melting pot of histories that make up the patchwork of our Midwestern culture.

The flight pattern begins at the main entry into the lobby, with chronologically older tools: mauls, axes, handsaws, fence posts, shovels, etc. and progresses toward more labor-specific gear as you move towards the theatre doors. The pattern winds its way around the windmill propeller (referencing labor and wind), separating the flock into two distinct categories: the **Industrials** (on the left) and the **Domestics** (on the right).

Like a genetic mutation, tools referencing our relationship with animals (the **Agrarians**) has migrated off to the left of the flock and mutates into the **Recreationals**. The swarm splits again as it encounters the **Ark** (the bed frame), then regroups and narrows its flight path down to where one will see the final winged element (a helmet) representing the mind of the artist/creator.

WINGS

Almost all of the tools have one of seven different types of wings. The series represents common flying warm-bloods and includes: Sparrows/Starlings, Owls, Waterfowl, Pigeons/Crows, Hummingbirds, Hawks/Eagles and Bats.

THE ARK

In the center of the lobby, the entire ceiling becomes a surreal dream-world. The bed frame offers a refuge for regional fauna from the encroachment of the human species. You will see that they are surrounded by the gear that references the subjugation of the natural world – nets, traps, arrows, fishing poles, etc. All specimens were collected and assembled from the flea market, consignment shop, auction and dollar store (formerly dime, thanks to inflation) frontiers of our region.

COFFEE POTS & FUNNELS

At the north end of the lobby, coffee pots are combined with various kitchen utensils suspended in a chevron formation, evoking the flight patterns of the avians, all the while keeping things surreally domestic.

I think a little Rube Goldberg reference never hurt a fun installation. Simply put, the funnel collection is a study in shape and form for the fun of it. Starting with a wheelbarrow, similar

shaped vessels pour out smaller related versions of themselves as they undulate toward the smallest funnel.

COAT RACKS

Most of the material for this area in the **northwest corner** was donated by the Unnasch family. The pulleys, cattle stanchions, whiffle trees, woven rope and chain are all historic remnants of a successful dairy business. A special thanks to Richard Unnasch for the woven loop technique on the ropes. As the stanchions were once the neckwear for hundreds of dairy cows in the past, they now serve as the means for patrons of the theatre to hang their fashion upon.

HANGING DOOR

On the ceiling near the bathrooms is a reclaimed door. The window allows the viewer to see the "blue moonlit," plaza-centered town leaning down to peek back at him/her. Be sure to note the varying degrees of personal security reflected in the locks.

BATHROOMS

The ceilings above the entry are encrusted with the plastic detritus of our modern generation – a nod to the gender specific symbology of the colors blue and pink, as associated with boys and girls respectively.

The bathroom interiors were the first area I worked on. I used reclaimed wood and hinges to frame the stalls. As a fun added feature, I incorporated salvaged slate chalkboards into the stall dividers so that anyone feeling the creative urge to write/draw could do so in erasable chalk. The door pulls are made from salvaged hammer heads and the coat racks are made from salvaged hand tools.

