



# RIVERSIDE/BROOKFIELD LANDMARK

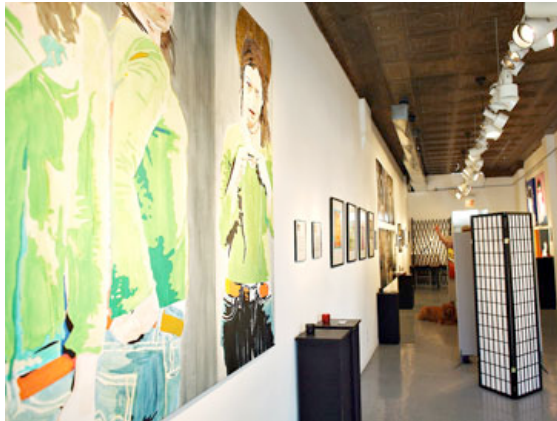
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## Roll over, Picasso

*North Riverside resident's business spotlights visual art of rockers*

By **BOB UPHUES**  
Editor

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Humble digs: The 12th Street Gallery occupies a space that was once a tavern, as evidenced by the beer bottle labels still stuck to the original tin ceiling.

FRANK PINC/Staff Photographer



When the Lollapalooza music festival rolls into Chicago this weekend most of the attention will be focused on Grant Park where the event is staged. However, a few miles west, right down Roosevelt Road, there will be another rock 'n' roll show fans might not want to miss.

Artapalooza, featuring works of art by such legendary figures as George Clinton and Yoko Ono will be on display at the 12th Street Gallery in Berwyn, 7023 Roosevelt Road. It's the latest in a line of unique art shows at the gallery, which is the brainchild of North Riverside resident James Currie.

The show kicks off Aug. 7 and runs through Sept. 1.

The gallery itself is an offshoot of Currie's Westside Multimedia business, which opened a year-and-a-half ago.

Currie, 37, who is also a photographer and musician, has shot pictures for Lollapalooza and for many bands in past years. His network of music connections allowed him to put together a show that focuses on the visual art of musicians including Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo, Sarah McLachlan and others.

"I know these people have backgrounds that people don't know about in the visual arts," Currie said. "So I decided to put together a Lollapalooza-esque show."

The gallery hosts a variety of art shows during the year, each one lasting six to eight weeks. The shows typically feature works by local area artists; the Pop Art show, which just wrapped up featured drawings by Riverside illustrator Charlie Krebs, for example.

Some of the shows have drawn large crowds to the traditional opening night parties. For Valentine's Day this year, Currie curated a show titled "Erotica" that drew 350 people to the opening reception. He couldn't fit everyone in the small storefront gallery space at Roosevelt Road and Wenonah Avenue.

With the kinds of name artists showing work (which is for sale, by the way), he's preparing for another big crowd.

"I'm kind of worried, actually," Currie said. "When you get names like Yoko Ono ... wow. Instead of just a one-night gala, we're doing it Friday, Saturday and Sunday."

Some of the artwork has already come into the gallery, including a mid-1990s ink print by McLachlan. Mothersbaugh will have paintings in the show, while Peter Holstrom of the band the Dandy Warhols, will be exhibiting his photography.

Currie said that he's unsure what funk-godfather George Clinton will provide, but it will either be a video, sculpture or multimedia painting. Yoko Ono has already provided Currie with limited edition "Imagine

### Freaky Frights exhumed

If you were wondering where you heard the name James Currie before, think Halloween. Currie, a resident of the 2200 block of Forest Avenue in North Riverside, is the man behind "Freak Frights on Forest," the Halloween decorating extravaganza that began on the block in 2002.

While elaborate Halloween displays had been a tradition for years in the 2300 block of Forest Avenue, things really began to take off crowd-wise when Currie jumped into the mix. He started a Web site, sought out sponsors and even got TV publicity.

By 2007, residents on neighboring blocks had enough and pleaded with the village of North Riverside to keep a lid on the annual fright fest.

Last year, the village asked Currie to tone down the advertising and sponsorships. Currie responded by taking the year off entirely.

But this year, he says, the decorations will be back in the 2200 block, though he will abide by the village's wishes and not advertise, put up banners or seek sponsors.

"We'll meet them at the bridge," Currie said. "Each house will do their own thing. It'll just be on a lesser scale."

**-Bob Uphues**



James Currie  
12th Street Gallery owner

Peace" posters, which Currie said he will be handing out free to the first 200 visitors to the show.

"I'm a fan of their music, but also of their art," Currie said. "I want to show what they can do as visual artists as well."

In addition to the works by famous rockers, there will also be works by local artists as well, Currie said.

That the show is happening at all is something of a North Riverside story itself. For six months, Currie had been looking for a space to open up a one-of-a-kind combination art studio/gallery/digital production house.

About to give up, he was talking to his neighbor Jansen Hwang, who is the owner of the Polar Bear ice cream stand just down the block. Hwang gave Currie a set of keys to a former corner tavern in Berwyn and suggested he check it out.

He walked through once and knew it was for him. Westside Multimedia, which is Currie's core business, occupies the corner space. While converting a storage area into the gallery he uncovered the original tin ceiling that betrayed the space's former use as a tavern - decades-old beer bottle labels stuck to the panels.

The business opened December 2007. The reception area doubles as an antique gallery/rare movie library/vintage computer showcase. In addition to providing digital production services, Westside Multimedia has video and photography studios that can be used by working artists.

Over the months, the business has also sprouted an Apple computer museum "wing," featuring machines from the Apple II and original Macintosh to early laptops and original iMacs in a rainbow of colors. The computers work and visitors can try them out. Currie does repair work on Apple computers at the business as well.

"One of the coolest things that's happened is that a kid from Oswego found the museum on the Internet, and told his mom that he'd like to come here for his birthday," Currie said. "He took pictures next to everything like they were rock stars."



**Rock art: North Riverside resident James Currie is parlaying his rock 'n' roll connections into an art show featuring works in a variety of media by musicians themselves. Frank Pinc/Staff Photographer**