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# INSIDE THE ARTISTIC MIND

The following profiles introduce artists creating and innovating in Columbia. All three visual artists currently live in the area and have connections to the USC community.

BY GABRIELLE SINCLAIR

## Blue Sky

The world is a beautiful place, and Columbia artist Blue Sky is determined to experience it day by day.

"I hate to wake up and know that I have something I have to do," he said. "So I try to keep a clean slate and not have any plans."

Sky has attained mythic status for his mammoth scale sculptures and murals. Busted Pipe, the massive fire hydrant on Taylor Street, cost \$250,000 and was sponsored by AgFirst Bank. It took two years and the assistance of 75 people to complete.

"There were welders, engineers, architects, contractors, stone cutters, site experts and electrical engineers. It was amazing," he said.

One of Sky's goals is to understand the universal laws of beauty.

"You can arrange things a certain way, and they are beautiful," he said. "Like a person's face. The difference between a beautiful woman and a not beautiful woman is very slight. You might be talking about a quarter of an inch. But if the arrangement is exactly right, everybody agrees it's beautiful. And the same thing applies to landscape. That's what I'm trying to discover."

Sky studied at the Art Students League in New York City. He also worked as a technical illustrator for a helicopter company illustrating the heli-

copters used in the Vietnam War. This training is evident in his landscapes, in which he tries to make everything scientifically correct.

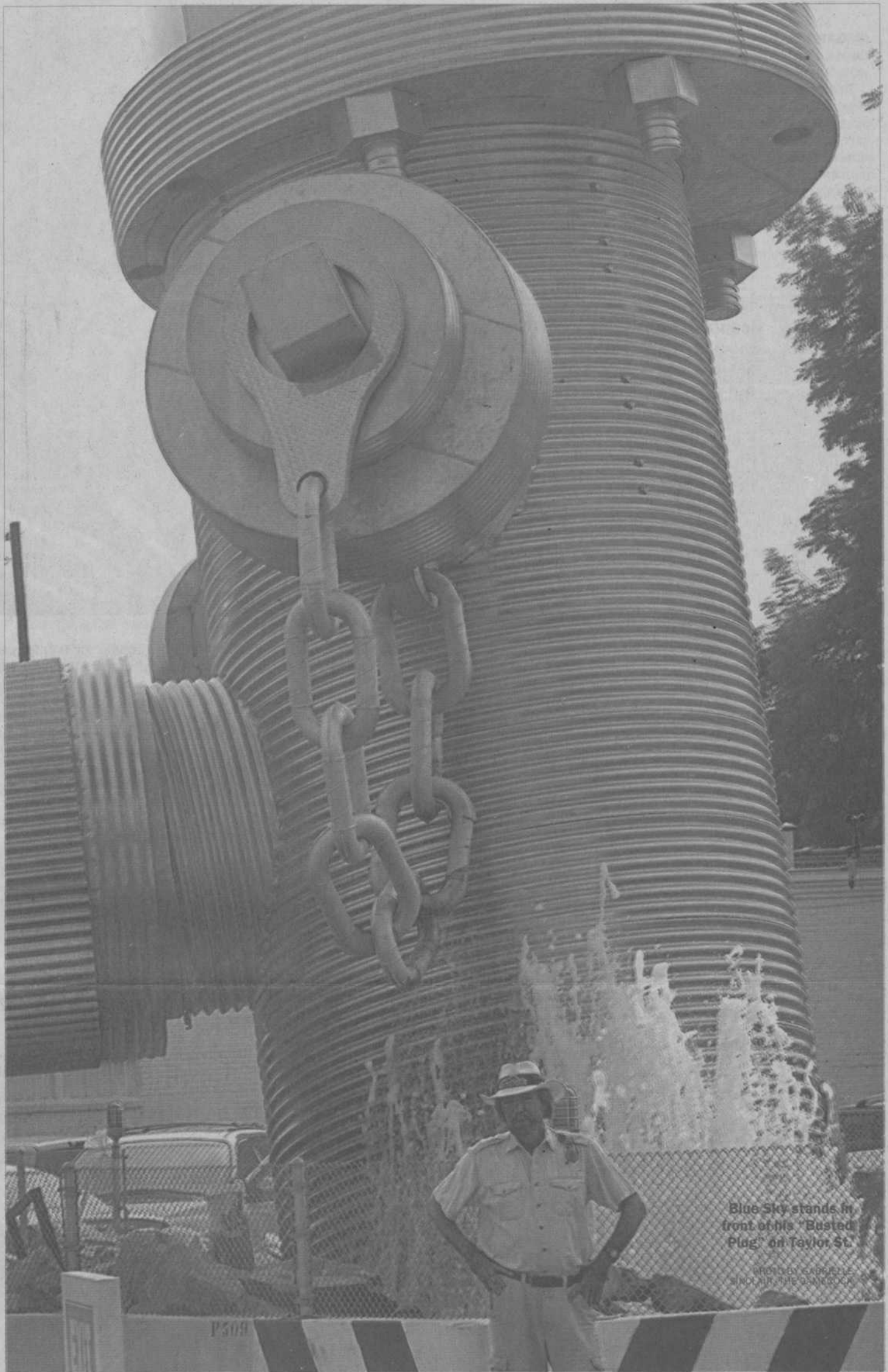
"It always annoys me when people paint landscapes and they're not correct," Sky said. "They've got the light coming from the wrong way, and they've got the moon in the wrong place in relation to the sun."

Sky is one of the few remaining on-location painters and doesn't hold much esteem for those who've gone the way of the slide projector.

"I'd say 99 percent of landscape paintings you see today are done on slide projectors," Sky said. "The difference between doing a projection in an air-conditioned studio, music playing and drinking a beer, as opposed to being out on the lake with the wind blowing, the burning sun, mosquitoes biting, sketching the scene out and getting it all right, putting the right colors in is like somebody saying they did the four-minute mile, and they did it in a car."

Sky's wife Lynn Sky has run the Blue Sky Gallery in Five Points since 1989. USC students can see 16 prints of his work in the Grand Marketplace.

"Basically, what I believe is that the world is a fantastically beautiful place," he said. "You don't have to invent beauty in art. All you have to do is look around you."



Blue Sky stands in front of his "Busted Pipe" on Taylor St.

PHOTO BY GABRIELLE SINCLAIR/THE GAMECOCK

## Judy Hubbard

Time stops at Judy Hubbard's house.

"It definitely doesn't matter if the clock works or not," Hubbard said. The living room alone is filled with at least a hundred said timepieces.

"It's the object itself that I care about." Practically every wall has some sort of broken clock or clock part. The silent ticking is deafening.

For more than 13 years, Hubbard — a self-proclaimed "mixed-media artist" — has been focusing on time. "There's chronos, which is chronological time, and then there's kiros" — which she describes as the fullness of time — "and that's what I focus on," Hubbard said. "People have come to associate me with time. Every now and then, I'll walk out the front door and there'll be a bag of watches someone left for me."

It's not really about the clocks, though.

"Time is really the lens," Hubbard said. Her pieces are on display at the Carol Saunders Gallery in the Vista.

"It's given some meat for me to center my work on," she said.

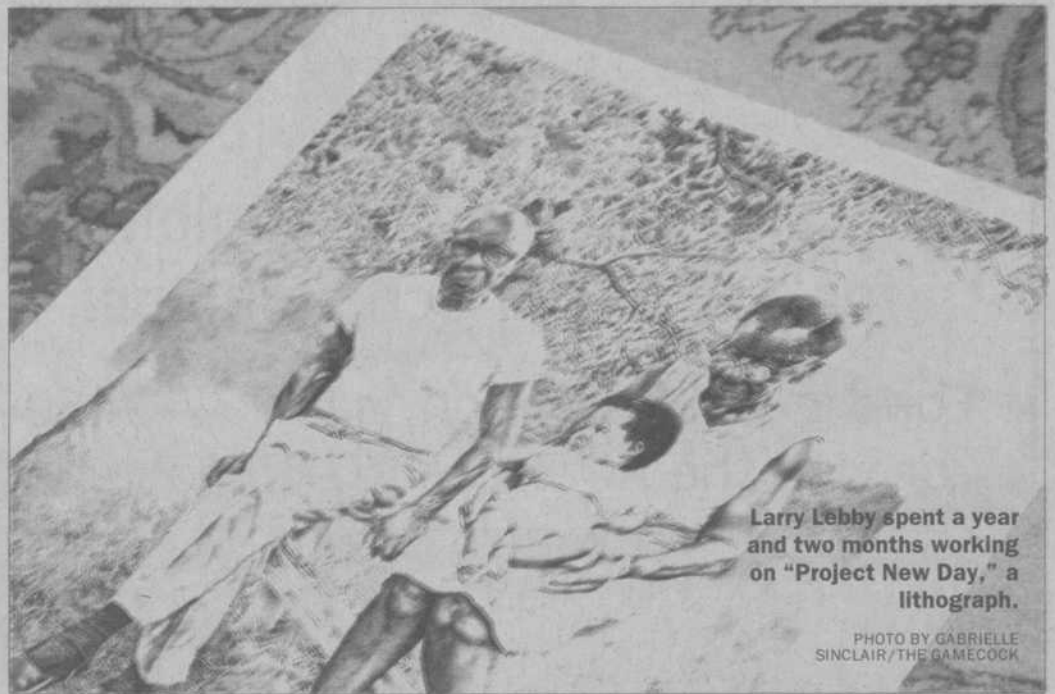
Hubbard said the crux of her work is "valuing things not for their wholeness, but for each element."

A minister's daughter, Hubbard specializes in assemblage, incorporating treasures



PHOTO BY GABRIELLE SINCLAIR/THE GAMECOCK

Local artist Judy Hubbard explains the symbolism behind her piece, "Memento."



Larry Lebbly spent a year and two months working on "Project New Day," a lithograph.

PHOTO BY GABRIELLE SINCLAIR/THE GAMECOCK

## Larry Lebbly

Lithography is not for the weak of heart.

The process involves a painfully complicated set of steps complete with any number of possible, print-altering mistakes. Even the masters can mess it up.

"You cry — a lot," said Larry Lebbly, a Columbia artist who specializes in lithographs and watercolor. "But you learn from it, and then you know what it's like, so you make sure not to do it again."

Lebbly said black and white has a way of being more powerful.

"It's easy to reach out and pull

you into the image itself," he said.

Lebbly has five children — the youngest 9 years old and the eldest 26. Almost 53 years old, his work can be found at the Vatican, the Smithsonian, and the home of the late Gregory Peck. A portrait he painted while attending USC still hangs in the McKissick Museum.

The son of a welder and the middle child of five boys, Lebbly was born and raised in Dixiana, a town of about 10 or so families, that can be summed up as a former train

stop right outside Columbia. He said he found his love of art at the age of four, drawing in the sand at home.

After experiencing integration during the ninth grade, Lebbly jumped at the opportunity to attend a school offering structured art courses.

"I had no fear," he said. "Some other kids were scared; they knew we weren't going to be welcome. But all I cared about was that I knew at Airport High School, there would be art classes to take."

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