Portrait of an Artist: Kris Kanter

We're debuting a new feature in 2023, Portrait of an Artist, to celebrate the talent and diversity of Great Barrington's creatives and entrepreneurs. Whether it's a theatrical production, comedy showcase, restaurant meal, or gallery exhibit, the "show" doesn't go on without a deep bench of front and back-of-house artists lending their skills.

We start with a profile of half of the husband-and-wife design team of JK Custom Furniture & Design, co-manager of Great Barrington Arts Market, founding member of artist-run retail storefront Railroad St. Collective, and DGB Cultural District co-chair, Kris Kanter.

In this brief profile, we ask Kris about her path from earning a B.A. in forensic psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and pursuing a career in child abuse prevention, education, and intervention, first in New York City and then the Berkshire district attorney's office, to returning to an early love of the arts, honed under the guidance of her mother, first in sewing, then painting and drawing, and now custom furniture and home accessories with her husband.

What's your impression of the arts scene in Great Barrington since you arrived here in 2004?

Initially, Josh was working solo on furniture and cabinetry, while I continued with my career in child abuse prevention and intervention, so we were isolated from the Berkshires' creative arts scene at first. We only became familiar with it in 2008 when we started our collection of cheese boards and decorative homewares and began doing craft markets, which happened by accident. Once we did, we found an incredible community of creative, welcoming people whom we immediately connected with and are grateful to still be a part of today.

What inspires you as an artist, crafter,
What led to your co-managing the GB Arts Market and founding member of Railroad St. Collective?

The GB Arts Market was started by two friends, Molly De St Andre (Petit Pilou/MOHO Designs/Berkshire Four Poster) and Katie Burkle (Kathryn B Designs) in 2013. After Katie relocated, I stepped into the manager role alongside Molly. We both loved the idea of helping connect other local craftspeople with a viable market opportunity and are immensely proud to have grown it into a thriving weekly summer, fall, and winter standard. We're also very proud of GBAM's mission to provide revenue for Berkshire based/local artists and offer locally made products to consumers with a downtown location that makes it even easier and more convenient to enjoy shopping for local gifts.

Railroad St. Collective began in 2020 as a holiday pop-up. It's similarly an artist-run retail shop featuring the work of local and regional artists. What's unique about the shop -- in addition to it being a joy to work alongside a talented and supportive group of artists -- the shop gives us the opportunity to sell our work year-round in a prime downtown retail location while still allowing the studio time we need to produce our craft -- something none of us could do if we had to run the shop alone 7 days a week.

What have you learned about the arts community in Great Barrington by serving on the DGB Cultural District Steering Committee?

Being a part of the Steering Committee provides useful knowledge about the things happening downtown and the whole county. Being a working artist can be isolating, but being part of a group that is working to bring together the community and create a vibrant cultural district is very rewarding. It allows us to see the bigger picture and understand the importance of arts and culture for the local economy and quality of life.
so being part of the group gave me -- and Josh indirectly -- a connection to our downtown and the creative economy locally that we might not have had otherwise.

## Local Creative Economy Jobs

Find Berkshire County jobs paying at least $40K at [1Berkshire](#) and creative economy jobs at MCC's [HireCulture](#).

- Museum Project Director, Williams College
- Digital Marketing & Communications Mgr., Norman Rockwell Museum
- Special Projects Associate, 1Berkshire

## Arts Funding and Resources

Curated information about funding and financial assistance for those working in the creative economy.

### MCC's Monthly Newsletter

Learn about grant opportunities, action alerts, community highlights, opportunities, and resources. Find the latest fellowships, explore Massachusetts artists’ galleries, discover arts apprenticeships, and identify art spaces and resources. [See a List of Funding Opportunities to June 30, 2023.](#)

### Creative Capital Artist Opportunities for January and February 2023

Creative Capital is a nonprofit, grantmaking organization with the mission to fund artists in the creation of groundbreaking new work, amplify the impact of their work, and foster sustainable artistic careers. Examples of upcoming deadlines include [NXTHVN 2023–2024 Fellowship Applications Program](#) and [Stochastic Labs Summer Residency](#).

### New England Foundation for the Arts

NEFA works to cultivate and promote the arts in New England and beyond. Among upcoming grant deadlines are [Jazz Road Tours](#) and [National Dance Project Production](#).

### ArtsHub Monthly Event Calendar

ArtsHub is an ever-evolving idea designed to highlight and bring together the amazing artists, organizations, and events that are happening within the creative communities of Western Massachusetts. Near-term
grants include Foundation for Contemporary Arts: Emergency Grants and Hilary Teachout Grants. More can be found on the ArtsHub website.

Artist Impact Coalition

Artist Impact Coalition: Monthly e-Resources
AIC focuses on providing resources for artists to live and thrive in the Northern Berkshires and county-wide. See their list of January 2023 resources.

What | When | Where

What: [London’s National Theatre In HD: Straight Line Crazy (Encore)]
When: February 11 @ 7:00 PM
Where: Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center

Details: Ralph Fiennes leads the cast in David Hare’s blazing account of the most powerful man in New York, a master manipulator whose legacy changed the city forever. Robert Moses.

What: [The Organ Masters-I: Renée Anne Louprette Plays The Historic Johnson Organ]
When: February 11 @ 2:00 PM
Where: Berkshire Bach Society

Details: Renee Louprette plays the historic Johnson organ and George Stauffer, Ph.D. provides commentary on Bach’s music, life, and times.

What: Submissions to Berkshire Film Festival
When: Early Deadline: February 1; Late Deadline: March 11; Extended Deadline: March 14
Where: Berkshire International Film Festival

Details: The Berkshire International Film Festival (BIFF) awards Juried Prizes for
narrative, documentary, and feature films with a $5,000 prize. The Next Great Filmmaker Award for best short film carries a $2,500 prize. They also give Audience Award prizes for Documentary, Narrative, and Short Films with no financial award.

Mass Office of Travel and Tourism

The [Massachusetts Official Travel and Tourism (MOTT) website](#) includes a FREE business database where you can list your business! To get started, visit their website, where you can sign on as a new business or update your information if you are already registered.

Are you making the most of the #mylocalMA campaign? [Submit Your Story](#) for a chance to be featured on social media and in MOTT's My Local MA e-newsletter. You can find more information and resources at [Lovemylocalma.com](#).

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