

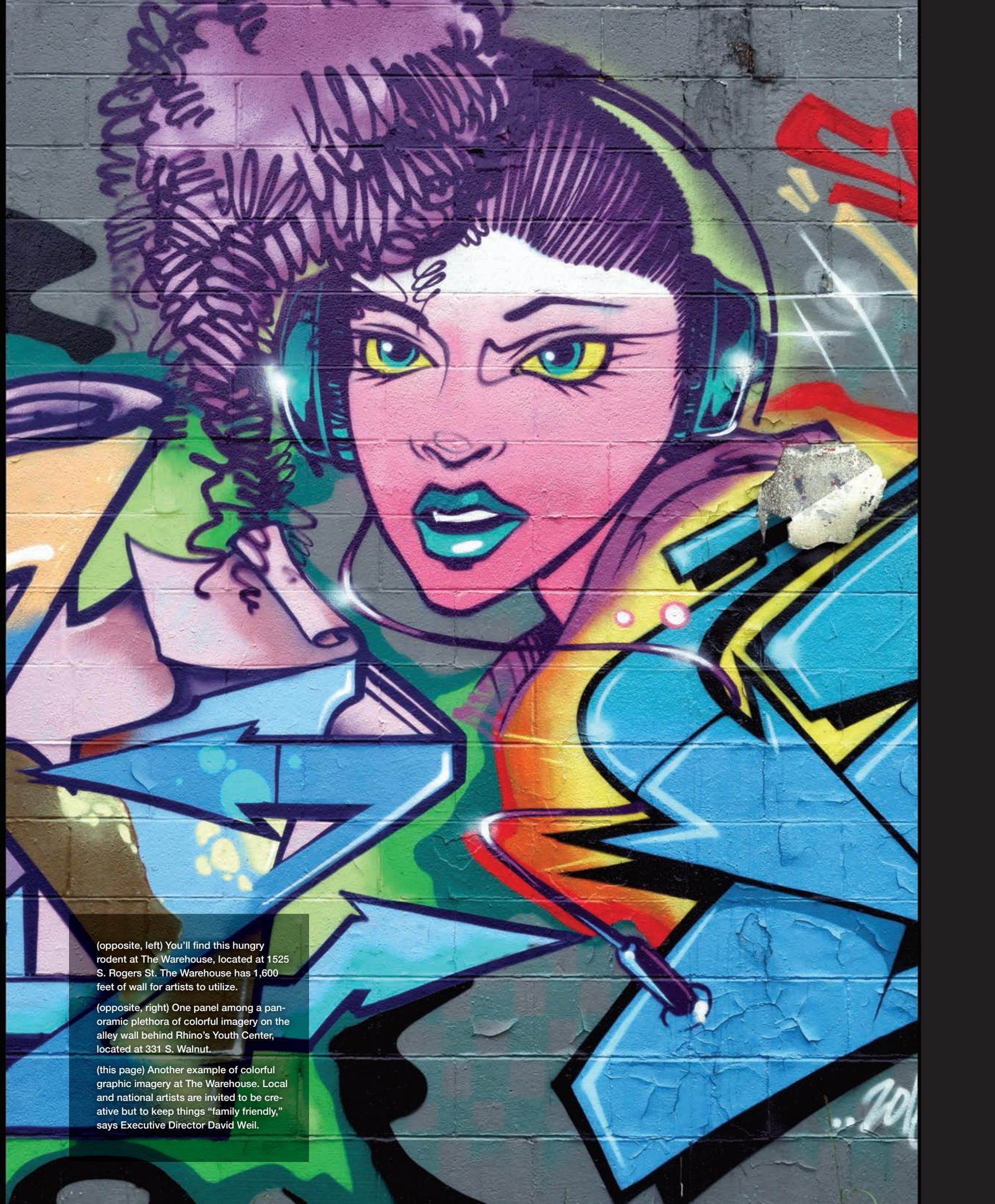


ART ON WALLS

AS YOU STROLL AROUND TOWN, KEEP AN EYE OUT. THERE'S ART TO BE FOUND IN UNLIKELY PLACES.

By Carmen Siering • Photography by Roger Pfingston

Art is plentiful in Bloomington, and there are plenty of obvious places to find it, from the I.M. Pei-designed Indiana University Eskenazi Museum of Art and local art galleries to artists' collectives featuring folk art and handcrafts. But there's also art in less likely places that you can discover by taking a walk down nearly any back street or alleyway. It's a more populist form of art to be sure—colorful and creative murals and graffiti gracing the once-bare back walls of stores, restaurants, warehouses, and office buildings.



(opposite, left) You'll find this hungry rodent at The Warehouse, located at 1525 S. Rogers St. The Warehouse has 1,600 feet of wall for artists to utilize.

(opposite, right) One panel among a panoramic plethora of colorful imagery on the alley wall behind Rhino's Youth Center, located at 331 S. Walnut.

(this page) Another example of colorful graphic imagery at The Warehouse. Local and national artists are invited to be creative but to keep things "family friendly," says Executive Director David Weil.



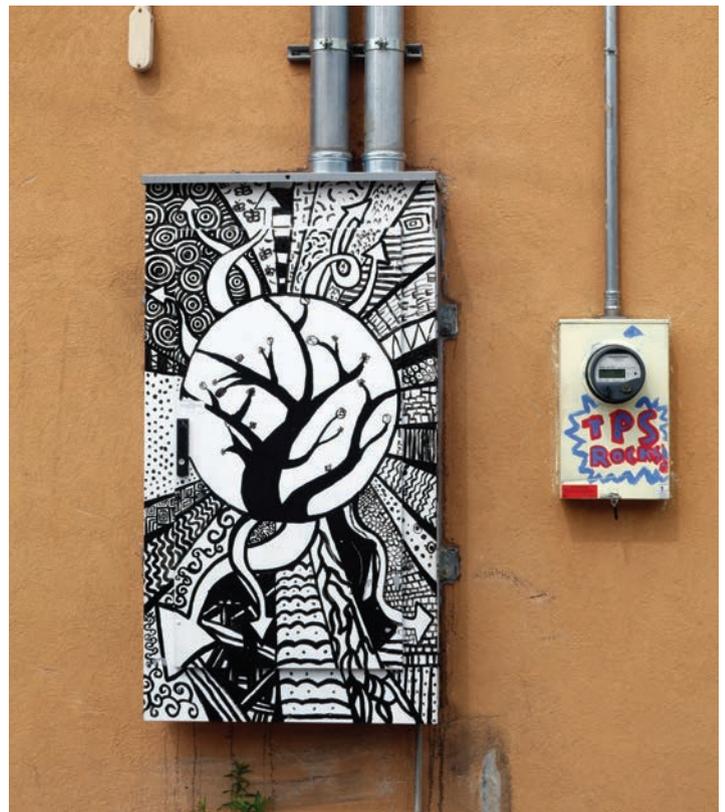
“Bloomington has a reputation as an artistic community, and a lot of this work falls under that heading,” says local photographer Roger Pfingston, a retired English and journalism teacher whose poetry and pictures have been published in journals for the past five decades. “Sure, you’re going to get some stuffy people who have pretty limited views of what art is. But that Mark Rice swimming pool piece (*Breaking Away 2*, above)? That’s art. And the one called *Swampy* (opposite page)? I’d say that’s art, too.”

For this feature, Pfingston spent several weeks combing Bloomington streets and alleys looking for works of art on concrete block walls and in brick alleyways. “One thing I discovered is that, for as much wall art as there is, this town is pretty clean,” he says. “Business people keep their walls clean of obscenities—if it shows up, it gets painted over or scrubbed down.”

There’s a reason for that. Bloomington has a city ordinance that states it is the responsibility of property owners to restore surfaces damaged by graffiti to their original state. The City also has a graffiti management program that works to keep the entire city free of graffiti.

With that in mind, you can still find graffiti art in Bloomington—it’s just that when you do, it has usually been commissioned, allowed (as in the case of mural boards used by some organizations and along some trails), or is on

(top) *Breaking Away 2*, a privately-commissioned work by former Bloomington artist Mark Rice, was executed in just six days in July 2012. It’s located on the western-facing wall of 114 E. 6th St. (right) Power boxes behind The Project School, 349 S. Walnut. (opposite, top) Anonymous graffiti on the wall of an abandoned building just off the B-Line Trail at South Morton and West 1st streets. (opposite, bottom) This whimsical wrap-around trash enclosure hides a would-be eyesore behind the Buskirk-Chumley Theater and FARMbloomington restaurant.







surfaces not under the jurisdiction of the City, such as railroad overpasses or similar structures.

For Pffingston, it doesn't matter much if the art has been commissioned or if it was done by a rogue artist. He's been taking photographs of artwork along the B-Line Trail since its inception in 2011 (see "An Artist's Images on the B-Line Trail" in the August/September 2015 issue of *Bloom*) and says much of the graffiti he's seen there is aesthetically appealing. "I'm attracted by the bright colors and the graphics, which I sometimes find indecipherable," he says. "But as a kind of public art, I'm impressed with the quality."

He's also intrigued by the ephemeral nature of graffiti. "Some of it appears overnight and some of it disappears overnight," he says. "So I try to think like a documentary photographer and document the work."

Most of the art Pffingston captured here was designed for its location. For example, Pygmalion's Art Supplies, located on North Grant Street, commissioned local artist Jim Sampson to design an 8-by-16-foot mural on the north side of its building. Titled *Red Studio*, the painting features, among other things, the store's two cats, Kiki and Alice.

If you like what you see here, you can find more of Roger Pffingston's art-on-walls photographs at magbloom.com. ✧



(top) Pygmalion's *Red Studio*, designed by local artist Jim Sampson. (above) Versions of this image, large and small, appear in and around Bloomington, much like the "Kilroy Was Here" signature made popular by American servicemen during WWII. (opposite, top) These panels at Rhino's Youth Center are interchangeable. The top two images were created by Stella Winterman, now a student at Indiana University. Sophia Waxler's work, on the lower left panel, was inspired by Russian punk rock group Pussy Riot. (opposite, bottom) The Ice King from the TV show *Adventure Time* makes a local appearance.

