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MAGAZINE

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The Yo Magazine is published twice each academic year (once in the fall, once in the spring) by The Jambar, Youngstown State University's student-run newspaper.

The Yo Magazine was first distributed as part of The Jambar in spring 2007, and it won

Associated College Press' Best in Show award in 2008.

We're always looking for writers, editors, designers and photographers, so contact us if you're interested. The Yo must go on!

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear readers

Despite the constant claim that Youngstown is being revitalized, it's difficult to visualize this post-industrial community—riddled with its rust and crumbling concrete—becoming a polished, 21st century city.

But there's much to be said about the people who remain here in the incredible shrinking city—the people who work to make something grow in a city whose supposed last hope was an industry that left decades ago. Yet, here we remain.

The theme of our Spring 2016 issue of YO Magazine is "Growth/Rebirth."

Second-time YO Magazine contributor Georgia Kasamias interviews musician Sam Buonavolonta about Historian Recording Company, a real, homey recording studio that hosts intimate shows with touring musicians, right here in Youngstown.

Former YO Magazine editor and Jambar columnist Jordan McNeil returns to these pages to tell of her nerve-wracking, yet rewarding, experience as the head editor of Jenny Magazine in this issue's YO Diary.

Samuel Cappeli speaks with Daniel Rauschenbach, the curator and co-owner of the SOAP Gallery, an art independent art gallery in Downtown Youngstown.

Alex Puncekar tells a story about the power of the written word, especially when it is said through a microphone.

The Jambar's newest editor-in-chief, Gabby Fellows, gives us a photo essay that explores the little-known lower levels of Bliss Hall, where art students work at all hours to grow into full-fledged artists.

Justin Wier, The Jambar's current news editor, and I take a trip to the Republic Rubber campus, braving the overgrowth, piles of tires and collapsing buildings, to shoot photos of a once-thriving business, now being reclaimed by nature.

These people: they're artisans and poets and musicians. They're providing a service to Youngstown-they're breathing new life into the city through artistic and scholarly pursuits.

Eniov.

Bully









The seven levels of hell-- four marked floors and three unlabeled, unrecognized ones-- transform imaginative ideas into actualities at the fingertips of artists. Arrive at Bliss Hall a naive young adult, leave a master of the trade.





NNY MAGAZINE:



STORY: JORDAN MCNEIL & PHOTOS: JUSTIN WIER

the Tyler History Center, my hands full with cof- all of them. fee and a snack tray. My nerves were already frayed because I had cut the catering pickup too close to the event start time, and I had received a "Where are you?" text from my sister as I was waiting on my order. My first premiere as head editor, and I felt like I was on the path of messing it up.

The doors opened, and my nerves became even more jumpy. When I had left to pick up the food, there were maybe five people who weren't staff members in the room — now it was basically their reading series, which brought professional

I walked off the elevator onto the top floor of full. And I was going to have to speak in front of authors from the local Northeast Ohio and near-

I joined the staff of "Jenny Magazine" sometime in the spring of 2013, but the online literary magazine was created in the fall of 2010, a year before I started my undergrad at Youngstown State University. Members of the Student Literary Arts Association organization, led at the time mission of sharing the arts in Youngstown — having already spent about two years working on

by Pennsylvania area to Youngstown to share their work and fight the perception that our city did not have a deficit in cultural production.

They wanted to highlight the literary arts as something that people actually do in this region, to create touchstones in the community for students and others to become interested in the litby Christopher Lettera, wanted to continue their erary arts and see it as an actual thing they could pursue for themselves.

fully, holding the readings at various industry somewhere. And the fact places within Youngstown to get that there were college students YSU students off campus and into currently acting in that space on my downtown and create public engagement with their city.

ect, the members of SLAA wanted could become a part of that myself to continue the awareness and encouragement of the literary arts in the area that they had started with the reading series — and so, "Jenny Magazine" was born.

It was to be a literary magazine that was representative of the region and its history, featuring poems and stories and interviews and art from local writers and artists that had to do with this place of Youngstown, but also just place-based subject matter in general.

"Jenny" would be a space that would put local work side-by-side with work from other states and even other countries, giving Youngstown the opportunity to be part of a global conversation.

When I joined in 2013, the staff was working on their sixth issue, which was a special Youngstownthemed anthology that also received a print edition, focusing on the place of Youngstown, as well as the lore of the city, all told by local writers and artists. As of April 2016, we have produced ten issues, publishing a total of 106 short stories and 147 poems from a variety of authors: YSU students, Youngstown residents, authors as far away as South Korea and many, many others.

I actually became part of SLAA and the "Jenny" team because other members at the time sought me out at a department banquet where I was presented with a creative writing award. But I had been trying to find them myself for a bit before that.

An instructor pointed out "Jenny Magazine" to me after a class one day my freshman year, and I was enthralled. I had recently decided to follow my heart and switched to my favorite things I did in my underan English major, with the long-term

And they did so rather success- goal of working in the publishing campus amazed me.

But I was shy and anxious, and After the success of their first proj-didn't actually figure out how I until they found me that spring of the hundreds of pages 2013. Because I'm a rather quiet and shy person, I think I surprised them when I actually showed up to my first meeting.

> They were definitely an enthusiastic bunch of people, which could easily become overwhelming to someone like me, but they welcomed me and let me sit in quiet until I was comfortable enough to occasionally join in their energetic and rambunctious ways.

> I fell in love with what we were doing with "Jenny" rather quickly. The idea of being able to read so many pieces of writing from people who were literally all over the world was exhilarating, even if some issues were tiring with the sheer volume of submissions. And then we got to pick the best of those submissions and publish them — put them out there for all to see. We were an active part of the literary community in Youngstown; we were actually making something to share with the world.

> I took over as president of SLAA and head editor of "Jenny Magazine" in 2015, when Couri Johnson, a NEOMFA student and previous president of SLAA, graduated and I started my second round at YSU this time for graduate school. I admit, I was nervous toward the end of that spring when I knew my time for responsibility was coming, and again as that fall approached knowing that now it was just around the corner. But in the moments after and in between when I got myself to calm down, I was excited.

> "Jenny Magazine" was one of

be able to keep it going strong. We started that fall off with a smallerthan-usual staff, but I was determined that we were going to pull it off. And we did.

Reading through of submissions was time consuming and a little daunting, but my staff and I got through it, deliberated on the best pieces and put together an issue that I was proud of — and I'd like to think they all were too. I was feeling good about being head editor, about continuing this local legacy of creating in Youngstown, about showing that this city I was calling a home even though I actually lived somewhere else was not all that the cynics claimed it to be.

For an article in The said this quote that I have clung to since attempting to fill her shoes: "We want to be a signpost to the rest of the world that Youngstown is still here, still creating and still burning." "Jenny"'s mission in a nutshell. And I believe in it 100 percent.

I reminded myself of that mission as I exited the elevator - coffee in one hand, a snack tray in the other — into that room packed with people. I took deep breaths as my nerves kicked in and finished setting up the refreshments table.

These people were all here to support "Jenny," to celebrate our ninth issue — my first issue in charge. They were here because they believed in what we were doing and wanted to to share them with me. be a part of it themselves.

graduate career, and I was excited to weak knees, I was elated. This was think you're going to enjoy it."

what "Jenny Magazine" was cre-Jambar, her last year in charge, Couri ated for, those five years prior. We were creating art, we were creat-

ing conversation, we were creating community.

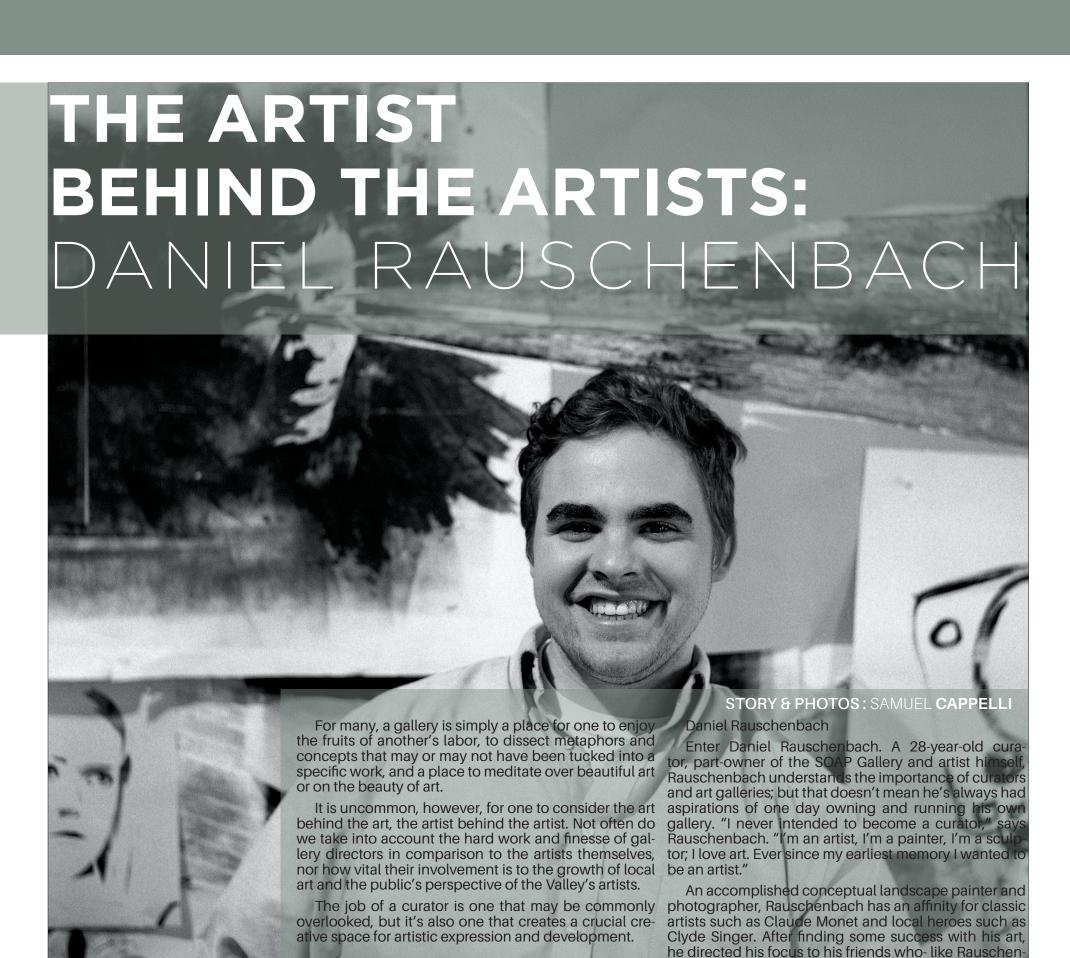
We were creating.

I took my papers, straightened my dress and walked as confidently as I could to the microphone in front of all those people. I steadied my hands on the podium.

"Hello," I said, smiling.

I tried to ignore my stage fright that made me want to buckle and focused, instead, on the sheer joy that here I was, sharing these amazing written works of our ninth issue and that all those people were here

"Welcome to the Issue Nine pre-Underneath my shaky hands and miere party of 'Jenny Magazine.' I



bach- are members of Youngstown's local art the public to feel proud about something." community.

artists, and they need help, you start to think rather than specifically to be sold. However, he 'Maybe I can help them out a little bit,'" he said.

The Art of Curation

The SOAP Gallery's ownership has changed hands more than a few times. Before its current owners, the Rica Building at 117 South Champion Street was home most recently to the Purple Cat headquarters, after working as a general their work in one encounter, but in another, he maintenance facility of Ohio Edison who originally purchased the property when its chief functions were based around horse cart repair in the early 1900s. Rauschenbach is charmed by its history, and appreciates the dynamic changes in purpose it's had over the past century.

Since last October, the SOAP Gallery has been working on leaving its own mark on the Rica building's history. Horse carriages are no longer the primary focus, and it's no longer a central hub for equipment maintenance, but rather an epicenter of art and expression. "Paintings are always the easiest to show," Rauschenbach said, grinning as he follows up with a story about having to manage a 2,000-pound painting. While fascinated with most genres and more than willing to exhibit almost every artist's work, he finds himself particularly attracted to thought-provoking installation sets, especially pieces that effectively transform and redefine the space.

However, curating isn't just about meticulously arranging pieces for an exhibit, nor having an intimate amount of knowledge regarding the gallery's history. Rauschenbach makes the point that the most rewarding parts of being a curator can also be the most challenging: the social aspects of gallery directing.

"That's the fun part and the hard part; being social, being part of the public and part of the community," Rauschenbach said.

While on certain days he can end up with six sequential meetings over coffee, he ascertains that getting to meet with many different people is an extremely satisfying part of the job. He explains that social-networking is crucial to running a successful gallery; first to get artists' work on the walls, and then later to bring the public through the doors by organizing and spreading the word about events. "It's both the neat thing about a gallery and the tough thing about a gallery," he said. "You want

Typically, Rauschenbach has found it's easiest "When you realize that all of your friends are to present art that was made to make a statement." enjoys the challenge.

> "That's a tough situation to be put into, but it's a fun situation, because you get to sell art," he said.

> Rauschenbach will have to wrestle with curating an artist who is requesting a large sum for may encounter an artisan who suggests a price that will hardly come close to covering a fraction of a month's worth of rent.

However, he is able to recognize parallels in both types of these artists; in that they both share a desire for their work to be seen and appreciated. Just by having their work hanging on the walls of the SOAP for display, whether it's seen by high-brow art critics, casual observers, or the artists' mothers, can make for a very inspiring and therapeutic experience that fosters further creation by local artists.

A Blank Slate

When asked to give his opinion regarding Youngstown's current art scene, Rauschenbach replied almost instantly: "The thing that's cool about Youngstown is that we're a blank slate."

He said that while Youngstown has made a name for itself well outside its city limits, usually regarding YSU's STEM programs or its football teams, or the perpetuated legend of the city's rise and fall with the steel industry.

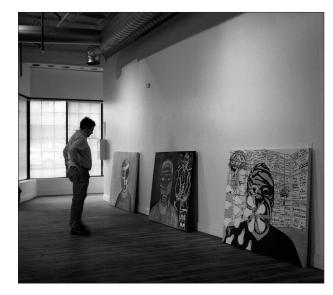
But despite having sold various pieces of Youngstown art to collectors from Los Angeles artists or the art community of Youngstown, Ohio. ers, affirming that

Should Youngstown revitalize itself as an up and coming art-community, it wouldn't be the first. Cities like Asheville, North Carolina, for example, have redefined themselves culturally, and as a result, they've become epicenters of art and bohemian culture in America.

However, Rauschenbach is confident that Youngstown has the opportunity to do the same.

"Asheville is a great city. But does Youngstown have the opportunity to do that?" he said. "Definitely, 110%. I think we have a chance to be something a lot bigger."

to make an artist feel comfortable, and you want in the Valley, as well as Youngstown's excel-



lent geographical positioning, he is confident Youngstown has what it takes to thrive.

According to Rauschenbach, the future of Youngstown's art scene can go either direction.

'We are able to become a thriving art center." he said. "Or we're able to spend the next 20 years with the same old same old."

Despite the opportunities and resources available, it won't be quick or easy to sculpt Youngstown into a well-known maker's space, and Rauschenbach believes that the bulk of the burden would be placed onto Youngstown State University graduates.

"It takes the voung adults coming out of Youngstown State University to make this into a thriving art community," Rauschenbach said. "That's a lot of pressure for these young people."

Rauschenbach has faith and confidence in both to Sweden, it's rare for someone to mention the the creators of art in Youngstown and its consum-

> "Youngstown knows good art, we were all raised with the Butler," he said "We know when to say when something is not good, and all of our moms are all of the greatest art critics on the planet."

> He stresses the importance of the individual in Youngstown, and that with the backing of the community, forming a prominent art-based environment can be feasible.

"We're freaks, we're weird, we're hipsters, we're punks, we're goths, we're everyday people, we're alive," Rauschenbach said. "And Youngstown has a chance to do that. It's just Referencing cheap and affordable living a matter of shaking off the rust and shining the steel."



An Introduction:

The art scene in Youngstown, at first sight, appears to be primarily made of the Butler Museum of American Art, the McDonough Museum of Contemporary Art, the DeYor Performing Arts Center, and the Stambaugh Auditorium. Yet beneath this layer exists a more elusive, vibrant art scene that is constantly buzzing. Youngstown's art scene harbors enormous potential for artists, both creatively and commercially. The Historian Recording Company offers us a prime example of a low-key art venture producing brilliant work.

I first heard of The Historian Recording Company by photographer and artist David Pokrivinak; he told me that it was a small recording studio in Youngstown, Ohio. I remember being especially intrigued when he mentioned that the sessions took place at the home of his friends. "What a unique and intimate project," I thought to myself. And so when I found out that this spring 2016 edition would focus on creation in Youngstown, the

Historian Recording Company was my first pick. Thus I bought a ticket to the next show, which featured Benoit Piolard and took place March 25.

The show was absolutely stunning. Tickets went for \$15, and the venue was indeed the eclectically furnished apartment of two of the founders of the Historian Recording Company — Melanie and Sam Buonavolonta. I entered the apartment knowing hardly anyone, but warmth emanated from the other attendees. There were about 20 people in total, including the videographers and the artist himself. We all congregated before the show and exchanged words, snacking on crackers, pretzels, cheese, nuts and dark chocolate, as well as sipping on alcohol or tea (the event was described as BYOB). After admiring the aesthetic of the apartment, with its friendly cat, abundant plants, old film cameras and numerous genres of paintings, everyone settled in to hear Benoit Pouliard play.

To hear his haunting, soft-yet-strong songs, check out the recording at:

www.historianrec.co/session

The Interview:

When did your project begin?

Sometime in 2013, "Dear Rabbit" was playing in town, and we were putting him up for the night. The next morning was pretty uneventful so I asked him if he wanted to record a song in the studio and we could film it with our phone-camera apps. So we did, and we just kept following that model until our first in-studio show. Sarah Lipstate (Noveller) was stranded in Cincinnati with a string of shows that had just been canceled. She was on tour opening for St. Vincent, who was secretly asked to play with Nirvana for their Rock Hall of Fame induction. Our friends Dave and Cathy were huge fans of Noveller and reached out to her to come play a show at our place. It was very last minute, about 15 people attended, and it was such a good show!

Did you to start the project as a couple?

We started it with the two of us, and our friend David. There's a rotation of other photographers that sometimes help if we need it.

On average, how many concerts do you have per year?

About four, it's very casual. We take artists as they approach us and if we don't have the time to make it a great experience for all involved, we don't do it.

On average, how many people attend your shows?

Anywhere from six to 40. Sometimes our sessions aren't shows at all. We'll just record the artist, and they'll play a show at a proper venue in the area.

What are your future goals for the project?

I'd like to get a better PA system for the shows ... Other than that this isn't really a goal-oriented project. Everyone involved genuinely loves doing this, which is probably why it formed as organically as it did. I think with every session we're all getting better at our respective roles, so we'd just like to keep doing it and see how it evolves.

Do you aim for a particular style or a particular artist to come?

We focus on touring artists. A group or individual that makes the type of sacrifices necessary to tour extensively needs all the help they can get.

We like to see it as a way to reach outside of the area as well. For a lot of the artists we host, it's their first time in Youngstown, and we feel like it's a great opportunity to show them a warm welcome and introduce them to the city that we love.

Is the Historian Recording Company's focus on music or does it also promote the visual arts?

We host musicians, though several have had visual accompaniment to their music. (See: Curtains, Benoit Pioulard). Of course the visual component of an edited video is the product. The video can be used by the artist or simply referenced by whom-



What do you think led you to this point to where you wanted to start this project?

This is by no means groundbreaking stuff. House shows and live videos are happening everywhere and have been for a long time. We are musicians, artists and photographers so we have the resources as well as a fascination with the process. I guess it was kind of inevitable.

Are either of you two musicians yourself?

Yes. I play in a band called Sam Goodwill.

ever. Historian sessions have been shown as shorts by The Youngstown Cinema, which is a neat context we didn't expect to see them in but are thrilled that there was an interest.

Do you release the recordings in an album or an EP?

We've actually talked about releasing these as albums or EP's, but haven't been able to make such arrangements with the artists. It's really about giving the artist what they need, if any of them needed a live album we'd love to do it.



Take a trip to Downtown Youngstown, serves more attention, Much like writing itself, Amongst the bars and the stages, in front of microphones and crowds of people, are the storytellers.

Youngstown is a place where stories are told, but some may not know that those stories are often told with a mic in hand and in front of an eager audience. Poets, essayists and fiction writers take advantage of this platform at places like Suzie's Dogs and Drafts in Downtown Youngstown to speak the words they've written and tell stories to entertain a crowd.

That's what live readings (sometimes called open mic nights) are for. Essentially public events where people with stories to tell do so in front of an audience are not a new concept in Youngstown, though it's one that certainly depublic reading is an art form.

These events often occur not that far away from campus as well. Places like Suzie's Dogs and Drafts and Youngstown State University itself have hosted several of these events.

These readings are part of a revival of sorts. The art of oral storytelling is a tradition that goes back as far as when humans were first learning how to speak and telling stories around campfires. That tradition is being revived here in Youngstown, or rather has been for quite some

One such organization that is keeping this tradition alive is Lit Youngstown, a non-profit literary arts group dedicated to the arts.

Karen Schubert, one of Lit Youngstown's

founders, believes that the literary arts are not only important for the artists involved, but also for the community at large.

"The literary arts can also help make a bridge between people, as a forum for storytelling, helping to foster empathy and strengthen community. It's a way of listening to one another, and taking time to really think about what we think, and how we think," Schubert said. "For emerging writers, it's good practice to get behind a mic in a low-key setting like Suzie's, look out and see everyone smiling at you and realize whatever horrible thing you imagined would happen when you were up on that stage in front of everyone, it's not going to happen."

Storytelling is important. We do it everyday, telling people how our classes went or how work is going, about what our friends did and what we hope to do tomorrow. We tell those stories because it's how we interact with the world, how we understand it and how we interpret it. There's always an audience to oral storytelling, whether it's one friend or a room full of people.

Community is the heart of that creative tradition. Packed with people, Suzie's Dogs and Drafts often sponsors these events led by groups like Lit Youngstown or the Student Literary Arts Association (SLAA).

"Poetry goes together with performance," Dom Fonce, an undergraduate and member of SLAA, said. "You're supposed to read poetry [out loud]. That's kind of important, so I'm glad we're supporting it".

Amber Palmer, an undergraduate at Youngstown State University and a member of the SLAA, said that these types of events help bring to Youngstown an art community that is so desperately needed.

"We don't have a strong arts community right now, and this is a way to harbor that," Palmer said. "Not just with literature, but there's also people who are interested in music and theater that are also interested in this sort of thing. When you have these events, it gives them an opportunity to come in." As a writer who has read his own work up on stage before, Christopher Alonso, a graduate student at YSU, says that getting behind the mic is certainly a challenge, but it's one that he gladly faces.

"It takes you out of your comfort zone a little bit," Alonso said. "I know some people are fine to speak in public like that, but some people might not be. It's a good experience overall."

Facilitating that arts community is something that groups like Lit Youngstown and SLAA are attempting to do. Whenever an issue of "Jenny Magazine" is published, SLAA holds a public reading to honor and celebrate the talented writers and poets that are showcased in the issue.



"I think it's just good to hear people just be passionate about what they're doing," Mark Toth, an undergraduate and SLAA member, said. "Especially with an arts scene."

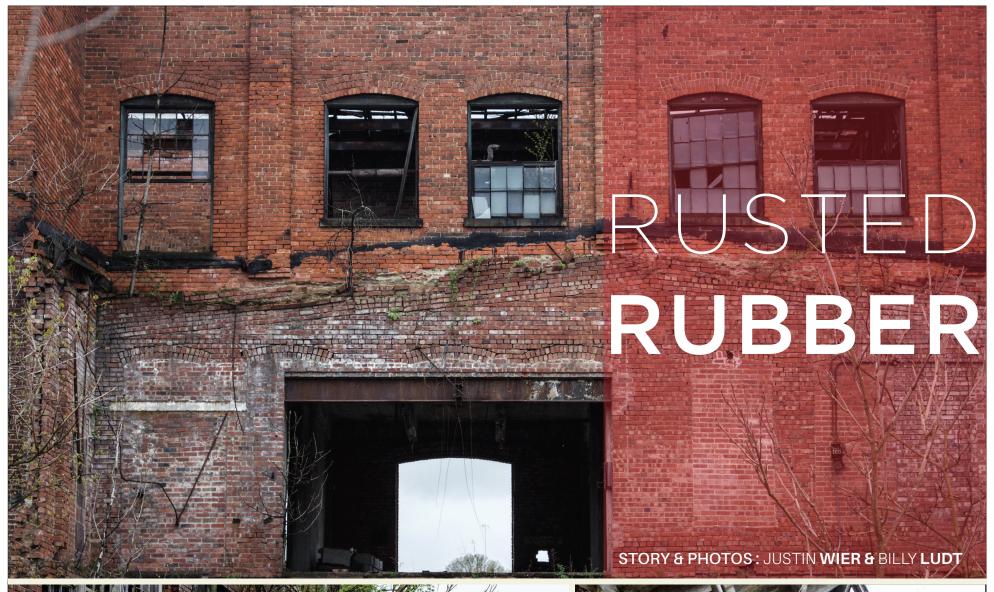
And that effect is consistently being felt, as the arts community continues to grow in Youngstown. For the past few years, places like YSU have facilitated the Summer Festival of the Arts, a festival where artists from all over can showcase their talents and creations.

Certainly, SLAA and Lit Youngstown have had a presence at these places and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future to spread the age-old tradition of storytelling and community. These events go out to the writers, the poets, the storytellers in order to bring together solidarity and unity, using art and storytelling to do so.

Stories are important. Storytelling is just as important. The creation of a community, one that supports and challenges each other through company and fellowship, can be the backbone that Youngstown needs for a creative revival.

Already, people are doing something about that, creating and supporting these communities in the hopes of bringing people together through stories. Dia Scruggs, an undergraduate at YSU and member of the student-led Jenny Magazine, says that a community of the arts is something that she feels is needed in her life: "As a writer, I want something like that, to be able to go to things like that ... it makes me feel like I have a family."









YO









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