

*By Kelly Skeen*

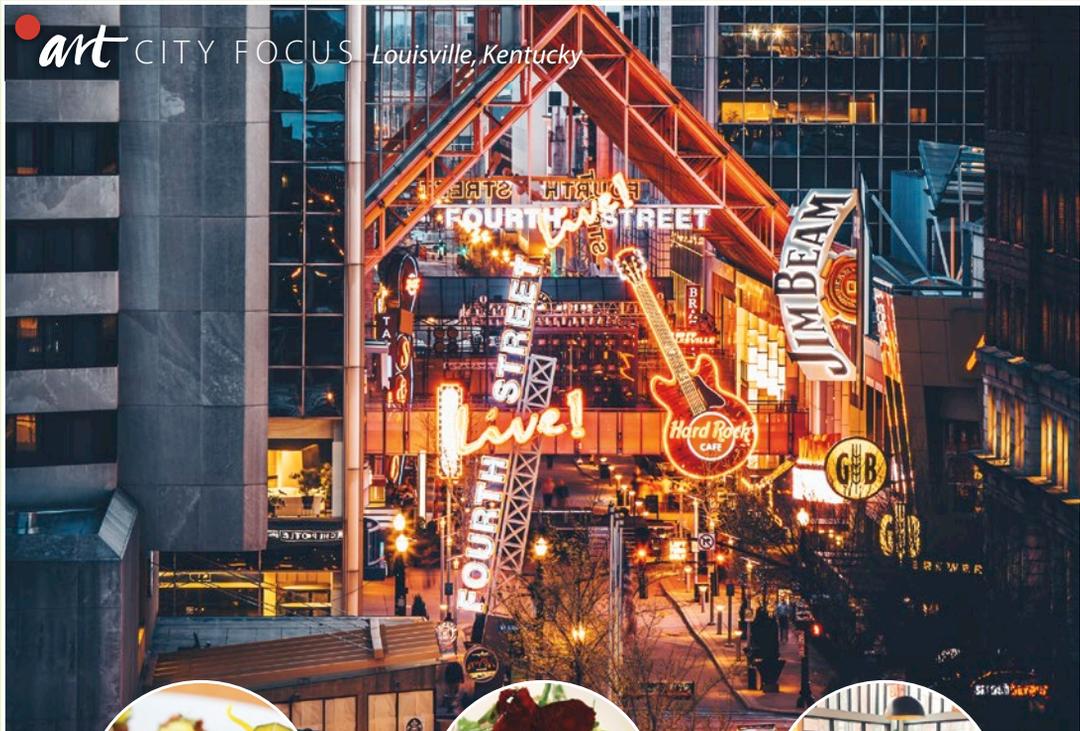
**L**ouisville, Kentucky, is a historic river city born from the steamboat industry in the early 1800s. Its prime location at the Falls of the Ohio made it an important trade center for both northern and southern waterways. The city's growth has since been characterized by the rise of the Kentucky Derby and its rich history of bourbon distilling; the unique limestone water is said to be the key factor in both its strong racehorses and superior spirits. Over the past decade, however, Louisville's arts and culture commitment has given the city another economical boost and exciting appeal. Now,

its creative community is flourishing due to innovative, high-caliber art institutions, a thriving arts and culture district, dedicated community arts funding and key voices committed to engaging Louisville in national art dialogues—and in many respects, the conversation is just beginning. Just last year the city announced a new cultural plan, Imagine Greater Louisville 2020, to bridge connections between museums, artist communities and art organizations to fulfill an inclusive and accessible vision for Louisville's artistic future. "We're focusing on the impact of art, not just the art itself," says Christen



# LOUISVILLE

*Kentucky*



EAT



### PROOF ON MAIN

In addition to its culinary artistry, Proof features an installation that celebrates Louisville's history in an artistic conglomeration of archival material and artifacts from the city.



### MAYAN CAFÉ

Chef Bruce Uacán is a Mayan Indian from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula serving authentic Mayan cuisine in the NuLu neighborhood.



### PORCH KITCHEN AND BAR

Louisville's newest restaurant serving comfort food—think Southern fried chicken and crab hush puppies—in a spirited atmosphere.

Boone, president and CEO of Fund for the Arts, who facilitated the plan. “We know that arts and culture creates a stronger community. It’s the sparkle that draws people to the area, and then once they get here, it’s the glue that holds us together.”

Louisville’s sparkle shines brightest in the heart of downtown on Museum Row—where a double-size, golden replica of Michelangelo’s *David* landmarks the **21c Museum Hotel**. This dominating sculpture by Turkish conceptual artist Serkan Özkaya is part of Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson’s adventurous contemporary art collection; the Louisville locals developed

21c with the concept that art should be both accessible and engaging. Their dynamic institution houses a contemporary art museum with 9,000 square feet of exhibition space, a boutique hotel and eclectic restaurant all under one entity. Site-specific installations and interactive exhibitions fill the building, encouraging guests to engage playfully with contemporary art. Housed in a conglomeration of renovated tobacco and bourbon warehouses, 21c’s property speaks to the community’s history while revitalizing the Main Street façade. It has expanded to seven regional locations since its Louisville opening in 2006.

Also on Museum Row is **KMAC Museum**, an institution that began 35 years ago as a foundation to support local crafters and folk artists. KMAC is still an advocate for local artists, but has since redefined its mission and renovated its four-story cast-iron building. Now an accredited museum and sophisticated contemporary art space, KMAC hosts intellectually challenging and dynamic exhibitions that redefine “craft” within a contemporary context. Shows for process-based artists spark local interest in national and international art trends, thus inspiring Louisville artists by exposing



**1 1619 FLUX**

1619 W. Main Street, Louisville, KY 40203  
www.1619flux.com

**2 849 Gallery at the Kentucky College of Art + Design (KYCAD) at Spalding University**

849 S. Third Street, Louisville, KY 40203  
kycad.spalding.edu/849-gallery

**3 Craft(s) Gallery & Mercantile**

572 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.craftslouisville.com

**4 Cressman Center for Visual Arts**

100 E. Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
louisville.edu/art

**5 First Light Gallery**

1009 E. Main Street, Louisville, KY 40206  
www.firstlightgalleryky.com

**6 Flame Run Gallery**

815 W. Market Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.flamerun.com

**7 Gallery at the Brown Hotel**

335 W. Broadway, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.brownhotel.com/shop-at-the-brown

**8 Galerie Hertz**

1253 S. Preston Street, Louisville, KY 40203  
www.galeriehertz.com

**9 garner narrative**

642 E. Market Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.garnernarrative.com

**10 Hite Art Institute at University of Louisville**

104 Schneider Hall, Louisville, KY 40292  
www.louisville.edu/art/

**11 Huff Gallery at Spalding University**

853 Library Lane, Louisville, KY 40203  
spalding.edu/huff-gallery

**12 Koi Gallery at the Galt House Hotel**

140 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.koibydolanor.com

**13 KMAC Museum**

715 W. Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.kmacmuseum.org

**14 Louisville Visual Art**

1538 Lytle Street, Louisville, KY 40203  
www.louisvillevisualart.org

**15 Moremen Moloney Contemporary**

939 E. Washington Street, Louisville, KY 40206  
www.moremenmoloneygallery.com

**16 Paul Paletti Gallery**

713 E. Market Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.paulpalettigallery.com

**17 PYRO Gallery**

1006 E. Washington Street, Louisville, KY 40206  
www.pyrogallery.com

**18 Revelry Boutique Gallery**

742 E. Market Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.revelrygallery.com

**19 Roanne H. Victor Gallery at Actors Theatre**

316 W. Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.actors theatre.org

**20 Speed Art Museum**

2035 S. Third Street, Louisville, KY 40208  
www.speedmuseum.org

**21 Swanson Contemporary**

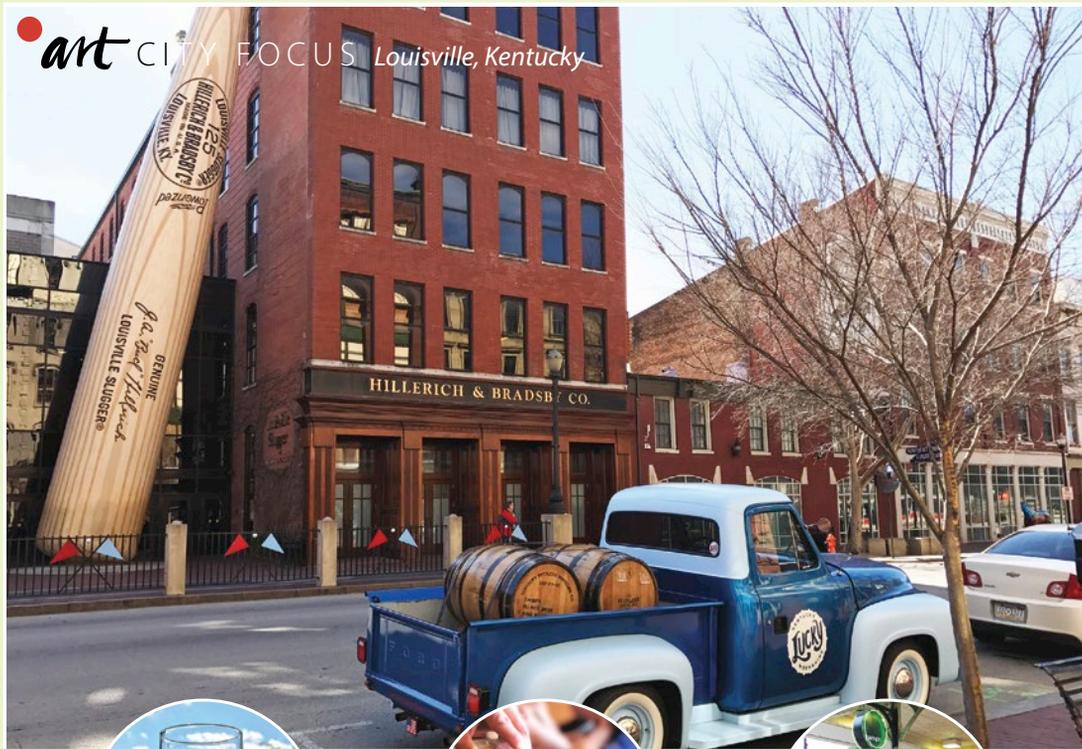
638 E. Market Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.swansoncontemporary.com

**22 Tim Faulkner Gallery**

1512 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40203  
www.timfaulknergalleryart.com

**23 Zephyr Gallery**

610 E. Market Street, Louisville, KY 40202  
www.zephyrgallery.org



SIP



### THE KENTUCKY BOURBON TRAIL®

Start at the Frazier History Museum with a tour of The Kentucky Bourbon Trail® Welcome Center, then adventure through the countryside and visit up to nine historic distilleries.



### WHISKEY ROW

This stretch on Main Street is the historic home of the bourbon industry. Slated for demolition in 2011, its 19<sup>th</sup>-century façades have recently reopened as an urban bourbon destination.



### GARAGE BAR

A former auto service garage now serves as NuLu's summertime hotspot. Check out Jonathan Schipper's commissioned sculpture out front, *Slow Inevitable Death of American Muscle*.

them to the art world at large. In addition to a ground level active community space and two stories of rotating exhibitions, KMAC boasts a permanent collection that includes cutting-edge work by artists such as Wendell Castle and Simone Leigh. KMAC executive director Aldy Milliken directed a contemporary gallery in Sweden before moving to Louisville to lead KMAC's evolutionary shifts. His transition from the art market to the museum world means continued collaboration with living artists, but Milliken's sales pitch has changed a bit. "What I'm selling now

is that contemporary art is good for the community, it's good for our brains and it's good for artists," he says. "It's a way for Louisville to grow."

Louisville's oldest institutional gem is **Speed Art Museum**, which reopened in 2016 after a three-year renovation project that doubled the square footage of its original structure. Considered to be the largest art museum in the state, the Speed's three-story, modern building now includes a 138-seat cinema, an airy glass atrium and large open-concept exhibition space. Its permanent collection ranges from African

and Native American art and artifacts to American and European painting and sculpture; the latter includes an exceptional collection of Dutch and Flemish art. The Speed's growing contemporary collection is particularly strong due to organized collector groups, who over the years have developed trained eyes and important dealer relationships on behalf of the Museum. Original members of these groups are now leaders in Louisville's art community, making major acquisitions for the Speed and supporting other institutions and galleries across the city. "We



STAY



### 21C MUSEUM HOTEL

For the art adventurer—book a night in *Asleep in the Cyclone*, a contemporary art installation by Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe that doubles as a functional hotel room.



### OMNI LOUISVILLE HOTEL

The Omni opened this spring and features 31 Kentucky artists throughout the hotel and in the Local Art Gallery on the first floor.



### MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN

Home to Louisville's newest restaurant, Porch, this Marriott has a modern aesthetic and convenient downtown location.

want to encourage a sense of community ownership over our collection," says museum director Stephen Reily. Opening this month at the Speed is *Picasso to Pollock: Modern Masterworks from the Eskenazi Museum of Art*.

Outside of the institutional realm is NuLu, or "New Louisville," which over the past 10 years has sprung up as the city's premier arts and culture district. Galleries, artist studios, boutiques and restaurants make what's also referred to as the East Market District a lively, hip part of town. **Swanson Contemporary** and **Zephyr Gallery**, both representing

forward-thinking artists who work in a variety of mediums, were NuLu's pioneers and continue to be strongholds for the district. Other NuLu galleries include **Revelry Boutique Gallery**, a multi-format art space and boutique emphasizing local artists and crafters, the artist collective **PYRO Gallery** and artist-owned **garner narrative**. NuLu is buzzing during Louisville's first Friday art hop where trolley tours connect the district to other art locations like Museum Row.

Contrasting NuLu's clustered consortium of galleries is "old Louisville," where industrial spaces from the steamboat era

are transforming into artist studios and galleries. Overlooked and abandoned for most of Louisville's recent history, Portland is shaping up to be the city's next creative haven. It's home to the multifaceted **Tim Faulkner Gallery**, whose 26,000-square-foot building encompasses an exhibition space, a concert venue and 11 artist studios. Across the street is **Louisville Visual Art (LVA)**, a nonprofit whose mission is art education, outreach and artist support. Portland's large and affordable warehouse studios also provide individual artists with opportunities to collaborate and grow their studio practices.

## BEST TIMES TO VISIT

Spring as excitement builds with events and festivals for the opening of the Kentucky Derby in May.

Fall for the citywide *Photo Biennial*, [www.louisvillephotobiennial.com](http://www.louisvillephotobiennial.com), and spectacular fall foliage on countryside bourbon tours.



Louisville's institutions and galleries give the city its shine, but it's the individual artists, students, curators and educators that make up its arts infrastructure. These individuals are committed to elevating Louisville's art dialogue and critical view, an area where many mid-size art cities comparatively fall short. Great Meadows Foundation, for example, is a grant giving foundation launched by local collector and philanthropist Al Shands who has recently sparked an initiative to bring national notable critics to Louisville for studio visits. Great Meadows' travel grants also ensure that Louisville's art influencers have worldly perspectives, which in turn raises the caliber of Louisville's "local" art. University of Louisville's Curatorial and Critical Studies program also plays a key role in fostering the critical dialogue alongside Great Meadows' initiatives.

"The arts are developing at such a rapid pace here," says curatorial studies professor Chris Reitz, who also directs University of Louisville's **Hite Art Institute**. "But the amazing thing about this town is that you can participate in national conversations while remaining committed to local producers and culture. And that rarely coincides."

*In addition to visual arts, Louisville is home to the Actors Theater, as well as an opera, orchestra and ballet. Learn more at [www.gotolouisville.com](http://www.gotolouisville.com).*



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