

My artwork has always been intimately involved with St. Louis. For over a decade I freelanced paintings and illustrations for the print media of the city. Editorial pictures of events of the day, issues of importance and in a general way, the things that mattered. The collection of these works is like a diary of St. Louis. Realistic portraits and caricatures of the people in civic office, or business, or sports, the urban landscapes, as well as cheerleading and boosterism for causes were the subjects of my work. My understanding and sensitivity of the subjects of our city was the reason I was repeatedly commissioned for these paintings. Posters for Mardi Gras and the Blues Festival, street art, concert posters, restaurant logos and advertising are also a large part of the St. Louis culture I have depicted.

And when I focused on the question of St. Louis' music history and began investigating those answers, I produced the only book of our complete music legacy, a history that was almost lost forever. The book, *Devil At The Confluence* began as an idea to simply paint the portraits of our cities great musicians. A task I soon found to be impossible for there wasn't so much as a list of names of the jazz and blues artists of the 20s and 30s from St. Louis. A few men were still alive for me to talk to and thus began a 15 year search that resulted in the illustrated book. Although publishing a book was not my goal until the results of hunt began to clearly show that St. Louis was the largest center of music creativity in those early decades. These new facts of our legacy compelled me to publish it as a book. I realized this was more than just a commemoration of hundreds of musicians, this is the legacy and it needs to be known. We can learn from our past, it is our character and our heritage. And this new information assures that the next generation will not be told that you have to be from some other place and that great art can come from St. Louis.

These reasons why I do my art, the sense of history, legacy and the sense of place, I feel are the same goals as this Carondelet murals project. I believe works like this are the best use of our talents - to carry our stories forward for the generations after us.

Kevin Belford,
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