

# Civic Creativity

By: Bruce Petrie on October 30, 2014 on [graydon.law](http://graydon.law)

There's a renewed civic creative climate in Cincinnati that is (among many other examples) transforming the City's front entranceway with a remarkable Park, Smale Riverfront Park. The new Park opens up visual ways of experiencing the City, its connection to the Ohio River, and has sparked fine art craftsmanship. Thanks to the Carol Ann & Ralph V. Haile Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, the Park will include a 46' diameter/20'tall carousel contained in a 70' by 90' glass building. Named Carol Ann's Carousel, its craftsmanship comes in no small measure from the imaginative paintbrush of Cincinnati artist Jonathan Queen. Along with a team that includes local artists Zach Sawan and John Volck, Jonathan is working late nights in his Essex Street Studio to complete all the painted panels for the carousel by January. The panels include Cincinnati scenes, architecture and parks populated with imaginary characters, like two giraffes watching an Ohio River sunset from Alms Park. On a recent visit to the studio to see the panels, I saw panels both finished and in progress and listened to Jonathan explain the creative process of imagining, composing, drawing, color mixing, team coordination and paint application, all within a unified design plan. What is working so well is the way imagination and realism are blended together. Paradoxically, unreal animal characters are painted realistically in real places. Young themes are enlivened with ages-old fine arts methods of form, space, color, shadow and light. Families, kids and visitors who ride the carousel will spin along with images of the City's built and natural environment inhabited as if the Cincinnati Zoo had let the animals out for a tour of the town. The painter's brush anthropomorphizes the animals as, in one panel, they take pictures of City scenes. This will all be in a public place, for all to enjoy.

Here are a few snapshots of the work in progress:

