

MAY 31

# Doors to lesser-loved spaces

SCOTT GORDON

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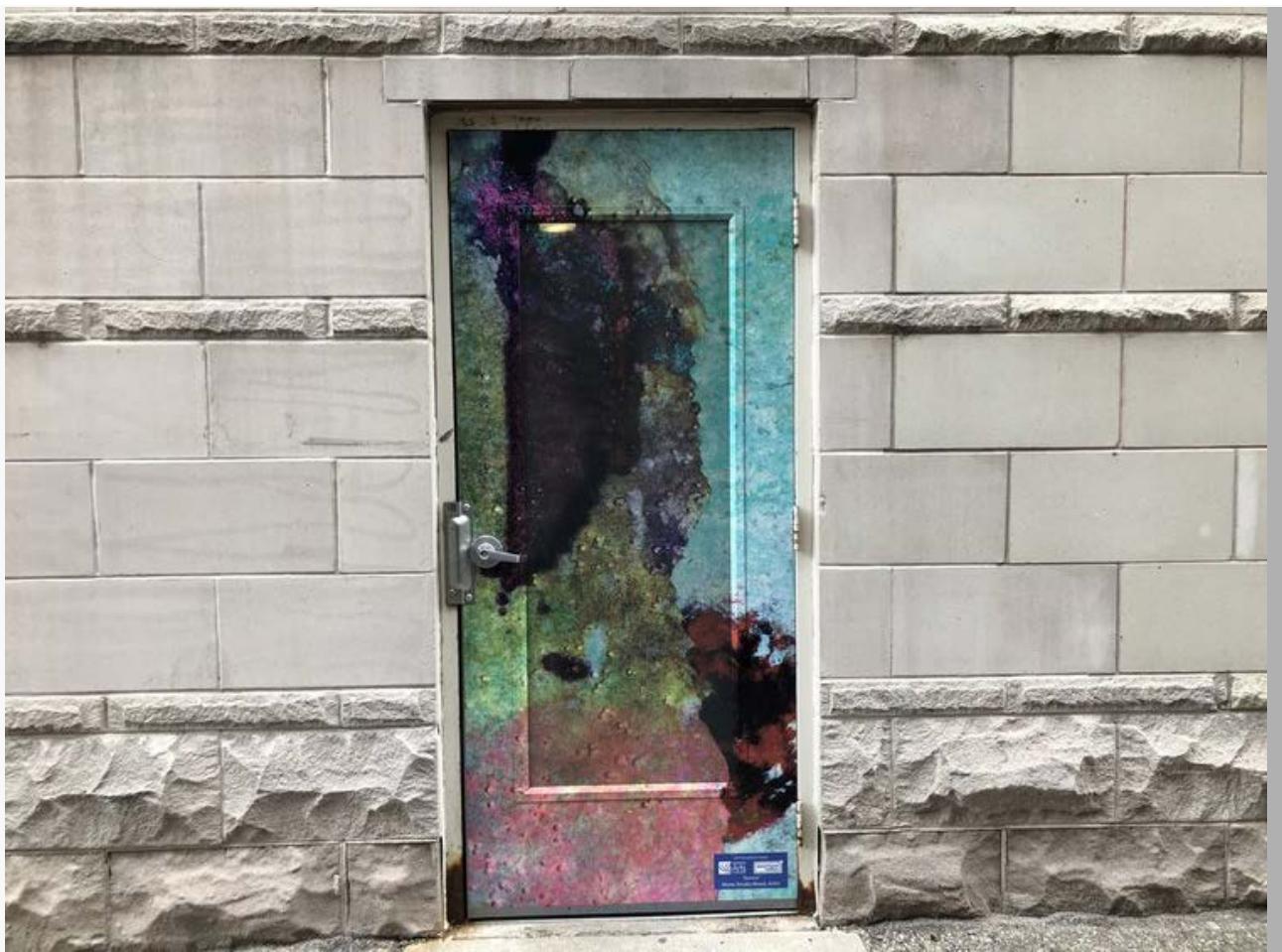
**MICROTONES** by [Scott Gordon](#), editor-in-chief and publisher

The [Downtown Doors](#) art project unveiled earlier this spring is exactly what it

sounds like—a couple dozen doors on downtown buildings, decorated with work from local artists—but it's bold almost in spite of itself. I decided to check out a few of the pieces this week, and I found myself coaxed into spaces that no one would think of as downtown Madison's showpieces. Most of the art doors don't face directly out onto State Street or the Capitol Square. Carol Hambrecht's "Spring Breezes," for instance, brings a wild, liquid-light-show abstraction to a back door of State Street shop The Soap Opera. To get to it, you have to walk through a parking lot the The Soap Opera shares with the Red Rock Saloon, Ragstock, and Mackesey's Irish Pub. The door is flanked by nondescript gray bricks and a couple of trash cans.

This parking lot isn't a particularly illicit or dangerous space, but it's also not the kind of space you'd usually encourage the public to explore. Especially if you were the Madison Downtown Business Improvement District, which partnered with the Madison Arts Commission to organize Downtown Doors. The Downtown BID is all about tourism and commerce, which means showing people the nice shiny stuff and getting them into places where they might drop some money. I have to respect the BID embracing a program that often steers people off such a course. People seeking out Carol Hambrecht's piece, or Allen Hambrecht's hyper-textured "Capitol Dome With Flowers" on Henry Street behind Parthenon Gyros, are going to smell their share of garbage and fryer oil and exhaust, especially as the summer heats up. Those who visit Jeff Repko's "Just A Feeling" will also enjoy the dirty-popcorn-ceiling backside of an office building at Johnson and Henry.





These unglamorous, functional pockets of the city deserve our attention, and good art holds up whether it's in a nice climate-controlled gallery or, like [Maria Amalia Wood](#)'s "Aurora," on the side door of a drab Langdon Street apartment building. The almost inhumanly dull grey bricks around the piece make Wood's cosmic washes of color all the more refreshing. Perhaps Downtown Doors' organizers wanted the program to have a bit of a scavenger-hunt feel, or maybe it's just more practical to put art on heavy back and side doors than on glass front doors. Maybe building owners just preferred to offer up the doors they didn't care as much about, cosmetically speaking. Either way, it feels like a key strength of the program that so much of it takes place in areas you wouldn't frequent unless you were heading into work, making a delivery, or picking up the garbage.

Or unless you were a musician or crew member loading in for a show at the Majestic, in the case of [Karli Didrickson](#)'s "Sunset Arches." This triptych depicts strange clothespin-bodied creatures in a landscape of impossible rock formations and color-swirled skies, across three of the venue's back doors. I've walked, driven, and biked past those doors hundreds of times; sometimes a tour bus blocks the view, but either way I usually don't think much about them one way or another. Didrickson's piece changes the way I feel about this particular stretch of Doty Street, with a dazzling blast of texture and color. I haven't seen all the Downtown Doors pieces yet, and hope the summer will bring a few more moments like this, in other spots that I didn't know I could enjoy.

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### New this week:

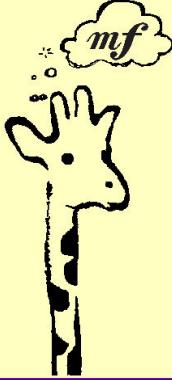
Jess Haven has an [in-depth conversation with Triangulador](#), a street artist who makes his work on discarded mattresses and TVs.

Grant Phipps [previews UW Cinematheque's summer season.](#)

The [Record Store Dropouts](#) podcast delves into the need for a more inclusive music scene and catches up with Black Belt Eagle Scout.

Before the weed church got shut down, [it got incredibly weird.](#)

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**A bowl of soup with a roll and a cup of tea makes a nice lunch in the springtime.**

**Mother Fool's**  
1101 Williamson St (at Ingersoll)

Mr. Jackson [releases a new album](#) of introspective R&B.

Reid Kurkerewicz [reports from Smash Mouth's headlining set](#) at Brat Fest.

[Saxophonist Jonah Parzen-Johnson speaks with us](#) ahead of his Tone Madison-presented June 6 show at Café Coda.

**Elsewhere on the Madison internet:** A *Madison365* op-ed [pushes back on respectability politics](#). [Isthmus has an update](#) on comedian and man-about-town Frandu. Essayist Meghan O'Gieblyn [concludes her "Objects Of Despair" series for The Paris Review](#). The Comedy Club on State has a big week in podcasts, thanks to [Doug Loves Movies](#) and [WTF](#). Some show announcements: [The Budos Band](#) (Sept. 20, Majestic), [Damien Jurado](#) (Sept. 24, Shitty Barn), [Lucy Dacus](#) (October 11, Majestic).

**This week's Madison calendar:** Improvisational trio Togishi [at Arts + Literature Laboratory](#). The return of the [LunArt Festival](#). [And more.](#)

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downtown doors, carol hambrecht, allen hambrecht, jeff repko, maria amalia  
wood, karli didrickson



### Scott Gordon

Scott Gordon is the editor-in-chief and publisher of *Tone Madison*, which he founded in 2014 with a group of other Madison-focused journalists. He has covered music and the arts in Madison since 2006 for publications including *The A.V. Club*, *Dane101*, and *Isthmus*, and has also written about subjects including environmental issues and public health for *WisContext*.

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