



## Q&A | Walt Taylor

# Drawing a crowd

photography by ADAM EWING

*The world, to Walt Taylor is an unfinished sketchbook; of real life captured with the subjects unaware. Taylor, now 72, is a respected commercial illustrator and revered cartoonist. But mostly he's a people watcher. And if you have wandered through the Norfolk neighborhood of Ghent in the past 15 years, there's a chance he has sketched you. Most days he can be found at his usual table at Café Stella, drinking coffee and drawing people. We caught up to him to talk art and life and what it's like to draw people these days.*

### So, you are not from here originally?

No, I grew up in upstate New York, a little town called Le Roy on the way to Buffalo. Way upstate. We moved to Ohio when I was 11.

### And you served in the Air Force?

Yes, it was around 1964 and I had completed about a year of college, which I screwed up badly, and when I dropped out, I immediately got a draft notice. I thought, 'Oh God, what am I going to do?' So I joined the Air Force, thinking that would be the least dangerous. Turns out that those four years helped me mature, and gave me the GI Bill, so I could go back to school when I got out. I went to Ohio Wesleyan University and got a degree in fine arts.

### How was art school?

Well, it taught me little about art, because, really, you learn about art doing it.

### Let's back up. What is your earliest memory of doing art?

I can remember when I was 4 years old, I would draw pictures of soldiers and things like that and um, show them to my family and friends and they'd say, "Oh, that's great. That's great." And then I started doing caricatures of people in my family as I got older.

### When did it dawn on you that you might be good at it?

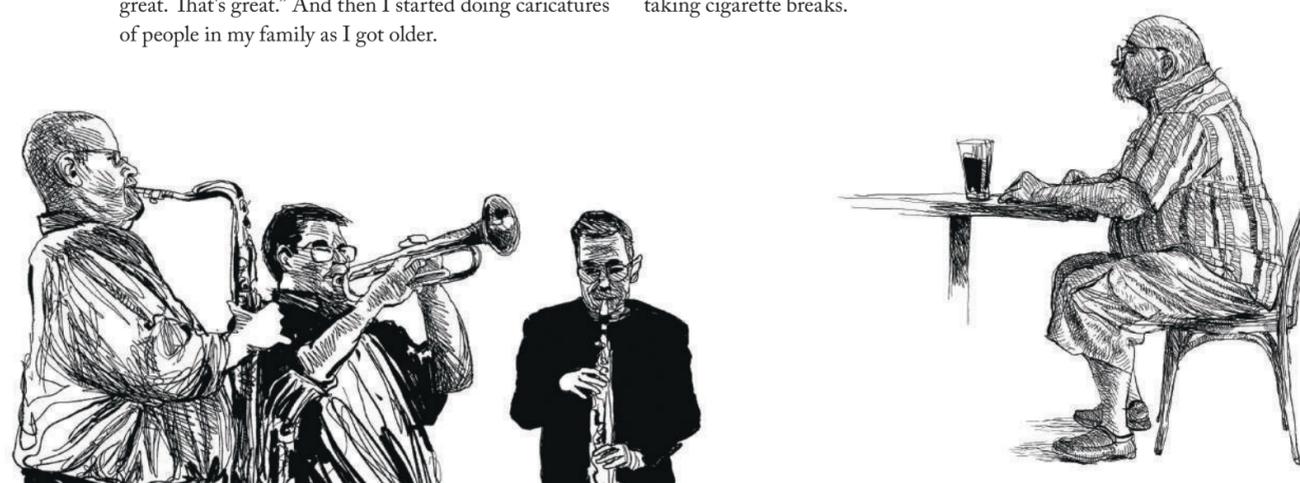
Well, I got, I got mixed signals. I mean, my parents were very good at complimenting me and showing my stuff to others, but they made it clear that I needed to keep up with my studies and I need to decide what I want to do with my life because art is not how you make a living.

### And when did you start doing art for money?

My wife and I moved from Ohio, mainly to escape the cold, to Norfolk, and I took a job with an ad agency here in town, Lawler Ballard (now Lawler Ballard Van Durand). I was an art director, working with a copywriter to create ads. I did that for about 20 years.

### When did you stumble onto what you are now known for—live sketches?

On a layover in an airport with nothing to do, I pulled out my sketchbook and I saw some really interesting people just lying around, and I decided to try to capture the people around me. Just drawing real people, being themselves. I remember that moment very clearly. And um, so when I got back here to Norfolk, I would go out every lunchtime from my job and just sketch people; people in the coffee shops, people in the street, people taking cigarette breaks.



# Put some hooch in your boo

by JOSH SEABURG | photograph by KEITH LANPHER



**W**hen it comes to fermented beverages, alcohol production is typically the goal. But kombucha is a different beast. A lightly effervescent, tart, somewhat vinegary tasting brew made by fermenting sweetened black or green tea with a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, it has been consumed for hundreds of years for its purported health benefits rather than an alcoholic punch.

Turns out, kombucha's signature puckering bite makes a great base for cocktails.

On its own, a straightforward ferment of black tea is not particularly delicious. Fortunately, there are several producers making kombucha with interesting flavors geared for leisurely consumption.

Maha Kombucha Company in Virginia Beach, for example, produces Raspberry Brilliance, which is flavored with in-house concentrates made from berries, ginger and lime. It's a drink that begs to be poured into a pitcher of ice and garnished with a big sprig of mint.

Born out of a desire to have something healthy to drink with meals, Nathan Mahadeva Elstein, a devout teacher and practitioner of yoga, started Maha Kombucha with a partner out of their kitchen. It's now made in 150-gallon batches in commercial space near the Oceanfront and carried as a nonalcoholic option at several breweries and restaurants in the area.

Elstein says most of his customers buy Maha Kombucha, which has six flagship flavors and a Thanksgiving offering, because it is both healthy and tasty.

Local kombucha makers ride a fine line to ensure consistency while maintaining a small-batch feel. Commercial kombucha is generally labeled nonalcoholic, as it contains less than 0.5 percent alcohol by volume. Homebrews can

easily exceed that, however, creeping to as high as 3 percent ABV, according to Nikki Hopkins, owner of Norfolk's Red Mushroom Brewing Company. There is also a trend among some brewers toward "hard" kombucha with higher ABVs.

Hopkins, who drinks kombucha daily, believes people buy it to feel healthy rather than buzzed, but she supports its use in cocktails. Red Mushroom's Buch'arita flavor, with its heavy lime and orange essence, acidity and carbonation, make it well suited to the task.

For most flavors we tried, a stiff pour of a compatible spirit and a squeeze of citrus sufficed, but the world of kombucha cocktails is ripe for experimentation. Here are a few recipes to get you started.

## Chai-ball

1 ½ ounces aged rum (Plantation 5 or similar)  
½ ounce fresh lemon juice  
Red Mushroom Pineapple Chai kombucha  
Combine rum and lemon juice in a highball glass over ice. Top with kombucha and stir gently to incorporate.

## Rooibos Collins

1 ½ ounces Tequila Blanco  
½ ounce fresh lime juice  
2 dashes orange bitters  
Red Mushroom BluRoo kombucha  
Combine tequila, lime and bitters in a highball glass over ice. Top with kombucha and garnish with a lime wheel. ■

*Josh Seaburg has established several award-winning bar programs and a series of innovative pop-ups, highlighting elaborate cocktails and food from local chefs.*



**Petal Potion**  
Maha  
Kombucha Company



**Orange Bitters No. 6**  
Regan's



**BluRoo & Pineapple-Chai**  
Red Mushroom  
Brewing Company



# THE REAL DECOYS

An Eastern Shore family creates world-class folk art

by KATHERINE HAFNER  
photography by PATRICK HAYES



**I**an McNair brings the hatchet down swiftly on a curved block of wood resting on a tree stump, sending chips flying. But at no point is he out of control. Each move is carefully planned and executed, because once the wood comes off, there is no putting it back on.

The scene plays out in a bucolic setting on what used to be a farm, so one could be forgiven for thinking McNair is simply preparing firewood to be burned in the 18th century house that sits nearby.

But this is not a chore. This is art. And like a sculptor, McNair is in the early stages of uncovering the figure trapped inside the block of wood. And that figure is a bird.

Welcome to the McNair home on the Eastern Shore. Here, two generations of wooden decoy makers continue a craft that has evolved from a practical way to hunt fowl into a form of folk art with an ardent group of collectors and a relatively high price tag.

From a practical standpoint, the tradition dates 2,000 years to early Native Americans who used reeds to construct decoys. But 20th century carvers became interested in the decorative aspects of the craft and started creating birds destined not for the lake or river, but for mantles and bookcases.

Patriarch Mark McNair, 70, fell in love with creating decoys decades ago and has become one of the industry's leaders. Sons Ian and Colin McNair have followed him into the trade. They're contemporary carvers who sell their pieces in a modern market, but they're loyal to tradition.

"A lot of what we do hasn't really changed from 100 to 150 years ago," says Ian McNair, 39. "We pretty much do it the old-fashioned way."

Decoys are serious business for collectors. The price for contemporary birds can range widely, from about \$50 to upwards of \$35,000 depending on pedigree. Some, typ-

ically a century old or more, have gone for hundreds of thousands of dollars at auction; some for more than a million.

Plastic decoys took over after the World War II era, but it wasn't long before a new generation of carvers yearned for the old ways. "In the 1970s, carvers like my father represented this new generation of people fascinated by the old birds who wanted to continue this tradition," says Colin, 33.

Colin now lives in Massachusetts and works as a decoy specialist for Copley Fine Art Auctions, selling high-end decoys. He has even sold a few of his family's offerings, usually when they come up through the secondary market. "When we consider the history and the uniquely American qualities of the pieces, they really are significant material culture that deserve all the appreciation they've received," he says.

Mark grew up on Connecticut's Long Island Sound and came across a duck decoy in his early 20s

Opposite: Ian McNair.