

**PRESS RELEASE
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*Union Station Unveils Art Addition to Hang in Grand Stair Gallery.
Painted by acclaimed American Artist, “Departure” has been gifted by
Kansas City arts philanthropists, Sharon and John Hoffman, along with their
children, Matt Hoffman and Lynn Hoffman Carlton.*

*Originally acquired in 1999 by Sharon and John Hoffman, the presentation of “Departure” –
painted by Lawrence Gipe -- is timed just before Yom HaShoah – and will honor and remember
victims and survivors of the Holocaust.*

KANSAS CITY, MO – Union Station leadership, along with Kansas City art philanthropists, Sharon and John Hoffman, and renowned American artist, Lawrence Gipe, unveiled for the first time publicly, “Departure”, a large-format oil painting to be on display indefinitely in Union Station’s Grand Stair Gallery. The painting, acquired in 1999 by Sharon and John Hoffman has been gifted to Union Station. The presentation of “Departure” is timed just before Yom HaShoah – and honors and remembers victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

“Union Station is honored and grateful to be the recipient of this important piece of art from Sharon and John Hoffman and their family,” George Guastello, Union Station president and CEO, said. “We saw first-hand the impact our 2021 exhibition -- *Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away.* -- had on those who visited. It caused people to stop and think about how each of us can make the world a better place. Looking around Union Station today, there are wonderful visual and emotional queues of history and connectedness. There is no other place in the community where all of these come together as an open-arms invitation to gather and celebrate the simple and priceless lessons of life. It is our privilege to be the home to such an important piece of art and continue preserving history and the stories that are so deeply rooted within this monument and the community. Sharon and John were directly involved in the restoration and renaissance of Union Station, and their legacy – tied to this wonderful gift of art – will be furthered for all to appreciate.”

Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away. -- an international touring exhibition -- opened in Union Station’s Bank of America Gallery in June of 2021. When it closed nine months later, it was the highest attended exhibition in the Station’s history. In total, it welcomed more than 318,000 people from all 50 states and 10 countries.

When Sharon and John began thinking about where to gift “Departure”, it was not only their strong ties to Union Station but also their memories of the Auschwitz exhibition that informed their decision.

“The piece (Departure) belongs where the community and the region come to visit, and that place is Union Station,” John Hoffman, said. “Sharon and I hope visitors will come from all over to see it and will learn about its historical importance as well as the importance of art. Art paints a picture, and great art portrays so much more. It’s rare to find a painting in a train station with this much meaning. There’s so much history at the Station and that’s presented in this painting. We hope people experience that when they visit.”

“Departure” was created by noted American Artist, Lawrence Gipe, in 1999. Gipe was present at the Union Station unveiling and shared his intent with the painting . . .

Lawrence Gipe, Artist Statement:

“*Departure* is a symbolic image about the Holocaust and/or any genocidal 20th century event that uprooted people through forcible displacement”, Gipe said. “It encourages the viewer to see not only the romantic ambiance inherent in the scene, but also to consider the tragic aspects.”

Sharon and John Hoffman’s Union Station History Dating Back to 1986:

The history of Union Station with the Hoffman’s is long and consequential . . . dating back to 1986 when Sharon served as Founder and President of Friends of Union Station. Sharon then served on the Union Station Advisory Committee and the Development Corporation. That group was instrumental in their advocacy and fund raising to help save the Station from demise.

In turn, John Hoffman – with deep interest in historic preservation, as well – was one of the original board members when Union Station’s Science City opened in 1999.

Their love of art began at a young age, when John – a teenager at the time -- would visit his father’s close friend, Thomas Hart Benton. John’s love of art was nurtured from watching Benton paint while sharing stories.

Sharon and John also look back to their time as a young couple, both with a passion for art . . .

“We were taught by Ted Coe of the Nelson Gallery to look for artwork that was new and meaningful to us,” Sharon, said. “When it comes to ‘Departure’, just before the newly renovated Union Station was reopened, we were visiting a gallery in New York and our connection to the Station immediately drew us to the piece. At first glance, it struck us how the images of the steam trains captured a bygone era . . . the mood of the piece was almost romantic in that sense. Then, as we learned more about the painting, the meaning became much deeper. It’s a story and part of history that must never be forgotten. When we acquired it, I think we both realized it needed to eventually be shared at Union Station. We could not be more pleased to make that possible. It’s a very meaningful moment for our entire family.”

The “Departure” painting will be on public display in the Grand Stair Gallery next to other notable pieces of art including:

- Hildreth Meière’s original three murals (later incorporated into one, as displayed) represent the activities for which Westport Landing was known: *Arrival at Westport Landing*, *Outfitting at Westport Landing*, and *Commerce of the Prairies*
- *The Creation of Union Station (2006)* by Anthony Benton Gude (the grandson of famous Kansas City artist, Thomas Hart Benton) is a mural size painting depicting locomotives from the twelve railroads that served Kansas City and participated as owners in the construction of Union Station in 1914.

To learn more about these paintings, visit Union Station’s Grand Stair Gallery during operating hours, Sunday – Saturday, 6AM – 11:30PM.

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Union Station Kansas City -- a 501(c)3 non-profit organization -- is a 111-year-old historical landmark and celebrated civic asset renovated and reopened to the public in 1999. Known as Kansas City’s Visual Voice, the Station has been designated “Favorite Attraction,” “Favorite Family-Friendly Attraction” and “Favorite Historic Attraction”, dedicated to science education, celebration of community and preservation of history. Union Station is home to Kansas City’s internationally-awarded Science City; the new Arvin Gottlieb Planetarium; the Regnier Extreme Screen Theatre; the popular free Model Railroad Experience; City Stage featuring live theater, and a selection of unique shops and restaurants. Union Station is also home to prominent area civic organizations and businesses, and regularly hosts world-class traveling exhibitions as was proud to host the 2015 Royals World Series Championship Parade/Rally and the 2020 and 2023 Chiefs Super Bowl Parades/Rallies plus the recent 2023 NFL Draft. Awarded “Top Banquet Facilities in KC” by KC Business Journal, the facility annually hosts hundreds of community events and private celebrations of all sizes. Visit unionstation.org for details. Also, follow us on FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, and YOUTUBE.