



St. Louis on the Air

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Judith Shaw, left, relied on construction workers to help her bring unique prints to tar paper.

For the past five years, Judith Shaw has lived on the edge of a massive construction project. That's no exaggeration. Her condo sits on the perimeter of Centene's \$770 million Clayton campus expansion — a mixed-used development that will ultimately include housing, retail and more than 1.5 million square feet of office space. Like a lot of neighbors, Shaw found herself frustrated by the heavy machinery, dust and debris. But rather than let her anger simmer, Shaw turned it into art. On Friday's *St. Louis on the Air*, Shaw explained how her show now on display at the St. Louis Artists' Guild was directly inspired by the work being done just outside her balcony. A self-trained artist who often makes sculptures from found objects, Shaw used the tire tracks on the construction site as the basis for a series of photos and prints she calls "fault lines."

As her show materials explain, “Shaw spotted an array of intricate tire patterns created by the huge machinery moving about the construction site. Awed by the in-ground sketches left by the tires, she stopped to admire the tracks and has been doing so ever since.” After trying out a few different materials, she began reproducing them on tar paper.

The towering patterns now mounted on the St. Louis Artists’ Guild’s walls for “fault lines” aren’t the only felicitous outcome to an initially unhappy event. Shaw has formed a special bond with the workers on site.

“I have a bunch of friends now who are flaggers,” she said. The site is a busy one, and after Shaw began working on the prints, she exchanged numbers with those new friends and began to text them to find a good time to come down. When she did, they’d help her get what she needed.



Artist Judith Shaw's "fault lines" was inspired by, and created within, the massive Centene campus expansion just outside her condo's balcony.

“They were very concerned about safety,” she said. “Some of the time, I couldn’t actually get the paper under the wheels of the truck. So, they would help me.”

Now, Shaw said, they’ve formed a special bond.

Just this morning, for example, she and her favorite flagger shared photos of their grandchildren. “He became a grandfather recently, and I became a grandmother recently, and we were talking about it. We talk about our families, and what’s going on in our lives, and what’s going on in our world.”

She added: “At some point it went from them helping me to us becoming partners and collaborators on this project. They became part of the art. A lot of them had ideas and suggestions. They’d say, ‘What if we did this?’ And I’d say, ‘Try it.’ I grew to appreciate the artistry and skill in what they were doing, even though it was truly a constant source of frustration. I began to appreciate the art of construction.”