

The New York Times Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)



April 5, 2012

Jack Outside the Box

By JOSH EELLS

In an industrial section of south-central Nashville, stuck between a homeless shelter and some railroad tracks, sits a little primary-colored Lego-block of a building with a Tesla tower on top. The inside holds all manner of curiosities and wonders — secret passageways, *trompe l'oeil* floors, the mounted heads of various exotic ungulates (a bison, a giraffe, a Himalayan tahr) as well as a sign on the wall that says photography is prohibited. This is the home of Third Man Records: the headquarters of Jack White's various musical enterprises, and the center of his carefully curated world.

"When I found this place" White said one day last April, "I was just looking for a place to store my gear. But then I started designing the whole building from scratch." Now it holds a record store, his label offices, a concert venue, a recording booth, a lounge for parties and even a darkroom. "The whole shebang," White said. It's a one-stop creativity shop as designed by an imaginative kindergartner — a cross between Warhol's Factory and the Batcave.

White, looking like a dandyish undertaker in a black suit and matching bowler, was in the record store, which doubles as a tiny Jack White museum. He is most famous as the singer for [the White Stripes](#), the red-and-white-clad Detroit duo that played a stripped-down, punked-up take on Delta blues; their gold and platinum records adorned the walls. Albums from Third Man artists, including White's other bands, the Raconteurs and the Dead Weather, filled the racks. The décor reflected his quirky junk-art aesthetic: African masks and shrunken heads from New Guinea; antique phone booths and vintage Victrolas.

White is obsessive about color and meticulous in his attention to detail. Inside, the walls that face west are all painted red, and the ones that face east are all painted blue. The exterior, meanwhile, is yellow and black (with a touch of red). Before he made his living as a musician, White had an upholstery shop in Detroit, and everything related to it was yellow and black — power tools, sewing table, uniform, van. He also had yellow-and-black business cards bearing the slogan "Your Furniture's Not Dead" as well as his company name, Third

Man Upholstery. When he started the record label, he simply carried everything over. “Those colors sort of just mean work to me now.”

Roaming the hallways were several young employees, all color-coordinated, like comic-book henchmen. The boys wore black ties and yellow shirts; the girls wore black tights and yellow Anna Sui dresses. (There were also a statistically improbable number of redheads.) White stopped in front of one cute girl in bluejeans and Vans. “Can you guess which Third Man employee is getting fined \$50 today?” he asked, smiling.

Some have called Third Man a vanity project, like the Beatles’ Apple Records or Prince’s Paisley Park. But White’s tastes are far more whimsical. He has produced records for the ’50s rockabilly singer Wanda Jackson; the Detroit shock rappers Insane Clown Posse; a band called Transit, made up of employees of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority. (Their first single was called “C’mon and Ride.”) And gimmicks like Third Man’s Rolling Record Store, basically an ice-cream truck for records, show he’s as much a huckster as an artist.

“I’m trying to get somewhere,” White, who is 36, said, reclining in his tin-ceilinged office. He’s an imposing presence, over six feet tall, with intense dark eyes and a concerningly pale complexion. On his desk sat a cowbell, a pocketknife, a George Orwell reader and an antique ice-cream scoop. There was also a stack of business cards that read: “John A. White III, D.D.S. — Accidentist and Occidental Archaeologist.” “The label is a McGuffin. It’s just a tool to propel us into the next zone. There aren’t that many things left that haven’t already been done, especially with music. I’m interested in ideas that can shake us all up.”

White walked back to a room called the Vault, which is maintained at a constant 64 degrees. He pressed his thumb to a biometric scanner. The lock clicked, and he swung the door open to reveal floor-to-ceiling shelves containing the master recordings of nearly every song he’s ever been involved with. Unusually for a musician, White has maintained control of his own masters, granting him extraordinary artistic freedom as well as truckloads of money. “It’s good to finally have them in a nice sealed environment,” White said. I asked where they’d been before, and he laughed. “In a closet in my house. Ready to be set on fire.”

White said the building used to be a candy factory, but I had my doubts. He’s notoriously bendy with the truth — most famously his claim that his White Stripes bandmate, Meg White, was his sister, when in fact she was his wife. Considering the White Stripes named themselves for peppermint candies, the whole thing seemed a little neat. “That’s what they told me,” he insisted, not quite convincingly. I asked if I needed to worry about him

embellishing details like that, and he cackled in delight. “Yes,” he said. “Yes.”

A few days later, White was sitting behind the wheel of his 500-horsepower black Mercedes. Howlin’ Wolf was on the stereo. He wore black sunglasses and a tight black T-shirt, and he drove fast, steering with one hand while ashing an Al Capone cigarillo with the other. “I quit smoking cigarettes like six years ago,” he explained, rolling through a stop sign. “These are just baby cigars. I don’t inhale.”

He pulled into the parking lot of United Record Pressing, the largest vinyl-record plant in the country. United has been pressing records since 1949. The first White Stripes single was made here in 1998, and now Third Man was its third-biggest customer. The label excels at vinyl novelties: glow-in-the-dark Halloween 45s; peach-scented albums; a “triple-decker” record featuring a 7-inch single sealed inside a 12-inch LP. (You needed a Swiss Army knife to get it out.) Third Man’s slogan is “Your Turntable’s Not Dead.”

White walked the factory floor, pausing now and then. There were massive gray bins full of rainbow-colored vinyl pellets (“like the flooring you’d see in your aquarium”), large extruders to melt and shape the raw vinyl into pucks, steel presses that employed 6,000 pounds of steam pressure to flatten the pucks into records. “It’s a really beautiful process,” White said. At the labeling station, an employee handed him a pressing of an old Robert Johnson LP that was being rereleased, and he weighed it in his hand. “That’s killer,” he said. “It’s not as heavy as mine, though. I’ve got the real one.”

White calls LPs “the pinnacle of musical expression.” “I was talking to Robert Altman before he died,” he said, “and I asked him about an interview where he said that he would never switch to videotape, that he would always stay in film. He said: ‘I know what that is. It has a negative. It has a positive. With videotape or digital, I have no idea what’s going on.’ That’s how I feel about vinyl. The left wall is the left channel, the right wall is the right channel, and you’re just dragging that rock through the groove. Watching it spin, you get a real mechanical sense of music being reproduced. I think there’s a romance to that.”

White famously doesn’t own a cellphone, but he isn’t the Luddite he’s often made out to be. He has an iPod; he knows how to Skype. His friend Conan O’Brien says he’ll occasionally e-mail to say he laughed at a tweet. Yet there is a bit of curmudgeon to him. “This generation is so dead,” he said at one point. “You ask a kid, ‘What are you doing this Saturday?’ and they’ll be playing video games or watching cable, instead of building model cars or airplanes or doing something creative. Kids today never say, ‘Man, I’m really into remote-controlled steamboats.’ They never say that.”

White once wrote a song called “This Protector,” about rescuing traditions from the march of progress. In a way, that’s what *Third Man* is — 21st-century monks of Kells, defending the catacombs against the digital horde.

Back in the car, White played a song he recently produced for Tom Jones. “Seventy-one years old, and he just came in and murdered it,” White said. Then he told a story about the time he was in Transylvania, filming the movie “Cold Mountain” (he played a minstrel). Every morning on his way to the set, the driver would be listening to Tom Jones. Later he went to a local record store, and there were something like 60 Tom Jones records. No one could explain what the deal was, so White asked Jones about it. It turned out that everyone in Transylvania thought Tom Jones was a Gypsy. He insisted that he wasn’t, but they still didn’t believe him.

“What an incredible story,” White marveled, no doubt jealous of a narrative that brought together slippery notions of identity, misleading your audience, dubious Romanians. “They really thought he was a Gypsy, and he was hiding it. He didn’t think that was the answer, but it seemed to me like it was the answer. Even if it wasn’t,” he said, “I’d make it that.”

One day last summer, with the flowers in bloom, White was at home in Nashville having some work done. A few days earlier, he and Karen Elson, his supermodel wife, announced they were divorcing. They claimed they were having a party to celebrate — “a positive swing bang humdinger,” according to the news release. White said that the split was amicable, and that not much would change — but he was keeping the house, and there were a few things he wanted done. At the moment he was in the driveway, leaning up against his cream-colored 1960 Ford Thunderbird, talking to his head carpenter, a Texan named Cowboy, about making sure some cedar planks were being stained the proper shade of green.

White’s mansion is on seven hilly acres in southwestern Davidson County, just down the road from Hank Williams’s old house. There was a barn-red guesthouse out back, but the main house was almost all white — stately columns, a white porch swing and a white veranda straight out of “Gone With the Wind.” Only the front door and the two chimneys were red.

White led the way inside, past collections of Mexican dolls and two stuffed hyenas, into his den. The walls were covered in flocked-velvet wallpaper, and in the stairway hung a portrait of Claudette Colbert. On the floor were two small pairs of jellied sandals belonging to his daughter, Scarlett, and on the kitchen counter sat a red, white and blue toy accordion — it belonged to his son, Henry.

Henry, whom White calls Hank, would be 4 in a couple of months; Scarlett had just turned 5. “They’re little vaudeville kids,” White said. “They’ve been onstage for school plays and stuff, and they’re not nervous at all.” He’d already noticed some differences in their personalities. “You can see in Henry’s eyes that he really watches the creation of things,” he said. “And Scarlett is very much a producer — she likes to tell how it’s going to happen. We were messing around a couple of weeks ago, and she was like, ‘I’m hearing two pianos. . . .’”

White said the kids had formed their own band, which they’d named Coke. “They’ve never had a Coke,” he said. “I think they just liked the syllable.” He opened his MacBook and pulled up an old video of Scarlett drumming along to the White Stripes’ version of “St. James Infirmary Blues,” keeping perfect time while White sang. “Check out the big finish,” he said as she hit the snare for the finale. “She’s 2 here.”

The kids were with Elson in New York. White said the couple would remain close. “I wouldn’t stay in a band if we weren’t moving forward and progressing,” he said. “It’s more like we’re best friends, pals, so we should be pals, and not pretend we’re something bigger.” He was wearing his wedding ring, a black diamond set in ivory, on his right hand.

White said he hated the limitations society imposed when it came to relationships. “I’ve always felt it’s ridiculous to say, of any of the females in my life: You’re my friend, you’re my wife, you’re my girlfriend, you’re my co-worker,” he said. “This is your box, and you’re not allowed to stray outside of it.” I told him it sounded as if monogamy might not be for him, and he laughed. “You think?” he said. “I gave that up a long time ago. Those rules don’t apply anymore.”

White led the way upstairs to the master bedroom, where a man in a Music City Masonry T-shirt was setting dropcloths around the fireplace. “Whoever lived here before built this ridiculous tan bedroom,” White said, spitting out the word “tan.” He was redoing it in green and black — what he termed “rustic art deco.” He was also installing microphones under the eaves outside his window. Thanks to some quirk of acoustics, he said, “I can’t hear the rain.” He wanted to pipe in the noise to speakers in his bedroom and listen to the rain while he fell asleep.

White headed back downstairs, stepping over a blue plastic wagon, and out to the backyard to a yellow-and-black brick building with a sign on the wall that read, “It Pays to Upholster.” “This is my workshop,” he said. There were brown burlap sacks draped over some chairs, and sewing and woodworking equipment scattered on the floor. There were also some tools for welding, which White said he was getting into through his friend Bob Dylan. “I’d never

done it before, and he'd been doing it for a while, so he kind of gave me the lowdown," he said. One day the two of them were sitting on White's front porch, just enjoying the view, when Dylan turned to him and said, "You know, Jack — I could do something about that gate." "That would be pretty cool," White said, laughing. "I don't know what kind of discount I'm going to get."

White walked through the backyard and over to his recording studio. He said he'd never taken a journalist there before. "I can't let you write about some of the things in it," he cautioned, switching on the lights. (What those things were, he never said.) Inside, every inch of the place was red and white, from the acoustic tiles to the electrical cords. "This is from a South African TV studio in the '70s," he said, pointing to the mixing board. "The writing is all in Afrikaans." Next to it was a large reel-to-reel machine stocked with tape.

White thinks of computer programs like Pro Tools as "cheating." He records only in analog, never digital, and edits his tape with a razor blade. "It's sort of like I can't be proud of it unless I know we overcame some kind of struggle," he said. "The funny thing is, even musicians and producers, my peers, don't care. Like, 'Wow, that's great, Jack.' Big deal."

It's easy to overlook amid the stylistic trappings, but White is a virtuoso — possibly the greatest guitarist of his generation. His best songs, like "Seven Nation Army," are firmly rooted in the American folk vernacular, yet catchy and durable enough to be chanted in sports arenas worldwide. That he does it with such self-imposed constraints — for instance, his favorite guitar in the White Stripes was made of plastic and came from Montgomery Ward — makes it all the more impressive.

White was brought up Catholic, and he still feels an affinity for the martyrs and saints. He likes their devotion, the purity of their sacrifice — especially St. Sebastian, the patron saint of endurance, and St. Rita, the patron saint of the impossible. He also admired Simeon Stylites, a Christian ascetic in fifth-century Syria who spent almost 40 years living atop a huge stone pillar, despite frequent entreaties to come down and not a few doubts about his motives.

White seemed to relate. "People were saying, 'You're just doing this for show, you're not really devoted, you're crazy, you're self-indulgent,'" he said. "So he came down and stood on the ground and said: 'I'm down here. Now what? Am I proving to you that this is not what it's about?'"

Then, White said, "he went right back up."

White once said he has three dads: his biological father, God and Bob Dylan. Dylan was the first concert he ever saw — he says he had seat No. 666 — and he shares with his hero a love for manipulating and obscuring his own persona.

Some things we know. He was born John Anthony Gillis, the 10th of 10 children, and — in a rare instance of mythology dovetailing with reality — the seventh son. His father, Gorman, was a maintenance man at the archdiocese of Detroit; his mother, Teresa, was the cardinal's secretary. They named him after John the Baptist.

The Gillises lived in southwestern Detroit, in a neighborhood known as Mexicantown, where they were one of the last middle-class white families who hadn't fled to the suburbs. He remembers looking out his bedroom window one night and seeing an abandoned car on fire in the street. "I suspect it was a neighbor who'd gotten sick of them not picking it up," he said. "So he waited until the middle of the night and set it on fire — like, Now they'll pick it up."

White says he was "tacked on" — his next-oldest sibling was 7 when he was born, and the oldest was 21. He says his parents were "senior citizens" and "pretty tired by that point," so a lot of the parenting was left to his brothers and sisters. "It could be brutal at times," he said of growing up with nine older siblings. "I don't recall hearing the words 'good job' very often." These days, except for White, all the Gillis kids are in Michigan. One is a child psychiatrist, one is a postal inspector, one is a pastry chef. One plays keyboards in an oldies cover band. His brother Leo Gillis is a Buckminster Fuller enthusiast who for a while lived in Detroit's only geodesic dome.

The upside to being the youngest was a lot of hand-me-down musical instruments. At 11, White taught himself to drum on a kit he found in the attic; later he taught himself guitar and piano so he could accompany himself on recordings. At one point he moved his bed out of his room to clear space for a drum kit and slept instead on a piece of foam.

Near the end of high school, he met a girl from Grosse Pointe named Megan White. They started dating, and by the fall of 1996, when he was 21, they were married. White took his wife's name and taught her to play the drums. He has said that she didn't really want to, that he had to push her. But he had an idea for a two-piece blues band, and he thought her untutored style would be perfect.

White says he had the concept for the White Stripes from the beginning: the two-piece, the brother and sister, the red and white. The point was to be as cartoonish as possible, to

distract from the fact that they were white kids playing the blues. Ben Blackwell, a nephew of White's who was also the band's roadie and their unofficial historian, casts doubt on this official story: he says they also considered the names Bazooka and Soda Powder, and distinctly remembers White inviting a bass player to join at one point. But it's clear that White was always fiercely devoted to his vision. At one point, the band was close to signing with a tiny Chicago label called Bobsled, but the deal fell apart when the label insisted on putting its green logo on the CD spine. "Red, white and black was a sacred part of what Meg and I were doing," White told me. "For a label not to understand that meant there were a lot of other things they wouldn't understand."

Meg was the group's virtually silent partner, a whiskey-drinking, Camel Light-smoking sphinx. Jack would talk over her in interviews and explain how shy she was. There's a telling scene in the 2009 documentary "Under Great White Northern Lights" in which he badgers her for not speaking up. Loretta Lynn, for whom White produced a Grammy-winning comeback album, says that the first time she met Meg, she worried that something might be wrong. "She didn't talk," Lynn told me. "She just kind of gazed into space. She didn't seem like she wanted to be there."

In the summer of 2007, when they were at the peak of their fame, the White Stripes staged a Canadian tour featuring a string of unusual side gigs. They played a bowling alley in Saskatoon, a flour mill in Ontario, a senior citizens' center in Nunavut. In New Brunswick, they played a show that lasted for a single note. (It was an E. The crowd chanted, "One more note!") Afterward they had a week of U.S. dates scheduled, followed by a break and more shows in the fall. But before their last show, in Southaven, Miss., Meg came to a decision.

"I mentioned this to Jack years later, and he didn't know anything about it," Blackwell told me. "But Meg came up to me and said, 'This is the last White Stripes show.' I said, 'You mean, like, of the tour.' And she was like: 'No. I think this is the last show, period.'"

She was right. The band canceled the rest of the fall dates, citing Meg's "acute anxiety." They reunited briefly in 2009, as a favor to O'Brien on his last episode of "Late Night," performing their song "We're Going to Be Friends," with Meg on guitar. (O'Brien remembers watching White teach her the chords during rehearsal.) But they never played in public again, and in February of last year, they released a statement saying they were through.

"Some people can live their whole lives in limbo," White told me one morning at his favorite East Nashville cafe. "I'd rather cut the lifeline so we can move on with our lives. There came

a point where I said, 'If we're not doing this, we need to put an end to it right now.' And that's what she wanted to do."

I asked him why. "You'd have to ask her," he said. "I don't know what her reasons are. Having a conversation with Meg, you don't really get any answers. I'm lucky that girl ever got onstage, so I'll take what I can get."

There was always something slightly condescending in the way White talked about Meg, praising her drumming the way you might encourage a promising 5-year-old. He may have had a point — The Onion once ran a headline that read, "Meg White Drum Solo Maintains Steady Beat for 23 Minutes" — but it also seemed somewhat passive-aggressive, especially after she'd been drumming for a decade.

But White insisted he was never controlling — if anything, it was the other way around. "It was more like groveling," he said. "Even when we were touring 200 days a year, I would have said: Can we do this? Can we do that?" He added: "Meg completely controlled the White Stripes. She's the most stubborn person I've ever met, and you don't even get to know the reasons." (Reached through her husband, the musician Jackson Smith, Meg White declined to comment for this article.)

White said if it were up to him, the band would still be together. "I'd make a White Stripes record right now. I'd be in the White Stripes for the rest of my life. That band is the most challenging, important, fulfilling thing ever to happen to me. I wish it was still here. It's something I really, really miss."

From the White Stripes to the Dead Weather to his albums with Lynn and Elson, most of White's success has come working with women. He said he liked their lack of ego. "When you're in a room of five guys, it becomes a bunch of gorillas in a cage," he said. "Girls don't have those hang-ups."

Then he started telling a long, rambling story about a dream he had the night before, involving a dead body, a basement and a bunch of kids in 1920s newsboy caps. Eventually he came to the crux of the dream, when he came across a beautiful woman. "She was smiling at me the whole time like she knew I was attracted to her," he said. "And then in front of my eyes she started rising up, turning into this 30-foot giant. As she got bigger, she also got blurrier, like she was going out of focus. And that's when I woke up.

"This metaphor was haunting me all morning," White said. "Not only was she becoming larger and more important than me, and able to crush me or destroy me — but at the same

time she's going out of focus, and I'm less in touch with how to connect with her. It's really interesting."

I asked him what he made of it. "I don't know," he said, seeming perplexed. "I don't know who that girl is. Maybe she's all girls."

At the end of January — almost a year to the day after the White Stripes' breakup — White announced he was putting out a solo record. He'd been avoiding doing one, mainly because it was what everyone expected. But when the rapper RZA of the Wu-Tang Clan failed to show up for a session at his house last summer, White decided he might as well work on some of his own songs. The album, "Blunderbuss," grew from there.

One morning at the end of February, White picked me up in the Mercedes. He'd just come from the house, where he and Elson were tending to Henry, who was sick with whooping cough. White stayed up all night working on artwork for the record, and his eyes were red and sleepy.

We headed for Third Man, where White was squeezing in a quick rehearsal. He'd assembled two new bands for the record — one of them all women, the other all men. He was taking both on tour, but only one would perform each night. He wasn't announcing which until the morning of the show — even the bands would be surprised. He'd barred them from listening to each other, because he wanted them to evolve separately.

He also had a new color palette: blue. There were blue P.A. cabinets, a blue drum kit, blue guitars. He was having some new blue suits made for himself, and a new blue logo. He said the band, meanwhile, could wear whatever they wanted — as long as it was blue.

White plugged in his guitar, and the band launched into a muscular version of the White Stripes' "Dead Leaves and the Dirty Ground." His new drummer, Carla Azar, vigorously pounded away. White looked stoked.

White said he never would have done a solo album if the White Stripes were still together. "I could have made 'Revolver,' and people would still say, 'Where's Meg?' " I asked if it felt weird to play the songs without her. "Maybe it should," he said. "But it doesn't. I wrote the White Stripes songs myself. It always felt like the two of us covering my songs."

White has long organized his albums around a central theme: cowardice, happiness, "the death of the sweetheart." He said if he had to choose one for "Blunderbuss," it would be death. "I was writing the liner notes the other day, and it seemed like it had a lot to do with

that,” he said. “For some reason, that was overwhelming throughout the lyric writing.”

Last April, White’s oldest brother, Ray Gillis, died unexpectedly at age 54. “Blunderbuss” is dedicated to him. “He was a really interesting guy,” White said. “He was a Redemptorist brother, a priest, for a while. After that he became a private investigator and opened a spy shop in Detroit. We spent a lot of time together growing up. He’d take me to the movies — he was the only person who took me to the movies, as a matter of fact. All the movies that I’ve been involved in since, I always brought him with me to the opening, to pay him back.”

White, meanwhile, said he hadn’t thought about his own death much, but as always, he was mindful of his myth. “I told my wife: If we’re on a road trip, and we pull into a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and I die in the car — can you please drive across the street to the hardware store?”

The next week White was giving a birthday party for Third Man, another swing bang humdinger. There would be cocktails, party favors (a limited-edition LP that played at 3 R.P.M.), a yellow-and-black candy buffet. He had recently bought the building next door and was in the process of expanding. Two days later he was starting his tour, and then he was eager to make another record. He also wanted to open a shop in Nashville specializing in high-end gentlemen’s hats. “I would sleep better at night,” he said, “knowing this town had a store like that.”

But of everything, he seemed most excited about those rain microphones. He’d finally got around to installing them, and they were already paying off. “A few weeks ago, the kids were in my bed,” he said. “Six in the morning — it was still dark. I said to Scarlett, ‘Is it raining?’ and she said no — which goes to show you really can’t tell. She hadn’t seen the trick yet. So I said: ‘Let me see. Let me turn the rain on.’

“And it wasn’t just sprinkling — it was storming. And she said the greatest thing — she said, ‘Can you turn the sun up, too?’ ”

White laughed. “I had a big choice there. Should I keep letting her think I have control of the weather? You want your children to think you can control the weather if you need to. At this point,” he said, “she still thinks I control the rain.”

Josh Eells is a contributing editor at Rolling Stone and Men’s Journal.

Editor: Wm. Ferguson

jack-outside-o-the-box. Thursday, January 20, 2011. Pantry Construction. I'm a lucky girl! My husband is both handsome and handy! When we moved into this house in May I instantly knew I wanted to turn the broom closet into a mini pantry. We are in a bungalow-not a huge space so a big walk-in pantry is not in the cards. I love the cupboard space this has created for us! Although-I have to admit that reorganization of my cabinets is something that is still on my list of 'to-do's'. Here is a picture of the kitchen when we moved in The broom closet is just to the right of th Jack Outside the Box. Wednesday, November 17, 2010. Heritage Railway Artifact Database. We're developing a MySQL database with web browser access for a local heritage railway museum. The goal is to provide volunteers with the ability to perform museum artifact data entry from the comfort of their own homes. Jack Miller is a professional speaker and fundraising consultant registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During his 30-year career, Jack has conducted annual and capital campaigns, special events and estate planning seminars, written and produced two planned giving videos and helped individuals contribute millions of dollars to charity. In 1999 his consulting work led the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation to hire him as its first director of planned giving, a position he held until July 1, 2012 when he became Vice President of Development for the Baptist Homes Society in