

Charlotte

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2019

HOME

DESIGN & DECOR

Arts & ARCHITECTURE

AT HOME WITH
PAM STOWE



PLUS:
ART MEETS FUNCTION

IN THE STUDIO WITH
HOLLY KEOGH

TOUR THE TOWN:
GALLERY CRAWL



INTO *MEMORY*

Local artist Holly Keogh narrates the out-of-context images that lurk in the shadows of our mind.

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Defined by Merriam-Webster, art is “something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings.” As any artist can tell you, it’s indeed all about expression, and it’s true that it flows directly from their imagination. But this definition is lacking, and what it lacks cannot be interpreted in words anyway – it’s experiential, on one side for the artist, and the other for the viewer. It’s visceral – on one side for the artist, and on the other for the viewer. And it’s transformative – *always* for the artist and in the best case, for the viewer.

Native Charlottean and artist Holly Keogh lives for the undefined portion of art. And she filters it through her work,

continually exploring and exposing those moments that are lost in the shadows of memory.

“I grew up with artsy parents,” Keogh explains. “My mother was a textile designer and painter, and my father was a Scottish musician. I used to sit at the table with my mother and paint, and I think that’s where my love for color-mixing was born.” It wasn’t until Keogh was forced to declare a major in college that she decided to pursue art. “I did try other things, but depression would inevitably set in, and I realized that it was just inside of me to be an artist,” she says.

Inspired by artists like David Hockney, Marilyn Minter, Frances Bacon, and John Baldessari, Keogh explored the human figure and fell in love with the face and skin because of its ability

to depict such emotion. From there, she dove into photographs searching for references. “What I learned in Art History class was that photographs today don’t really tell the truth,” Keogh says. “It’s a pre-constructed story – someone takes a whole roll of photos, deleting the ones that aren’t perfect and displaying only the ones that are. But the other half of that roll tells such a different story. And these photos with no context make for an incredible narrative.”

She further sets the scene by recalling a photo from her first day of school, in which she has a black eye. “My mother never displayed that picture because of my black eye. But my black eye tells a story that captures that time in my life – it wasn’t perfect for school, but it was real.”

Keogh begins her process by sifting through old family photos and collecting the untold stories. “It starts in my head, and I look through images to reference my idea. From there I sketch it out,

and then my favorite part, mixing the colors,” she explains. “I feel the most free when I am mixing. I find it therapeutic, if not a little nostalgic. It comes naturally to me, which makes it very satisfying.”

Next, she “pours” her piece. Using small cups filled with the mixed paint, she pours small pools in a rough outline of the image. Then, Keogh blends the paint to create a whole piece – a perfect metaphor for the subject of depicting memories. So many moments, perfect and non-perfect, blend together to create a scene in your mind. Some parts may be blurry, some crystal clear, but overall, it evokes an emotion that you’ve experienced.

Keogh says that she’s still working from her own old family photos. “I find that using this finite group of imagery pushes me to get more creative with my interpretations.” Pieces can come together as quickly as one day or can take up to a month to complete. Not many she can truly appreciate until some time





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has passed. “Seeing it later allows me to see the beauty when all the hard work is over.”

In 2015, Keogh became a part of an artist collective called Goodyear Arts. The collective (and Keogh) was so well received that what was supposed to be a one-month residency was instead funded to move to a permanent space in North Charlotte. Keogh was also invited to be a permanent fixture with her own studio space, alongside a revolving list of artists that participate in the collective. Most recently, and triumphantly, Keogh gained representation from the SOCO Gallery in Charlotte. “I just want to continue to show my work,” she says. “It’s always about what’s next for me, what’s next in my art. I am really excited about my process right now and what’s coming. I just got back from New York, and I am feeling especially inspired. I can’t wait to filter that through my work.”◆