

The Radar Art
Phebe Wahl

Sister Act



The crafty childhood of sisters Christy Kinard and Kim Schuessler informs their profound paintings that depict growing up Southern.

“There was flour dough and food coloring almost every day on the kitchen table,” explains Atlanta artist Christy Kinard when asked about her colorful youth growing up with her two older sisters in Dalton, Ga. “I even [dyed] the lemonade with food coloring at my lemonade stand.” All three sisters are painters today, with Kinard (the youngest) and Schuessler (the oldest) rapidly rising stars of the Atlanta art scene and currently showing at prominent galleries like Pryor Fine Art. The middle sister, Amy Cole, still lives and paints in Dalton.

Kinard describes a girlhood filled with art projects—papier-mâché sculptures, homemade books and splatter painting. Schuessler concurs that they were encouraged to create: “My mom provided every craft she could find to keep us entertained.”

Flowers are the primary subjects of Kinard’s work, and she remembers the abundant garden of her childhood home in Technicolor detail. “There was almost always a bouquet of fresh flowers on the table, too,” she reflects. Kinard knew from a young age that painting was her passion. “I had more paint brushes than pencils in my book bag,” Kinard says. After being awarded a scholarship to SCAD, Kinard continued her studies at the Atlanta College of Art and began selling her work at the mere age of 18. She sharpened her talent while working abroad, painting in a London studio and studying the works at the Tate Modern and Saatchi Gallery. Like her sister, the South has heavily influenced Kinard. A lover of antiques, she cites her inspirations as “historical buildings, old rustic barns, vintage signs, cotton fields, and the bold, Southern character.”

“I loved art from the time I was able to hold a crayon,” explains Schuessler. Combining paint, torn paper and stencil, Schuessler’s collaged canvases often depict the sweet and simple moments of girlhood—a first dance, ballet recital or splashing in puddles. But she has explored a multitude of media: “I have collaged SPANX hosiery into paintings for Sara Blakely, actual love notes into a painting for a couple in Charlotte, and pictures of Hank Aaron’s parents into a painting for his museum.” After studying art at UGA, and a brief flirtation with fashion design at Parsons School of Design in New York, Schuessler realized painting was her true calling.

Kinard claims to be the more impulsive of the two sisters, stating, “Kim is a very detailed person and so are her paintings. I am more of a free spirit. My paintings are looser and more intuitive.” Although Schuessler’s paintings are figurative while Kinard’s paintings focus on still lifes and flowers, there is no denying the commonality of vibrant color and textures.

Such a joyous homage to childhood is something sure to make a parent proud. Their mother Dixie Kinard explains: “Just like the girls, their art work is a [cheerful] expression of how they feel about life.”