



High ceilings, multiple windows, and oversize built-ins give the Wilkersons living room a sense of spaciousness.

work of art

A renowned painter and her trio of artistic children make a living doing what they love at their family-oriented Queen Street gallery.



Lee Limehouse and Betty Anglin Smith

With paintings adorning nearly every wall in her Mt. Pleasant home, Jaqueline Case can certainly be considered a patron of the arts. Lush, tactile canvases in sizes both large and small add depth to her decor, and depict subjects spanning from marsh views to bowls filled with fruit. Such a large accumulation of and appreciation for art in itself makes Jaqueline a rarity in the residential world, but what truly makes her collection stand out is that virtually all of her paintings stem from just three women...and they are all related.

Those living in the Charleston area are no strangers to the artwork of the Betty Anglin Smith and her triplet children Shannon Smith, Jennifer Smith Rogers, and Tripp Smith. Shortly after the girls graduated from college in 1994, they began showing their work at the Wells Gallery with Betty. "We had pretty much taken over, so it was time for us to have our own space and really showcase the family's work," says the matriarch. She soon fell in love with a space at 9 Queen Street which she found with her business partner Hume Killian, and Smith-Killian Fine Art Gallery was

born. Now in its tenth year, the Gallery has come to represent the family of artists and, naturally, is filled with paintings by Betty, Shannon, and Jennifer, as well as photography by brother Tripp.

Collector Jaqueline first became a fan of Shannon's work before being drawn into the family dynamic at Smith-Killian and developing a likewise love for Betty and Jennifer's paintings. "Her home is full of our paintings," laughs gallery director Leigh Limehouse. "It's like Smith-Killian Fine Art Gallery part two!" For Leigh, who

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Shannon often jokingly dubs "the quadruplet," it comes as no surprise when a customer comes in for the work of one artist and finds fascination in the others. "I think people find it extremely interesting that it's a whole family showing out of this space," she says. "Plus, it's very family oriented here, which creates a homey feel."

Oftentimes, guests to the Gallery are greeted by Jennifer's children sprawled happily on the floor at her feet, drawing or coloring as their mother paints. "Jennifer paints right by the window, and the light is amazing," exclaims Leigh. "She sets her easel up near my desk, so I get to watch every painting from start to finish, which is not something many people get to do." According to Leigh, part of the wonder of watching the women of the Gallery work is their sheer focus. "Jennifer and Shannon are both very prolific," she states. "They start a painting and follow right through to the finish. A lot of artists will stop working on something and do something else, and maybe even work on ten paintings at a time. But the girls are very focused, and they really enjoy the process." They are not immune, however, to occasional creative blocks. "I think painting

every day helps keep the momentum going," asserts Betty. "The hardest times, I think, come when you've been out of the studio for a few weeks and you find that when you walk back in, you've lost that momentum." Fortunately, the creative spirit at Smith-Killian is fostered by the family's passion for painting, helping the women to simply work through any blocks.

Throughout the Gallery, the works of Betty and her children showcase the subjects

they are most fond of painting. Jennifer, who was an architect major her freshman year at Clemson University, primarily paints architecture as is her first love, while Shannon dabbles mainly in landscapes and still life, and - most recently - figurative work. Betty and son Tripp both tend to focus on the natural landscape, especially in the Lowcountry. States Betty, "My studio is down in Meggett, which is on the marshes of the Intracoastal waterway



and Wadmalaw Sound, so 90-percent of my landscapes are from the area around my studio. I was a watercolorist for 20 years and painted architecture, figures, animals...a variety of different subject matter. But since I've been in oils, I've focused on the landscape."

As of late, however, Betty's work includes a shift toward the abstract. Her pieces in this new genre hang in a special section of the Gallery alongside Tripp's photography and bronze sculptures by Daryl Davis. "For me, to move from the landscape to the abstracts was sort of a natural progression," explains Betty. "If you look at my landscapes, the strokes are very expressive, very loose, very energetic, so it was easy to just completely abandon the subject matter and enjoy painting for painting's sake." Betty feels the abstracts are well-suited to sharing a space with Tripp's photography, as he shares her love of the natural landscape, and Daryl's sculptures, which are mostly of animals. In fact, Betty and her business partner Hume invited Daryl to show his work in the Gallery soon after it opened because he sculpts animals that are indigenous to the area.

Packed with so many different pieces spanning a variety of subjects and mediums, the Gallery offers ample eye-candy for patrons. So much so, in fact, that customers frequently need guidance in making their selections. Leigh suggests an innovative process for picking the right piece. "I think it is important for a homeowner to just be in love with what they are looking at," she says. "It should be something they want to live with for the rest of their lives. I'll often bring pieces to people's homes, hang them, and let the homeowners live with it a night or two to see the painting in a different light." The Gallery also caters to out-of-towners and sea-

sonal residents by offering to ship pieces to the customer's address of choice.

Each piece that leaves the Gallery - whether to a homeowner or for a show in another part of the country - is bittersweet for the Smith-Killian "family." Muses Betty, "You want someone to appreciate your work as much as you do. When I hear that someone bought a painting, I am thrilled that it is going to a home, but it can be hard to let go."



(above) Tiling installed in a vertical pattern available at A&S Marble and Granite. (below) Vignettes

Since work is continually being shipped out, the inventory at the Gallery constantly shifts. "We're always moving things around and getting in new pieces and shipping out old pieces," says Leigh, "so I am always re-hanging, which is actually one of my favorite things to do." This ensures the Gallery always feels fresh and interesting, and also ensures a steady stream of the family's work into other galleries across the country, in locations such as Atlanta and St. Simons, GA, Martha's Vineyard, MA, and Naples, FL. Betty's work has even been shown in Washington DC, Carmel and San Francisco, CA, and New York City, NY.

Looking forward, fall will be a busy season for Betty and her talented triplets. To kick things off, Betty's artwork will be featured at the First Friday art walk downtown October 7. "The theme is October Skies, which I love because October is when we have the most fantastic sunsets due to the low humidity," enthuses Betty. "It reminds

you of the Southwest, it's just so clear and vibrant! So the whole theme of the exhibit will be the October skies from my studio out at Meggett." Moving into November, Jennifer's work will be exhibited for the Charleston Fine Art Dealers Association (CFADA) weekend. The busy artists round out the year in December with a French Quarter art walk, as well as "Painting in the Park" at Washington Square Park, which all the paint and paintings are auctioned off to help local schools' art programs. For the fortunate family at Smith-Killian, being able to foster a passion for art in children is not only something they are happy to do, but something they feel drawn to do. "We give each school a gift certificate to an artist and craftsman supply store," smiles Leigh, "and in a few years, we've been able to raise around \$3,300, which is amazing since each school is only typically allotted \$200 per year. It makes a big difference, and we are proud to encourage the kids' creative spirit." ♦

For more information, swing by Smith-Killian Fine Art Gallery at 9 Queen Street in downtown Charleston or visit smithkillian.com.



VIDEO EXCLUSIVE

Check out our full interview with Lynn at charlestonhomeanddesign.com/videos or scan the QR code above using your mobile phone.

