

The Quintessential Charlotte Luxury Magazine

QC
EXCLUSIVE

THE FALL ISSUE

Explore the beautiful change of seasons here in the Carolinas,
from a Blue Ridge Parkway drive to the Great Smoky Mountains.

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SPACE TO CREATE

Artist Ashley Sellner explores her rightful place.

words ELEANOR MERRELL photos JAMEY PRICE



ARTIST ASHLEY SELLNER THRIVES ON EXPERIMENTATION. Her pieces exhibit a unique interpretation of line work and blending that has evolved from a willingness to play, in life and in art, on a daily basis. Although she has built a strong portfolio of photography and watercolors, her primary medium is oil painting.

Sellner has been creating from a young age, taking her passion with her to university. She was raised in Virginia but attended Wake Forest, where she took figure drawing and watercolor classes and graduated with a degree in Art History.

"I came to Wake with the ability to draw an adequate representation of a subject, but I left wanting to express my own unique vision," remembers Sellner. "It has taken me 20 years and a mess of courage to circle back to painting and allow myself the space to create."



"I need to create.
It's what keeps me sane."

Part of "the space to create" is metaphorical; a willingness to break the rules or paint outside the lines. "Once I learned the fundamentals of oil painting I set to work on breaking them, and figuring out how I could manipulate oil in the same ways I use watercolor," says Sellner. For this artist, part of the joy of watercolor is the potential for "happy accidents" that arise from quick, intuitive painting. Her oil painting process leaves room for similar "happy accidents" to appear.

Seller's space to create is also literal, as the subjects of her paintings are often inspired by breathtaking landscapes or curated interiors. In fact, her favorite subjects are the mountains, "the Blue Ridge, the Shenandoah Valley, the view from my parents' porch — landscapes where I feel small and know my rightful place." She describes these places as sacred, contending that in



these places “life pushes forward in all its splendor,” quoting poet Elisabet K. Jokulsdottir.

Like many of us, Sellner’s focus shifted during quarantine in 2020. She turned her attention from nature’s landscapes to people’s interior sanctuaries. This shift is reflected in a series of vibrant paintings titled “created space.”

“The outside world is dynamic, there is movement, and my marks reflect this freedom and energy. In contrast, these small paintings have been a study of detail and the intentionality and efficiency of each brushstroke,” explains Sellner.

In between larger projects, Sellner tackles commission pieces. However, she always leaves sufficient time in her studio days for self-directed projects that provide ample opportunity to experiment. At the end of the day, it’s not about the finished product. For Sellner, it’s merely the act of creation that imbues her days with meaning.

“I feel so fortunate that others resonate with my work, but I would still be painting without the gaze of others or the patronage,” explains Sellner. “I need to create. It’s what keeps me sane.”

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