

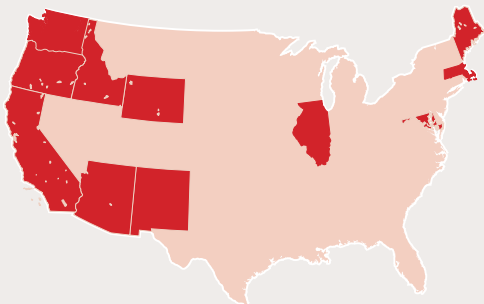
AMERICAN  
*art*  
COLLECTOR



# 54



## UPCOMING SOLO & GROUP SHOWS



### ARIZONA

- Scottsdale

### CALIFORNIA

- Sacramento
- Truckee

### IDAHO

- Ketchum

### ILLINOIS

- Chicago

### MAINE

- Boothbay Harbor

### MARYLAND

- Hampstead

### MASSACHUSETTS

- Chatham
- Nantucket
- Orleans

### NEW MEXICO

- Santa Fe
- Taos

### OREGON

- Bend

### WASHINGTON

- Edmonds

### WYOMING

- Jackson

## 100

Santa Fe, NM

**HEATHER NEILL**

From within

## 102

Boothbay Harbor, ME

**KEVIN BEERS**

Summers on Monhegan

## 104

Orleans, MA

**PAUL SCHULENBURG**

Life on the Cape

## 106

Santa Fe, NM

**PETER WOYTUK**

Suggestion of forms

## 108

Nantucket, MA

**JANET RICKUS**

Color progression

## 110

Chicago, IL

**FRANK GONZALES**

Up in the air

## 112

Santa Fe, NM

**KEVIN BOX**

Outside the box

## 114

Jackson, WY

**JARED SANDERS**

Barn abstractions

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Nantucket, MA

**ANNE PACKARD**

Creative solitude

## 118

Scottsdale, AZ

**HOLLY WILSON**

Shared emotions

# IMMERSED

CHARLESTON COLLECTORS  
MICHELE AND MIKE  
SEEKINGS COMBINE  
CONTEMPORARY ART WITHIN  
A HISTORICAL SETTING.

BY JOHN O'HERN

**M**ichele and Mike Seekings live in a three-story brick house built in 1849 in what is now the oldest historic district in Charleston, South Carolina. It was built by a local merchant, became a tenement, a parsonage, apartments and eventually returned to being a single family home. The Seekings made significant improvements including a modern addition in the back.

Stepping into their home is like stepping into the past, present and future of Charleston rather than into a period piece. The fabric of their home retains historic plaster moldings; wood trim; large, bright and airy windows; and piazzas that extend their living space. Their art collection leaves the past behind—large, colorful and mainly abstract. The couple is immersed in their city. Both serve on the Board of Directors of the Gibbes Museum of Art. Mike is an attorney, a Charleston City Councilman, and sits on the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Michele is a pharmaceutical account manager. Their home is a place for primarily local artists to display their art in the context of a home but also the scene of social, business, and charitable gatherings.

**MIKE SEEKINGS:** We had collected art on a small scale before we moved in six years ago. The house was a blank canvas.

**AMERICAN ART COLLECTOR:** Literally, I see.

1

The Seekings commissioned their friend and former Charleston resident Tim Hussey to create a painting for the long wall in their living room. The wall, as are all the walls in the house, was painted by Charleston artist Karl Beckwith Smith. Hussey's *Raft* (2009) is oil and oil stick on canvas and measures 72 by 108 inches. William Halsey (1915-1999) created the mixed-media collage on wood board, *Castles of Xibalba* in 1988. Brian Rutenberg's *From Mallow to Morning (Study)* (1997-1998), an oil on canvas, hangs in the adjacent dining room.





# IN ART





2

**MIKE:** Yes. Every room has been hand painted by Karl Beckwith Smith—from the entry to the third floor where his work is really off the charts. Karl is a wonderful close friend. It means something to us to know the artists personally. Many of them live within a mile of the house.

Charleston is an amazingly vibrant progressive place, especially in the arts. There is a new emerging artists community. It's part and parcel of the fabric of the city.

Our collection started out being pretty bold, modern and abstract. I'm not necessarily a conformist or a follower. Our artists aren't either. Sometimes we've commissioned pieces and the artists have been influenced by other art in the collection.

Our house is used as a place of entertainment. We bring the artists in and blend the young and the hip with Charleston residents from an older generation.

**AAC:** I've seen photographs of Karl Beckwith Smith's murals and paintings and they seem a lot more traditional than the work he has done for you.

**MICHELE SEEKINGS:** As Mike said, Karl is a dear friend. We worked with him in the beginning

on colors and finishes. Then we gave him the motivation and the room to expand—to allow him to move out of his comfort zone. He did a painting on the second floor to hide the TV and designed a mechanism so we can control it remotely. When we got to the guest room, we told him he could do whatever he wanted to do and we went out of town. As Mike said, what he did is “off the charts.” It's amazing.

**MIKE:** The afternoon sun comes into that room and the color of the light is the color of the painting.

**MICHELE:** There are a lot of Karl's paintings throughout the house. There is one on the piazza, *Hal on Bike—Dock Street*. Hal has been Karl's partner for more than 40 years. That's the Dock Street Theatre where he still performs.

**AAC:** In the modern addition to your home I notice you opted to have modern details rather than to duplicate railings and balusters in the rest of the house.

**MIKE:** We commissioned Sean Ahern here in Charleston to design and install the handrail as well as chandeliers on the first floor. He's

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Brian Rutenberg's *Pine Lakes 4* (2007-2008), oil on linen, hangs above the mantel in the dining room. Timothy Pakron's oil painted gelatin silver print of *Michele* (2010) is to the right. The chandelier is by Sean Ahern.

3

Timothy Pakron's *Untitled* (2010), gelatin silver on fiber paper, hangs to the left. Through the doorway and in the entry is a large painting by Benjamin Hollingsworth, *Lady Justice* (2010), a mixed media on canvas, commissioned by the collectors.

4

David Boatwright's oil on canvas drop cloth, *Tiny Tango* (2005), hangs in the stairwell. The couple commissioned Sean Ahern to design and construct the forged iron and copper handrail in 2012.

5

Karl Beckwith Smith created the acrylic on canvas paintings in the wine cellar (*I to I*) *Inspiration* (2010), *Legare Street Folly* (2013), and *Main Hall-The Mount* (2010).



3



4



5







Tim Hussey's *Visitor 16* (2008), mixed media on wood panel, hangs above the mantel in the living room. *His Face Study 1* (ca. 2008), a smaller mixed media on wood piece, hangs between the windows. The forged iron chandelier was commissioned in 2013 from Sean Ahern of Ahern's Anvil in Charleston.



incredible and does everything from massive installations to candlesticks and fireplace tools.

**AAC:** The canvas painting by David Boatwright hanging in that stairway is interesting. What can you tell me about that?

**MIKE:** It used to hang in a wine bar downtown and Michele always liked it. When the wine bar closed the painting was taken down and we knew we had to have it. We found it rolled up in what looked like the trash and we were able to rescue it.

**AAC:** How did the copy of Michelangelo's head of *David* end up in your front hall?

**MICHELE:** I bought that for Mike to hang his running medals on, and it was meant to go to his office but it never made it.

**MIKE:** When we have events with themes he usually ends up decorated to fit the theme.

**AAC:** By the way, I like the way the flowers in the hall match your running shoes, Mike.

**MICHELE:** Mike chose the flowers.

**MIKE:** And those running shoes have run the Boston Marathon!

You can just see a large painting in that hall through the door in one of the photographs. It's by Benjamin Hollingsworth. He's a super interesting guy with a Charleston connection. We saw some work when he was first starting out. We showed him the hall with the 13-foot ceiling and said, "We're going to give you



7

**7**  
Karl Beckwith Smith was commissioned to paint the wall mural and ceiling painting in the guest room. It is called *Celestial Dreams* (2011).

**8**  
Karl Beckwith Smith's *Bicycle Motion* (2011) is part of a remote controlled hideaway he designed for the television in the master suite. Sarah Haynes' oil on canvas *Ashes* (2010) is to the right. Across the bedroom is Fred Jamar's oil on canvas *Church Street* (2005).



8



9

**9** The Seekings on the raised piazza of their historic Charleston home with acrylic on canvas paintings by Karl Beckwith Smith, *Hal on Bike – Dock Street* (2012) and *Lost and Found Series # 5* (2011).

**10** Michele and Mike Seekings live in an 1849 three-story brick house in what is now the oldest historic district in Charleston, South Carolina.



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the wall.” He did his research and produced *Lady Justice*, a modern version of the scales of justice. Ben was a professional soccer player and turned to painting after he had a bad knee injury.

Emerging artists gravitate toward us. Some artists even ask to be in our collection.

Jill Hooper is a friend of Tim Hussey who is a good friend of ours. I performed Tim’s wedding ceremony. We commissioned him to do a large painting for our living room. Jill is classically trained and doesn’t fit the mold but wanted to be integrated into our collection. We saw a piece at a gallery here in Charleston and decided to buy it. When I was heading toward the gallery door another guy was coming from the opposite direction. Usually I’d hold the door, but this time I didn’t. Ironically, he wanted to buy the same painting. But I beat him.

**AAC:** Is Timothy Pakron’s painted photograph *Michele* a portrait of you, Michele?

**MICHELE:** Yes, he used to live on our street and he asked me to pose for a series of photos. He manipulates his photographs and this one he hand painted. We saw it in a gallery and had to buy it.

**AAC:** Edgar Degas wrote, “Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.” By bringing contemporary art into an historic setting and by bringing people together in their home they, too, are making what Degas would call art. ●