



Charleston magazine and the Halsey Institute of contemporary art present the winners of the “Emerging Artist” competition—10 talented Lowcountry residents— and discover their inspired works

**See the artists’ works in person:** City Gallery at Waterfront Park 34 Prioleau St., (843) 958-6484  
**Collector’s Preview:** May 9, 10, & 11, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.  
**Cocktail Reception:** May 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
 A percentage of all artwork sold will benefit the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art.

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When the editorial staff at *Charleston* magazine began planning this Arts Issue last fall, we wondered this: who is out in the community creating interesting and—as of yet—undiscovered artwork? Our second, and perhaps more difficult, question was how to find them?

So we partnered with the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston to create a competition of local artists, the winners of which would be featured in the May 2006 *Charleston* magazine and have their work showcased in an exhibition. We set the criteria for local emerging talent: artists of any age who have resided in the tri-county area for at least two years, have never had a major local solo exhibition, and work in at least one of the following disciplines: painting, sculpture, works of paper, printmaking, photography, digitally created work, and mixed media.

In January, a call for entries was advertised in the magazine and mailed out to the lists of local arts organizations; the response was overwhelming. Our jury panel examined nearly 80 entries—a cross-section of some truly outstanding work. After hours of deliberation, the panelists chose 10 deserving winners—*Charleston* magazine and the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art’s 2006 Under the Radar Emerging Artists.



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### Adrienne Antonson

Adrienne Antonson trolls junk shops, flea markets, and even her own shower drain, looking for everyday artifacts she can transform and elevate to fine art. After experimenting with a variety of styles as a studio art major at the College of Charleston, she began fashioning bustles, corsets, and other lingerie sculptures out of human hair, an idea she says immediately resonated with her resourceful aesthetic.

“Hair is such an organic material, soft and ephemeral,” says Antonson, who pursued fashion design at the Savannah College of Art and Design as a high-school student and established her own custom clothing line, Spinster, last year. “Because I like to sew and I’m so attracted to garments, hair seemed to fit perfectly. Creating lingerie was an unusual way to go, probably the least expected thing you would do with hair. But that’s what excited me about it.”

The sculptor likes to surprise viewers with the unusual and the unexpected. “With lingerie, your visual vocabulary is to be drawn to it. You’re attracted to this appealing shape, but when you get close and realize it’s made of human hair, you’re usually repulsed. It’s that play between attraction and repulsion that I find intriguing.”

Although Antonson describes herself as impatient by nature, she finds sanctuary in the



meticulous process of stitching hair and thread. “It’s like a meditation,” she explains, comparing her art to the act of brushing her teeth, a familiar, necessary experience that exists outside the realm of focused thought. “I have a clear concept of what I want, and it’s just a matter of building it and working to the end. It’s a very careful, delicate process. It gets frustrating, but it always works itself out.”

One of Antonson’s most gratifying projects was a commissioned piece she created for a friend that chronicled her hair loss through cancer treatment. The artist says the project allowed her to finally grieve her own mother’s successful battle with breast cancer. As her work evolves, she would like this form of sculpture to offer an uplifting solace to people undergoing chemotherapy.

“I’m at the point where I really don’t know where I’m headed,” Antonson says, secure with the uncertainty. “I guess that’s what’s beautiful about it: I don’t know, but I’ll go wherever it takes me.”

[Click here](#) to view Adrienne’s work



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## **Jonathan Auger**

Jonathan Auger’s sculpture saturates the senses, from kinetic mixed-media pieces that buzz and whirl to large-scale social commentaries that create a stir.

“I’d like people to feel as if they are entering an intellectual playground,” says the New York native, who earned a Master’s degree in fine art from the University of Maryland and teaches at Pinewood Preparatory School and the College of Charleston. “There’s a kind of quirky humor about the work, but I also want it to resonate with thought. I like to try to keep it playful and fun, but at the same time, if I can hammer out my own intentions in a subtle way, then I figure I win and the viewer wins.”

Working with a range of materials such as wood, steel, recycled library books, and handcrafted joints and gears, Auger says he focuses on the physicality of creating sculpture. “Each piece definitely changes as you go through the process. It’s about making the work, reacting to it, and learning something new about myself. The process of making the piece and evolving with it is very important to me.”

While he describes himself more as a student of the world than a political activist, Auger likes to experiment with size and scale to punctuate his social messages, which range from education to national security. “I like being able to invade the viewer’s space,” says the artist, who has exhibited his work in venues such as the Conner Contemporary Art Gallery in Washington, D.C., and Cedarhurst Sculpture Park in Mount Vernon, Illinois.

“Sometimes if you shrink things down, they might not seem as confrontational, so it’s not so imposing to the viewer. On the reverse side, if you increase the scale, you can make it so that they almost have to react or be involved in some way. I try to use scale so that viewers can get a sense of humor out of the work and not feel that their beliefs are being attacked.”

As Auger's kinetic art evolves, he envisions an intersection of science and sculpture that keeps the work—and the viewer—in motion. "It's one thing to create the illusion of motion, but to actually incorporate it into a piece is another thing. It opens up more dimensions beyond traditional static work that just sits there and requires you to move around it. I'd rather make work that moves around you."

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## **Townsend Davidson**

"My work is a reflection of Charleston and the things I see every day," says Townsend Davidson, "the blue skies, the water, the people I meet."

Unlike the realistic renditions of historic homes and beautiful landscapes that crowd local gallery walls, Townsend's paintings use everyday surroundings for ambiguous social commentary. "I take the things I see, things on which I want to comment, but leave them open for interpretation," he says.

What defines Davidson's current work is his use of space, a common thread throughout his paintings. Flat blues and grays project the magnitude, the vastness of the sky and ocean, and contrast with the subjects of his works, which are rendered as small, seemingly insignificant objects of human design, like a Charleston single house in his piece *The Single House* or an oil tanker in *The Trade Winds*. The scale of Davidson's minute subjects is where his commentary comes into play. How something so small can mean so much to so many people is at the heart of his work.

Though his preferred medium is oil on canvas, much of Davidson's background is based in photography. Viewing his work, the two media may seem incongruent, but Davidson says it's his training in "documentation" that has given him the perspective from which he sees the world.

Even now, the artist spends a considerable amount of his time working with realistic images as a photography lab technician at the College of Charleston, where he earned degrees in art history and studio art in 2003. He is also a drawing instructor at the Gibbes Museum of Art.

"Working with people is all part of creating my paintings, and something I enjoy," he says. And teaching art is something he plans on continuing, with designs on entering a graduate program in the near future. Currently Davidson works—usually on multiple pieces at a time—at the Redux Contemporary Art Center, where he rents studio space alongside other artists, many of whom he seeks out for their opinions on his works in progress. "To be able to ask someone into my studio and get their opinion on something has been helpful," he says. "The community at Redux is very supportive."

[Click here to view Townsend's work](#)



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## **Kat Hastie**

Even after 25 years as a dedicated painter, Kat Hastie doesn't always initially know where she's going with a work. "And that's not necessarily a bad thing," she says, "Because even when I've determined a direction, something will take me off the path and bring a very personal and organic element to the process—I've learned to be open to the randomness of art."

Describing the process of her craft, she says, "There are things you just want to do for the doing of them." It's exactly this wide-open approach that makes Kat's paintings—and her range as an artist—so delightfully diverse. Feeling an intense interior struggle to "find that aesthetic niche that's just mine" might define the artist's endeavors, but one surmises that her inability to give herself boundaries is a gift to her works.

In fact, pushing beyond limits and breaking barriers is a prominent theme in Kat's paintings as well her life. Always challenging herself to evolve, travel, learn, and experience, she embraces German artist Joseph Beays' philosophy of exploring a direct connection with an event or emotion and wordlessly communicating it on canvas. Her series, *Historic Sights Charleston*, is intensely personal, but has a discernible ease about it. "Probably because it's more a collection of observations and not necessarily tackling the painful," she offers.

Growing up on Shem Creek when it was still rural farmland, Kat had plenty of time—and the necessity—to cultivate her imagination. "I had to make believe a lot," she explains, since just getting over the bridge in those years was a major production, one that kept her relatively isolated. Her resulting creativity was directed toward painting by a high-school art teacher who was "so serene and always seemed to exist outside of what was going on in the classroom," Kat says. "I wanted to enter that realm," she explains.

What Kat ultimately values in art is as diverse as her style: "Color, quiriness, solemnity, humor, skill—especially the courage to stay creative!"

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## **Alice Keeney**

When Alice Keeney and her brother were sorting through her father's possessions shortly after he had passed away, they came across a camera. "You take it," said her brother to the then 16-year-old Alice. "You like photography."

What he handed her was both a legacy and a gift; today, the Rhode Island native and College of Charleston grad has traveled leaps and bounds—literally and figuratively—in her pursuit of capturing poignant and unflinching images. After studying at Spees Photographic Institute in Paris, Alice spent a month in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, working with Grassroot Soccer, a non-profit organization that uses the global soccer community to teach about HIV and AIDS education. And of course, she took her camera.

“I’m not really one for studio photography—I prefer the spontaneity of the street,” she laughs. “The kids in Zimbabwe were so willing to have their picture taken; they loved the attention, but you can really see the hardships in their eyes. When I take a photograph, it’s important to me to show something about the person I’m capturing, about my connection with them.”

Her images were used by Grassroot Soccer for fundraising purposes; these days, many of them hang in Kudu, an African-themed coffee shop on Vanderhorst Street. “There’s not much wall space in there, so the owner and I came up with the idea of putting up a projection screen,” she says. The young artist donates all the proceeds from her work to Grassroot Soccer. “It’s so nice to be able to give back to them; they’ve given me so much inspiration.”

Of her work, Keeney says she loves playing with alternative processes, such as Polaroid transfers to get a range of diverse images. Currently a stringer for the Associated Press, she hopes to get back to Africa in the next six months to pick up where she left off: combining photography with philanthropy.

“One of the most important parts of taking pictures is to document change,” she says. “If I can do what I love doing and simultaneously create awareness about an important issue, then I’m living my dream.”

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## **Julie Klaper**

Julie Klaper likes to say she took 35 years to complete art school. As a college freshman, daunted by the possibility of crafting a living from her art major, she switched to business and pursued a marketing career instead. After decades of sandwiching art classes into the pockets of her executive schedule, she became a student again in her fifties and graduated from the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis.

Now able to devote much of her time to her craft, the mixed-media artist says the life experiences that unfurled between the bookends of her art studies add an autobiographical depth and perspective to her work that she would not have had as a younger artist.

“I think my work is intensely personal, but I’m dealing with some of the same issues that many people do,” Klaper says, noting that caring for her chronically ill husband has influenced several of her pieces, such as *Sharing the Pain*, an abstract sculpture of two joined coiled figures made from refrigerator tubing and stereo wire. “I think I’m a different person in terms of where my art is because of the experiences I’ve had taking care of my husband. I think it’s altered me. I look at where I was 10 years ago or five years ago, and it has changed my perspective in terms of dealing with people and dealing with myself.”

Influenced by women's history and the techniques used to fashion the utilitarian beauty of common objects such as baskets, quilts, and clothing, Klaper says she begins with ideas or messages she wants to communicate and then finds materials to express those visions, ranging from latex gloves to hand-knit wire, hand-dyed silk, or embroidered damask. She works intuitively, letting her well-honed instincts guide the process.

"As an artist, you hope you know when a piece is complete, because there's always the threat of taking something too far and spoiling the spontaneity you had there. It becomes too planned. It's always a balancing act of knowing when to 'say' enough," says Klaper, who finds herself thinking of her own legacy and what she will leave behind. "The highlight for me has been that I'm coming to peace with my work right now. My work is becoming more individualized—more an expression of myself. I'm happy with the path I'm going down right now."

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## **Katie Leonard**

Katie Leonard's work gives new meaning to the phrase "damaged goods." The 23-year-old Denver, Colorado native takes pretty pictures—and then she likes to destroy them.

"I had a lot of negatives of angels—pictures of stone figures that I'd taken in cemeteries in Boston, when I was studying up there," she says, "They were nice by themselves, but they were nothing special. I remember trying to print them in my first semester at school, and really having a hard time making them come out as these perfect, flawless pictures. So when I moved to Charleston and found the negatives, I decided to do something totally different." What followed was Katie's adieu to perfection. She deliberately scratched one of the negatives—normally a huge no-no in the darkroom—and then printed it as though it were unblemished. "When you do something like that, the picture is either going to turn out really well, or you're going to completely ruin it," she says. "Luckily, I loved the result. At first, I only did it with a few, just to create an unusual effect, but these days, it's hard to leave my negatives alone. I have to destroy them somehow before I print them!"

And her destruction takes many forms—she'll use safety pins, etching needles, or sandpaper to scratch the negative, and then often a lighter to burn the edges. "I also love doing liquid emulsion prints," she says. "It gives the picture an older effect, and almost makes it look like an etching. No two ever come out exactly the same."

With a B.A. in Studio Arts from the College of Charleston under her belt, as well as time spent studying at Boston's Northeastern University and Studio Arts Centers International in Italy, Katie is currently working at Artizom Frame & Gallery on East Bay Street. Among her influences, she counts Brooklyn-based photographer Merri Cyr—who has photographed musicians like Jeff Buckley, Joey Ramone, and Tracy Chapman—and Mike and Doug Starn, twin brothers whose torn, taped, and intentionally distressed photographs first received critical acclaim in 1985.

“A lot of my best pieces have come about because I’ve made a mistake,” says Katie. “My lack of patience seems to work pretty well for me. I’ll get distracted with something else, and forget to move the paper back to where it was when I’m exposing it to the light, or I’ll leave it in the chemicals too long, and get these weird spots on the print. The rules of photography dictate that you’re not supposed to do either of those things. But then again, you’re not supposed to scratch your negatives either!”

[Click here to view Katie’s work](#)

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## **Karin Olah**

Fabric flows from Karin Olah’s hands as fluidly as paint from a brush. Combining a palette of antique textiles with glossy acrylic paint, gouache watercolors, and graphite, she creates modern mixed-media collages inspired by the tactile elements of Charleston’s architecture and the craft of quilting.

“I like to play with the layering of translucent materials and transparent fabrics,” says Olah, who launched her art career in a New York City textile design studio, creating colors and patterns for couture fashion designers. “I really love the unfinished edges, the meandering threads that come off of the fabrics. There’s something very intimate and domestic about it. I like to pay attention to the metaphorical implications of working with textiles. I’m trying to make a visual connection between the blueprint of the city and the aesthetics of a quilt.”

Growing up in historic Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Olah was drawn to the simplicity of Amish quilts, which eventually led her to explore a variety of textile traditions at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. One of her whimsical college creations, a refrigerated red gown made of Jell-O, appeared in the 2001 coffee-table book *Jell-O: A Biography*.

From foodie fashion to textural paintings, the artist says she focuses on moments of abstraction, elements that may be hidden in the larger whole, such as the curve in a cobblestone street or the curl of a wrought iron gate. “Since I work abstractly, I’m trying to communicate and set up a different viewpoint of something we see every day,” says Olah, who is director of the Eva Carter Gallery and represented by the Corrigan Gallery. “I’m using recognizable images, but in a way that people haven’t considered before. I hope the viewer comes away with a fresh interpretation or a new feeling about a familiar image.”

Energized by a daily devotion to her art, Olah says her favorite challenge is always the next piece. “I think it always needs to be better. You always learn from previous works, and then you know what to tackle next. Each takes on its own characteristics and informs other works. It’s all about momentum. I’ll work on a lot of projects at once so that the pieces feed off of each other and keep the momentum going.”

[Click here to view Karin’s work](#)

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## Joel Parker

Observers of the human condition come in many forms. But for Joel Parker, both the “human” and the “condition” he chooses to commit to canvas are quite specific. An oil painter, Joel chooses college students, in all their beer-drinking, midnight-studying glory, as his subjects.

While a student at Piedmont Baptist College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Joel became aware of young people’s lack of knowledge about contemporary art, especially within the Evangelical Christian movement. And with an innate artistic talent that he originally planned to use for a career in architecture, Joel turned his energies toward examining both the perception the public has of college life and the perception college students have of themselves. “I feel my paintings are something I can share with people, especially other students,” says Joel, who’ll receive a Bachelor’s degree in studio art this December from the College of Charleston. “When you paint something, it’s not just about capturing a snapshot, it’s about taking that moment in time to a different level, and campus life lends itself to that end in a unique way.”

Culling much of his inspiration from first-hand experience on and around the College of Charleston campus, Joel—who has, in his words, discovered a “love of humanity”—says his goal isn’t for his work to be critical or social commentary, but merely wonderful imagery.

“College students have such specific notions of what’s important,” he says. “And when I paint a scene—whether it’s a bunch of people doing keg stands or playing a drinking game—I’m really exploring what they think of themselves, and how they define their place in the world. And at the same time, I feel that I’m participating in these peoples lives.” For the future, Joel sees himself remaining in the realm of academia and campus life, eventually hoping to become an art professor. “I don’t ever want to be an artist who sits alone in his studio day after day,” he says. “I want to stay engaged and be out among people. Universities are perfect places to do that.”

And as for the quirky and colorful titles of his work—such as *Despite Contrary Belief This is Not Jackie Kennedy with Red Hair and Her First Keg Stand of the Day*—“I often overhear people talking about my paintings, and I take what they say and turn in into a title,” he says. “It’s a great way to give true meaning to a piece, and it serves to remind me that, after all, it’s only a painting.”

[Click here](#) to view Joel’s work



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## **Shannon Wood**

Shannon Wood weaves stories through collage, layering acrylic paint with photocopied images, blurred pinhole photographs, type, and organic matter to share a personal narrative. A graphic designer by training, the University of Georgia graduate uses a selective eye to organize and balance tactile elements into a cohesive whole.

“I sew together different fragments from my life into a story, whether it’s real or fictional, and it comes out onto the canvas in a way that isn’t literal,” says the Charleston native, who spent childhood summers taking classes at the Gibbes Museum of Art and later explored several art forms before focusing on collage. “I’m constantly finding things I want to put together, almost like pieces of a puzzle. For me, collage is the perfect medium to document experiences.”

Wood thrives on the flow of the creative process, intertwining textures and colors in unexpected combinations, frequently scratching the surface to reveal hidden layers. She views an expanse of canvas as an important design element. “It’s interesting to think of the canvas as its own fabric,” she says. “I’m always sewing things into the canvas. It’s easy to forget that it’s actually cloth, and you can do things to it that you can’t do to other surfaces.” While Wood says she has finally overcome a fear that she will run out of creative energy, she lets ideas simmer until the form tumbles out in its own time. “I’ve learned about the spontaneity of being an artist,” she says, drawing inspiration from landscapes that speak to her—her father’s farm, the shifting tide line, birds winging skyward. “You have to trust your first instinct and vision and go with it and not really think about it too much. I like immediate gratification. I want to go from start to finish, no matter how long that takes. I don’t want my work to just sit and languish while I ponder it.”

After years of sharing her work with only a trusted circle of friends, Wood is discovering that a fresh audience expands her storyline, adding new dimensions to her art. “I want people to look at the work and wonder what is going on as they try to figure out a story for themselves or how it speaks to them. I have my own reasons for why I put objects together, but it’s such a tactile experience that I like to leave it up to the viewer.”

[Click here](#) to view Shannon’s work