



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.

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"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."

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.