

Little Lacy Something: 5,
oil on canvas by Connor
Heindel OPPOSITE:
Bountiful #1, acrylic
on panel by Well +
Wonder artist EMYO



A WELL *of* TALENT

By creating the virtual gallery Well + Wonder,
MOLLIE CREASON has cultivated a
vibrant community of Southern female artists
and aims to take their work to the masses

By **KIRK REED FORRESTER**



ABOVE: *Multi-Love*, watercolor and ink on paper by Lizzy Love BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT: *Flower Crown*, acrylic on canvas by Amanda Norman • *Continuum II*, oil on canvas by Paige Kalena Follmann • *Red Lily*, oil on paper by Christy King



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Seven years ago, MOLLIE CREASON, a Louisville-based art broker, found herself running into the same issue. As a representative with Portraits Inc., her primary job was helping match clients to the right portrait artist; yet, even when the commission was finished, clients' questions about art weren't.

"So many of the families I was working with were in the same phase of life," she says. "They'd say, 'I want to invest in original art, but I'm lost on where to start,' or 'I saw this painting on social media. Can you help me track it down?'"

Slowly Creason began sourcing original art for clients' homes, a job she found deeply satisfying. "I studied art and art history in college but never thought that I could make a career in art sales without moving to New York," she says. Though Creason's taste runs the gamut, as she was on the hunt, she felt continually drawn to pieces by emerging female artists from the South. "I thought, there's got to be a place where we can put all of this artwork," she says. Her parents encouraged her to start a brick-and-mortar gallery in Louisville, but Creason was working with clients from Atlanta to Dallas and needed a platform to reach a broader audience.

In 2015 she founded the virtual gallery Well + Wonder, a collective of artists whose works can be purchased directly online. By design, Well + Wonder aims to eliminate the most pervasive barriers that keep people from buying original art: access and cost. Before creating the site, Creason would hear clients

confess that they were too intimidated to go into galleries or that they assumed that any art worth buying was out of their price range. "Trying to address those issues was so important to me," says Creason. "When I began collecting for myself in my 20s, I bought artist's studies, drawings they weren't going to sell but that I loved and still cherish. At Well + Wonder, so many artists have small watercolors that are around \$100. People need to know they can afford original artwork; they just may have to start small."

While Well + Wonder started small with only six artists, it has quickly turned into a destination for emerging talent, now boasting a stable of 28 artists whose works range from oil to collage to sculpture. Creason is passionate not just about connecting people to art but also about connecting people to artists. "Art is so personal," she says. "It tells such a great story. It's a conversation piece, so I want people to feel like they know something about the artist and understand her process."

As Well + Wonder began to make a name for itself, Creason wrestled with how prominently she wanted to tout the fact that her artists were all Southern and all female. Then a gallery owner who has become a mentor pushed her to embrace it. "It's resonating with people," Creason remembers her saying. And not just within the region. "This week I'm shipping a painting to a home in New York," she says.

To browse the works on Well + Wonder is to go down the rabbit hole of wish-list-making. Gorgeous botanicals, moody landscapes, poignant abstracts, bold drawings. The only thing left to wonder about is how to make more room on your walls. *Continued on next page*

ABOVE: Art broker Mollie Creason started the virtual gallery Well + Wonder in an effort to make art more accessible to novice collectors. BELOW: A collage of still life paintings by Well + Wonder artist Kate Waddell



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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: *Arrangement*, acrylic on canvas by Adele Yonchak • Artist Whitney Stoddard in front of a collection of her pieces • *Summer Vacation V*, acrylic and collage on canvas by Hannah Betzel • Creason shares a toast with Well + Wonder artist Lexie Armstrong at a dinner party at Armstrong's farm in Franklin, Tennessee. OPPOSITE: *Grecian Fruit II* by Lindsey J. Porter



PHOTOS: LUCY CUNEO (TOP RIGHT) AND MARY CRAVEN DAWKINS (BOTTOM LEFT)