

## 2015 Studio Artists

### Joshua Johnson

Joshua is one of the young artists who received a Fine Arts Society scholarship throughout his student days at Ringling College. He has a BFA in visual art from the University of North Dakota and an MFA in studio art from the University of Nebraska. He taught sculpture in Nebraska and metalcasting and other sculptural processes in Minnesota.



Like Cassia Kite, his work reflects memories from his homeland--North and South Dakota, Minnesota (where he studied and taught), and Texas. One sculpture explores the land forms of the South Dakota Badlands. Another, called Frozen in Place, represents the salt licks that hunters in South Dakota leave in the woods to entice deer.

The wood furniture, wall pieces, and wood-framed tiles he makes today are a Josh variant on Arts and Crafts style.

Since 2009 his work has been shown extensively in juried shows and sculpture competitions in North and South Dakota, in Minnesota—and also in Texas, Ohio, and Iowa.

### Pat Kaufman ([www.patrickauffman.com](http://www.patrickauffman.com))

A native New Yorker, artist and playwright Patricia Kaufman graduated from the University of Michigan, received an MA in dramatic writing and musical theater from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, and studied at the Art Students League in New York City and Instituto Allende in San Miguel Allende, Mexico.



She lived and worked in a 3000-sq-ft loft in Manhattan's Soho district until nine years ago. Then she decided to move to Sarasota and finally came to rest in this light-filled house. The sunroom is now her studio—actually, she says, the whole house is her studio, and she plans to incorporate the garage into her storage space.

Her artist daughters call the studio her “playpen.” Kaufman agrees. “Art is serious fun,” she says. “I was lucky to grow up in a city with museums which welcomed visitors of all ages. Those masterpieces remain with me still, peering and provoking as I work. They applaud good and boo false moves.”

She is as well-known for her six graphic novels and plays as for her paintings. “I have drawn and written stories since I could hold a pencil,” she says. “I am a storyteller in paint and words.” Her graphic work is always about the human face, figure, and psyche. Her Greek gods, sexy goddesses, and Christian saints and prophets are never still. They leap, stride, swim, fly, dance, bowl, walk a tightrope, or step right out of their clothes.

**Cassia Kite** ([www.cassiakite.com](http://www.cassiakite.com))

Kite was born and raised on a farm in Auburn, Nebraska, her father a farmer and her mother an elementary school teacher. She studied painting and sculpture at Northwest Missouri State University and the University of Florida, along with art education, and now teaches art at IMG academy.

In 2012 she married fellow artist Tim Jaeger, who is from Kentucky, on the farm. She says: "You can take a girl off of the farm, but you can't take the farm outta the girl." The Kite homestead, the farm, and the objects and photographs connected with it have become an obsession of hers.

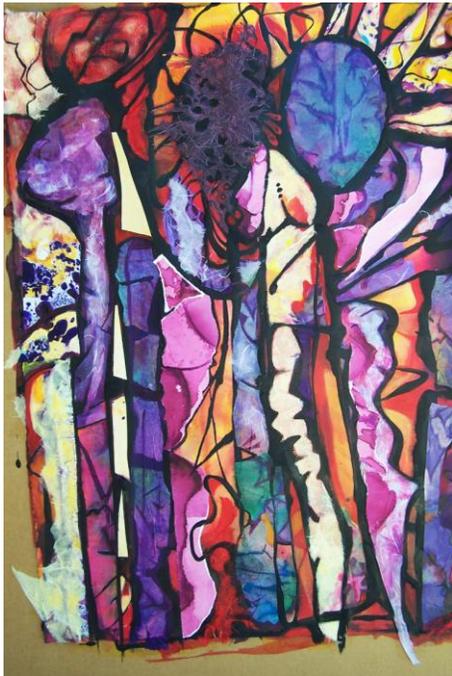
Her portraits of family members, farmscapes, or symbolic constructions of memories communicate "this intense feeling of nostalgia." Kite uses a circle of paper with heavy thread handstitched onto it to make the image of the Auburn grain elevator. A series of photos of family members taken in the '30s are retaken by Kite.

You are in her winter studio. In the summer she returns to her studio on the farm.



**Eleanor Merritt** ([www.eleanormerritt.com](http://www.eleanormerritt.com))

Over a 50-year career Merritt has met Michelle Obama, been a charter member of the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC, a board member of the Ringling Museum, president of the Venice Art Center. She is a founder of the Sarasota group Women Contemporary Artists. Colleges, corporate offices, museums, libraries, and art centers have shown her work.



A native New Yorker, daughter of Jamaican immigrants, Merritt graduated from the famed High School of Music and Art and received a BA and MA from Brooklyn College. She was taught by the best at college: Mark Rothko, Ad Rinehart, Jimmy Ernst, Kurt Seligman.

The influence of these giant figures of the New York school shows in her abstract and semi-abstract works here. But she never forgets the figure. The images have become more abstract and the painted surface more textural over time, she says, but there is always a figure and a message there. Her work does not replicate nature. "Some people get my message," she says, while "others are still looking for sunsets and palm trees."

On our studio tour she hopes visitors will browse. "Art is on all the walls," she says. "Ask me questions about the art process. Take a look at the Chinese brocades in the dining room. Be sure to take in the masks I collected on trips to Africa, South America, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia."

**Taylor Robenalt** ([www.taylorrobenalt.com](http://www.taylorrobenalt.com))

“Art has been an obsession of mine since I was a little girl,” this ceramist says. Some of her sculptures reflect figures from her dreams, others, like the large vessels, are more abstract. The figural works are often self-portraits.

Porcelain is an especially important medium to her. “It is so dainty and delicate,” she says. Through sanding the porcelain, minimal glazing, limited color, and leaving some raw clay exposed, she gives the piece what she calls a “sacred and ghostly quality.”

Her recent show at the Village Gallery in Bradenton shows this approach, as it combines porcelain animals and flowers. “The animal heads are bursting forth from a heavy cluster of flowers,” she says, “as though they are escaping from the thicket.” But as the sculpture series goes on, the flower clusters become heavier and more ornate, dominating the animal heads.

Robenalt has a BFA in sculpture from Southern Methodist University and graduate study in ceramics at the University of Georgia. She has taught ceramics at IMG Academy, State College of Florida, and Sarasota County Technical Institute and has studied around the US and in Costa Rica, Italy, and Japan. She has had solo shows at art centers and galleries in Sarasota, Tampa, and Lakeland, and has participated in group shows in Georgia and Tampa.



**Judy Lyons Schneider** ([www.judyschneider.artspan.com](http://www.judyschneider.artspan.com))

Schneider is a painter, a printmaker, a photographer, a multimedia artist, a collagist. And she has excelled in all these endeavors over several decades. You might call her a “layerist,” she says. A look around her studio shows what she means. “I layer my work in much the way I collage papers and fabrics. Even in printmaking I overlay the various plates for a collage effect. Printing layer over layer and adding different techniques makes my images more complex and magical.”



Her passion for the natural world inspired Schneider and her husband to build this studio. “We had a choice between adding a pool and a bedroom or this,” she says. “For me, that was a no-brainer.” When she takes a break to sit on the window seat, she has spotted deer, bobcats, water otters, armadillos, and even Florida panther cubs. “Seeing something wild really gets my juices flowing,” she says.

Born in New York City and trained at New York University and the Art Students League, Schneider has had one-person shows at Union Theological Seminary in New York, the Printmaking Council of New Jersey, the Princeton University Program of Study and Gender, and the Sarasota Womens Resource Center and Longboat Key Art Center. She is a member of the Florida Artists Group, Women Contemporary Artists, and Petticoat Painters.