

‘In Flux’ artist Quia Z. Atkinson goes with the flow

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For Quia Z. Atkinson, artist and owner of the QZ Design Gallery, Tallahassee is home.

As she goes from station to station in her garage converted to art studio, she takes joy in pouring technicolor liquid acrylics and resins across her canvas. The flow of paint redirected across the smooth, shiny surfaces resembles the fluidity Atkinson felt while moving around as a child.

Both her parents served as U.S. Marines, which means Atkinson grew up calling Virginia, South Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Norway



Atkinson

home for a time.

Her paintings in the “In Flux” exhibit at the Artport Gallery reflect on this nomadic upbringing via the work’s experimental, flowing techniques.

“Moving around taught me resilience as a kid,” says Atkinson. “You have to be able to adapt and meet new friends fast. It also opens you up to different cultures, people, and ways of life, and I’m thankful for that. I think that’s shown in my art.”

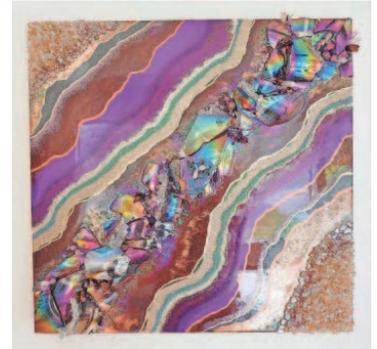
Out of the many states and countries Atkinson lived in, Rabat, Morocco, was by far her favorite. She can vividly recall the vibrancy of Moroccan culture, from

shopping in the marketplaces filled with rich spices, meats, bejeweled scarves, and fabrics, to admiring the intricate trellis designs and basket weaving done by the women in the city.

Refining a ‘signature’ look

While she was in school, Atkinson got the chance to deepen her understanding of the sculptural arts and made pottery and three-dimensional crafts. Moroccan design still permeates her household today with its bright colors and geometric patterns. When Atkinson started her art journey seven years ago, she found

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Local artist Quia Z Atkinson’s “Kintsugi in Violet.” PROVIDED

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herself going back to those same images and memories she made while living in Morocco's capitol.

"It took me a long time to find my signature look, but I finally feel like people can look at my work and recognize it as mine," says Atkinson. "Every time I do something I haven't done before I research and go through a series of trial and error. I welcome those challenges because it makes me better as an artist and opens up my brain to creating something new."

Atkinson has found artistic mentors online by watching video tutorials or messaging artists over social media with questions about their work. At the top of her list is German artist, Stephanie Walberer, known as MRS. COLOR-BERRY. Atkinson draws inspiration from the color and three-dimensional embellishments in Walberer's large-scale geode works.

Almost every piece in the Artport exhibit places resin, crystals, glass, stones and color on display. Her most embellished piece is the 5x4 foot "Kaleidoscope," which is comprised of a dozen geode clusters. Atkinson says she worked on the painting for six hours a day over the course of two weeks.

Color and crystals

"I wanted to make a piece that gave a sample of all kinds of color combinations," says Atkinson. "I wanted it to look like multiple paintings within one painting. You can look at it ten times and see something different every time you walk by it."

Atkinson says to create a piece that resembles geodes takes multiple layers. For "Kaleidoscope," she hand-painted each section, then went back with layers of metallic pen and paint to create fine lines before adding glass and crystals. Each crystal was placed individually to give shape to the signature clusters.

"I threw the whole kitchen sink onto that canvas," laughs Atkinson.

In stark contrast to her brighter works are a few black and white, minimalist pieces like "Monochrome Fantasy." For these works, Atkinson used fluid acrylic and a blow dryer to nudge the colors into a pattern she found aesthetically pleasing. Then, she added fine lines in gold detail to bring out the edges.

Acrylics and resin

Atkinson says the fluid acrylic is not as forgiving as resin — although resin has its own fickle tendencies if not mixed correctly or kept at the right temperature. When working with resin



The Amazon is part of the In Flux exhibit at the Artport Gallery. PROVIDED

If you go

What: In Flux, Artworks by Quia Z. Atkinson

When: 8 a.m.-11:30 p.m., daily through November 8

Where: Artport Gallery, 3300 Capital Circle SW

Cost: Free and open to the public

Contact: For more information, call 850-224-2500 or visit coca.tallahasseearts.org. To see a digital version of this exhibit, visit COCA's Online Gallery at cocaonlinegallery.zenfolio.com.

however, Atkinson says she can always add another layer to cover up imperfections. Like a fingerprint, fluid acrylic works cannot be recreated or redirected in the same way.

"Sometimes it's harder to make a fluid acrylic painting because you can't cover it up with glass or resin," says Atkinson. "Those have to be done right the first time. When it comes out perfectly it's a rewarding feeling."

Atkinson has found a similarly satisfying feeling from sharing her process via video tutorials on her website, as well as opening her home for art classes.

She loves watching clients melt away the stress from their day as they create their one-of-a-kind masterpieces. Atkinson has found it therapeutic to teach and hopes her works at the Artport Gallery give visitors flying in and out of the city a similar feeling.

"I want people to be able to stare at a painting and figure out what it is," says Atkinson. "Some people might say a painting looks like a lake or a view from space or a topographical map. I want it to be an edifying experience to whoever is walking past. Each painting is a story in itself."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).