

Seeing...

from the Soul



Kimmy Cantrell

Whenever artist Kimmy Cantrell looks around him, visions flow from his soul. "Landscapes become human forms and lumps of clay transform into vivid abstract figures," the sculptor explains. With his striking ceramic faces, still lifes and nudes, the College Park, Georgia native conjures up imagery that beckons us to view ourselves and the world through an unorthodox lens.

Largely self-taught, Kimmy discovered his artistic vision in high school. His art teacher, Curtis Patterson, now at the Atlanta College of Art, admired his command of clay. Kimmy's very first piece, a clay vase, landed on display at the Atlanta Board of Education Building. Still, he never considered making art his livelihood. Instead, he studied business administration at Georgia State University and spent 12 years in distribution management. In 1991, a recently divorced Kimmy left College Park to accept a job in rural South Georgia. There, after almost 20 years, his life came full circle. "I just decided one day that it was time to reconnect with the clay so I picked some up and sculpted a vase." Kimmy's vases evolved into bowls, and bowls, faces. And, well, he hasn't stopped creating since.

Kimmy enjoys developing fresh variations on three recurring themes: faces, still lifes, and the female anatomy. He counterbalances seemingly irreconcilable elements to create pleasing compositions. Half of a nude sculpture entices with its glossy, candy-apple red glaze, while the other retreats in flat, earthy tones. Kimmy uses such asymmetry to challenge traditional definitions of beauty. "I want to show the beauty within flaws," the artist explains. "Imperfections tell stories that are far more compelling than perfection." Kimmy's vibrantly colored faces tell stories, too, and they're written in the eyes and titles. "I manipulate the shape and position of eyes to express a range of emotions," he remarked, "and the titles of my work often reflect my own life experiences." Kimmy also uses still life collages of clay and metal to tell his story. Through his fragmented watermelon, flowers and fish, for instance, the artist recounts fond childhood memories of cooking, gardening and fishing with his grandmother.

From a tiny utility room to his spacious, loft-like, backyard studio, Kimmy continues to masterfully shatter and reshape his subjects and personal history into lively kaleidoscopes of color, texture, form and dimension. He also continues to command attention. A working artist since 1994, Kimmy has won numerous awards and exhibited at many American galleries and major art events, including New York's prestigious International Artexpo and the National Black Arts Festival. He has also appeared on FOX TV's *Good Day Atlanta* and in regional and national publications, such as *Art & Antiques Magazine*, *Images* and *The Washington Post Magazine*. *Creative Loafing* Art Critic Donald Locke has compared him to renowned artist Thornton Dial. Kimmy's pieces are in private collections across the United States and abroad, from Washington D.C. to San Francisco, from Miami to England.

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