

WADING IN: THE STUDIO

FLORIDA ARTIST PROFILES

By Nila Do Simon

THE GREEN THUMB

A DELRAY ARTIST'S CAREER SPROUTS LIKE THE PLANTS SHE CAPTURES IN WATERCOLOR



Above from left: *Balance*, watercolor; Kiker began posting her botanical watercolors on Instagram in 2013 and quickly built a following; *Shield Ferns*, watercolor

A green tropical plant known for large leaves with deep slits and holes, the monstera plant makes a statement in any room. But in botanical artist Jenny Kiker's Delray Beach studio, the monstera serves as a baseline. That plant, she says, helped her find her voice, got her 169,000 Instagram followers and gave her icon status under her nom de plume, Living Pattern.

In actuality, the monstera is one of several plants that helped launch Kiker's career as one of the nation's premier botanical artists. Ferns, orchids, philodendron xanadus, areca palms, triostars and cacti are among the subjects that 36-year-old Kiker gives life and personality

to through her watercolor hues. Painted on paper, Kiker's pieces are modern, clean and concise, yet somehow fun and bold, perhaps a reflection of the artist herself.

Born into a family of "mega-recyclers and plant lovers" in Charlotte, North Carolina, Kiker's earliest memories include planting fruits and vegetables at her home and flowers in her grandparents' nearby garden. She carried that love of nature with her as she studied illustration and painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design. After a foray into fashion design, creating textiles for children's apparel brand Carter's and visual merchandising and display at URBN,

the parent company of brands like Urban Outfitters, Kiker turned away from fashion, having become "sick of the corporate world."

She went back to painting, initially creating custom wallpaper before hitting her stride with botanical works. At the urging of her graphic designer husband, Chris Johnston, Kiker created an Instagram account around 2013. Almost obligingly, she began posting her watercolor paintings of cacti, not quite realizing her potential to profit.

"Every time I posted, they sold," Kiker says. "That was nearly six years ago, and fast forward to now, and I'm doing commissions—all because of Instagram."

JENNY KIKER

WADING IN: THE STUDIO

FLORIDA ARTIST PROFILES

Her popularity on the social media platform has grown among followers looking for a beyond-the-typical art piece. In fact, despite her large following, Kiker isn't represented by any art gallery, a move that traditional artists might consider risky. But Kiker looks at it as a testament to how her generation of artists influences the industry.

"The new-school way for artists is selling on Instagram," says Kiker, who now sells her prints for around \$50. "It means more to me for people to have my work in their homes than hung in a gallery. I feel lucky that I can sell directly to customers."

Each Living Pattern print is carefully wrapped by Kiker, complete with a thank-you note, an added touch that she says allows her to better connect with her clients. Her Instagram presence has even sparked collaborations, catching the eye of national quilting fabric company Paintbrush Studio Fabrics, which tapped her to create a line to be sold nationwide early next year. Kiker says more collaborations are in store. From the looks of it, the monstera plant is not the only thing growing inside Kiker's Delray Beach studio; her career is too. 🌿

livingpattern.net



**It means more to me
for people to have my
work in their homes
than hung in a gallery.**

-JENNY KIKER



This page from top: Begonia watercolor, Shield Ferns print on fabric, Zebra Haworthia watercolor