

ColorHer



The soft blues of a recovered Art Deco armchair, which is adorned with a small chocolate swirl bolster pillow, direct your eyes into the myriad of reds, yellows and blues of Alicia Leeke's formal dining room.

World

By Margaret Gregory
Photography by Robert Clark

Artist Alicia Leeke's vibrant home

Color is an important part of artist Alicia Leeke's world. In her paintings, bright dots of swirls and sweeps – when viewed from just a few steps back – become images of majestic mountains

and winds sweeping through grassy fields below or cityscapes of people drifting by Paris sidewalk cafés.

Alicia always knew that art was something for which she had a passion, but not until a year ago did she really

embrace it. In 2008, she gave up life in the corporate world and turned to creating her paintings as a full-time artist. A native of Columbia, she studied art in college, and now she's sharing her art around the country with upcoming shows in Chicago and New York. "These are juried shows, 'one-of-a-kind' shows, to which you have to receive an invitation," says Alicia, "so I'm very excited about participating in these."

Alicia's love for art is evident, as her home is filled not only with her own artwork but also with the works of artists for whom she has a great admiration. "Art is what makes the personality of a house," she says, and her home has both in spades. With a selection of paintings, prints and mixed media works from Marcello Novo, Jean Capalbo, Jamie Blackburn and Bill Davis, Alicia's home truly is her personal art gallery.

Influenced by some of the great French Impressionists, Alicia combines her love of old world art with her own interpretation to create abstracts, landscapes and cityscapes. "I am really inspired by a lot of different painters," she says, "and my work is really a melding of all of those artists that I love, a process which I call Fabatism. I don't limit myself to just one thing."

Her home is influenced by those loves as well, with a unique blend of contemporary furnishings and more traditional pieces. Her den is flanked on one wall with an oversized sectional while across the room sits an Asian armoire. Hanging above the sofa is a portrait of a guitar player by Russian painter Nikolay Oskolkov and a palette-knife painting she created called *Amboise*, a landscape of a French village in the Loire Valley. From the sofa, guests can muse over a large painting by Amanda Thorne Suber, one of Alicia's favorite artists, as well as a glass wall-art creation by Steve Hewitt and two smaller paintings by Tony Cacalano, under whom she studied.

Alicia truly believes that art and rugs make a house – and she has several well-chosen Tabriz, Bokhara



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The antique high-back carved double bed gives the bedroom an eclectic, old world feel.

and Hamadan rugs placed throughout. She hopes that more people will focus on placing original paintings in their homes. “Many people buy posters and open edition prints to match their sofas, but I hope that one day they will start buying sofas to match their art,” she laughs.

The soft blues of a recovered Art Deco armchair, which is adorned with an animal print throw pillow and small chocolate swirl bolster pillow, direct your eyes into the myriad of

reds, yellows and blues of her formal dining room. The Duncan Fife dining table and china cabinet belonged to her grandmother on the Leeke side of the family, and on it sits a large, blue, hand-blown glass bowl. To the right is one of her prized possessions, an inlaid Asian teacart Alicia had refinished and restored. Embellishing it is an antique, four-chamber decanter that belonged to “Granelle,” a nickname created to identify her other grandmother.

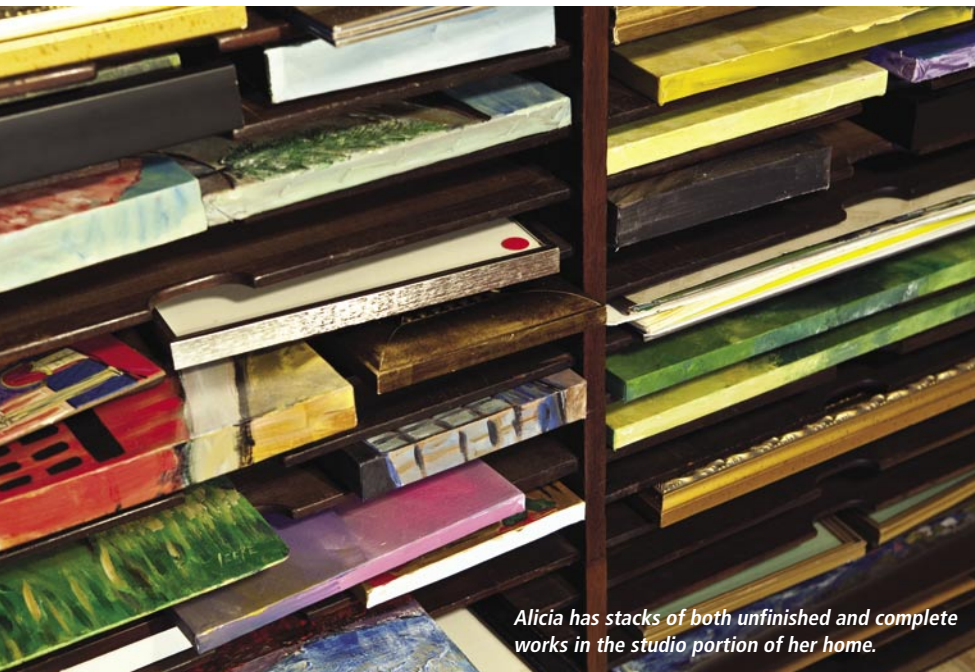
Decking the floor of the quaint

breakfast nook is an earth-colored Herati rug along with a cozy decorative iron wine rack and matching wrought iron and wood table set. To the left of the table is a print of Montmartre leading up the hill to Sacre-Coeur Basilica by Maurice Utrillo. “I wanted this room to feel like a Parisian café,” she notes.

Each of her guest rooms is an eclectic blend of old world and contemporary, complete with antique beds, recovered furnishings and favorite paintings including an abstract by Carol Ann Rose and a print of Notre Dame by Maurice Utrillo. Alicia points out that some of her best eclectic finds include the Asian armoire and Art Deco chair that were acquired through Don Danford of D. Martin Interiors.

Alicia created her own spacious studio in the downstairs portion of her home. The tiled floor and Persian rug accent, along with the open arches that Alicia and a former roommate cut into the walls, give the room a feeling of an art gallery. Paints are scattered along the bottom of her easel, and a large painting waits patiently for the brush strokes that will bring it to life.

“I am experimenting with a new body of work – that regardless of which way the painting is held, either right-side-up or upside-down, you will



Alicia has stacks of both unfinished and complete works in the studio portion of her home.

“Art is what makes the personality of a house,” Alicia says.

be able see a separate painting from either direction on a single canvas,” she says. “It’s more of what I leave out of a painting that makes it interesting,” she adds. “You don’t need every single detail for the painting to create the image in your mind.”

How long does she spend in creating her pieces? Alicia prefers to work on her paintings *alla prima*, or all in one sitting. “But there are some paintings that may take a year,” she says. “It simply depends on the piece and the number of layers involved.”

Because her home sits at the edge of Quinine Hill Lake, Alicia often takes her easel outdoors to paint *en plein air*, capturing the light and constantly changing atmosphere surrounding the lake. “Natural lighting makes a huge difference in the intensity of color in my work, and color and movement is what draws people into my paintings,” she adds.

For inspiration, Alicia has traveled to Paris, Venice and New York, photographing many of the scenes that she later translates to the canvas. “I’d love to do some more work in New York,” she says. “Some cities just captivate me more with their tall buildings and light. New York has a great deal of character with its iridescent light. Columbia is also one of these cities whose buildings provide a lot of inspiration.”

Alicia sometimes finds it hard to let go of paintings into which she has put so much of her own personal feelings and energy. “I’ll usually hold onto certain pieces for a period of time, and then I’ll paint something else that I love even more. It’s not until that point I can let the other

pieces find new homes,” she smiles.

While she’s painting full time, Alicia also has plans for her house as well. “I want to make it more like a French chateau,” she says, “adding iron work shutters to the windows and a grandiose, hand-forged arched door to the entryway. This house is like a painting; it’s a work in progress!”

Alicia’s work can be seen at several locations around Columbia, including Nonnah’s, House Brand Furniture, Bank of America on Main Street and Tombo Grille. She also will have a showing of new cityscape and landscape paintings at Frame of Mind on Main Street in Columbia, with the opening reception to be held October 8 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. 🌿

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