

Susan McAlister

ARTIST FULFILLING HER EARLY PROMISE

Susan McAlister was told early in life she had artistic talent, and the sentiment stuck with her.

“My high school teacher, Mrs. Biddle, insisted that if I wasn’t going to art school, then to always remember I was ‘an artist.’ To be given that identity at a young age was empowering,” says the 51-year-old.

The Davidson graduate credits other artists (Herb Jackson, Eric Aho) and her family with helping her become what Mrs. Biddle believed she could be.

She spends significant time in South Carolina’s Lowcountry, Virginia’s horse country, and Montana’s Ruby River Valley. All appear in her ethereal work, which has a very particular sense of place.

“I grew up in the wide open spaces of undeveloped Virginia land and spent most of my days outside,” she says. “That’s a great way to start—to have the freedom to observe light, beauty, and space.”

Her oil (or oil-and-wax) landscapes and abstracts depict familiar scenes—marshlands, mountains, rivers, big skies—but they also look like dreamscapes.

She cites The McColl Center and the Bechtler as “true gems” in Charlotte. The gracious Southerner is quick to express her gratitude to the first gallery to exhibit her work, Les Yeux du Monde in Charlottesville, Va., and to her Charlotte gallery, Hidell Brooks.

McAlister’s perfect night out includes “popping in to see Thierry (Garconnet) at Terra for a touch of Europe around the corner” from her Eastover home.

She’s doing *big* things these days. Some of the paintings in her September Hidell Brooks show are as massive as 60 x 72. “Creating something that large emphasizes ... the physicality of the process,” she says. www.susanmcalister.com and www.hidellbrooks.com

