

Signal **ARTS**

Making the art scene

Emily Effler's retro-inspired mixed media works find an audience in the Chattanooga arts community

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Emily Effler may only be 20, but she's already made a name for herself among an established circle of artists in Chattanooga.

The 2003 graduate of the Chattanooga School of the Arts and Sciences started classes at Chattanooga State fully intending to transfer to the Art Institute of Chicago. But after discovering life in town post-high school, Ms. Effler is no longer so sure she wants to leave town.

"Since becoming immersed in all these local art scenes — it's kind of amazing. It's only going to get better around here. The arts are becoming so strong in Chattanooga," Ms. Effler said.

After joking about how the Southside is poised to become the next SoHo, Ms. Effler began to explain her passion for mixed media. She said she began to draw bunnies at the age of 3 and started learning how to paint at 5.

"All I do is make a mess," Ms. Effler commented. "Everyone's done that, right?"

As her artistic style matured, Ms. Effler became inspired by found objects. She said she has a huge fascination with all things vintage.

"I guess (my art) centers around retro imagery but in a dark and messy way," Ms. Effler said. "It's like mixed with urban street graffiti and



Emily Effler ponders her artistic future in the Metalico Arts Gallery on Main Street.

PHOTOS BY CARI GERVIN

grunge. They don't really belong together, but I make them work."

Whether utilizing an old window pane found behind a trash bin, a 1962 Hixson High School Yearbook or copies of magazines like Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's from the 1950s, Ms. Effler does pull disparate items together with her sense of color and flair.

Many of her works seem preoccupied with gender and women's traditional household roles, but

Ms. Effler discounts the politics of her work. She has just wrapped up a group show at the Metalico Arts Gallery on Main Street, which is a private gallery in the home of Rey and Patricia Alfonso.

The show was inspired by weekly lunches with a group of artists — the Alfonsos, Cessna Decosimo and Ray Padrone, among others. Called "Roy's Lunch Club," the group meets on Tuesdays to eat and discuss art. Ms. Effler called it a grown-up show-and-tell.

The discussions have broadened Ms. Effler's thinking, she said, but when it comes down to it, inspiration still appears in random packages.

"I'm always evolving and discovering new things I want to incorporate — it just takes finding it on the curb," Ms. Effler said. "My garage is a mess."

Although she still lives on Signal with her parents, Bill and Kristen Effler, Ms. Effler plans to leave the nest soon, meaning her garage full of found objects will have to relocate. Where, she isn't quite sure, but one could bet that Ms. Effler will be a staple of the Southside and Chattanooga art scenes for years to come.

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"Transfusion," mixed media, 2005.



"Holy Mother," mixed media, 2005. This painting, a box that protrudes four inches from the wall, features stenciled collages on old copies of domestic magazines and an oven dial.



"Dr. Mom," mixed media, 2005. Emily Effler said she found the old window pane on which the piece is painted behind a trash bin.