

PACESETTER GALLERY

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Keri Davis, owner of Pacesetter Gallery, to get to know her and learn about her art gallery. Keri is as gracious as she is smart and talented, and she's passionate about art culture.

Keri grew up in the small town of Uvalde, Texas, where her maternal grandmother owned an art gallery—Pacesetter Gallery. The gallery served Houston hunters and local businesses with high-end southwest oil paintings such as cattle on the trail, and it also carried western-themed bronzes.

One of the first paintings that her grandmother, Lu Haile, bought was a Melvin Warren oil painting that President Lyndon B. Johnson commissioned. The painting was taking too long (according to President Johnson) so Johnson didn't purchase the art. Lu was able to purchase *Pacesetter Cattle Drive* and sold it to First State Bank of Uvalde, which began their southwest art collection. Pictured below is current vice president Bill Dillard with the painting.



Being around masterpieces in the gallery was childhood magic to Keri. The closeness of inspiring works sparked her imagination and creativity. She began art lessons at age eight and studied art through high school.

Keri went to University of North Texas (UNT) in Denton to study opera, but she soon changed to art education. She embraced the discipline-based art education program formulated by the J. Paul Getty Trust taught at UNT. The program promotes art history, art production, art criticism, and aesthetics and parallels art to other academic disciplines like English, math, music, and history, promoting critical thinking and world connectivity. It is art education for all students, not just those demonstrating talent.



My Mississippi Art Mission

written by Susan Hogue
photography by Susan Hogue

Above is Keri in her new gallery, and below are examples of art in Pacesetter Gallery at the time of this photo shoot.

After graduating from college, Keri was the lead art teacher for seven years at a middle school in the Fort Worth area. The family moved around the country quite a bit, so Keri made the decision to stay home with her three sons, Zack, Andrew, and Gregory Richardson, painting murals and portraits to keep her skills sharp. Keri often took her sons to museums to expose and educate them about the arts and sciences.

Keri settled in the Jackson area in 2012, buying a home in a subdivision along the Ross Barnett Reservoir. She often went on adventures in her little Jon boat to nearby islands to take photos of the wildlife and murky waters to paint them. She began selling art in Fondren at Circa., but she soon began focusing her energy on growing a career in building products. She ran the Mississippi branch of an exterior wholesale distributor, Lansing Building Products, where she managed the sales and operations.





Entrepreneurship ran deep in Keri's family with her mother, Stephany Haile, owning a dance studio and her grandmother owning the art gallery. The passing of her grandmother at age 96 in 2019 caused Keri to start thinking about her future business plans.

"I had a moment where I looked at my experience with art and business and thought, 'Why not me?' Pacesetter Gallery was born in that moment, and I never looked back." – Keri


Keri traveled across Mississippi to artists' studios looking for her first group of artists. In her travels she visited other galleries who were happy to discuss what they do to help their artists succeed. Keri found this Flowood location in April 2021, remodeled the space, and opened on July 27, 2021. Pacesetter is a family environment—Keri's husband, driftwood artist Jason Davis, was instrumental in helping with the gallery's build out. The gallery consists of modern white walls and a custom Juno and Lithonia gallery lighting system, created for the space by Ram Electric and Hartwell Cook and Associates.

Pacesetter Gallery features a mix of traditional and contemporary art all by Mississippi artists, including plein air landscapes by Susan Wellington, Carol Roark, and Linda Peters, and encaustic works by Justin Selway and Alice Hammell. Also available are abstracts, mixed media, functional pottery, jewelry, and a wide variety of gifts.

"I feel that this is my Christian ministry," said Keri. "Art inspires—it makes you feel you can handle and cope with daily stresses. It refills your soul and forces you to examine the world around you and find the good in it."

The gallery has hosted many business and cultural events including a Mississippi Arts Commission grant workshop, Jackson Watercolor Group and Mississippi Artist Guild meetings, Millsaps Junior Exhibition, book, wine, and garden clubs, and school visits.

Pacesetter Gallery's website includes biographies and an internal search engine that allows the viewer to break the collection down by color, size, artistic style, and medium. Keri states, "I brought over my understanding of the building process into the gallery. Being able to type the word 'blue', 'impressionism', or 'tree' into the search bar narrows down options and can save a homeowner or an interior designer hours previously spent driving from gallery to gallery. Having inventory availability that is updated in real-time and a virtual install option on mobile devices is a time saver." Pictured below is Acoustic Blues by Cliff Speaks, virtually installed from pacesettergallery.com using a mobile device on the left before the actual install on the right.

Upcoming 2022 events include live painting demos, hands-on workshops, "Last Thursdays" open mic nights, and the 2nd annual plein air cash competition. All events will be listed on Pacesetter Gallery's website, Facebook, and Instagram. 



To contact Pacesetter Gallery, call 601.488.0345, visit them at 310 Ridge Way in Flowood Monday through Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Thursday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with wine, or visit their website at pacesettergallery.com.