Art In Oxford: The Art of Small town Charm

It is easy to fall in love with the southern charm that is Oxford, Mississippi but one of the biggest components that gets overlooked at times is its creative spirit. Before moving to Oxford to start my freshmen year of college, art was coming in to a massive museum from the busyness of the city to see high end framed pieces of flowers from some dead guy we may had learned about in school. I was amazed that like its people, food, and spirt, even Oxford’s art scene was warm and grown in tradition. The south itself takes pride in this idea of handmade uniqueness the consumerist world whether be jewelry, clothing, or decorations. It is not surprise that all art in Oxford is focused on the handcrafted yet distressed element. “Art and artists have always found a home in Oxford where creativity has been embraced through the years. Oxford is home to many different cultures which makes it a melting pot of inspiration for the creative minded individual” Said April Ford Beasley is a fourth year B.F.A student at the University of Mississippi. The Bachlors of Fine Arts program allows art students a more intensive schedule while allowing them to have their own exhibition show the semester of the individual’s anticipated graduation. Masters students who are accepted into the Master Fine Arts program also receive this same opportunity while also teaching an undergraduate course. Many public and private university’s art programs function this way, but what differentiates Ole Miss’s students experiences? Beasley, a Mississippi native explains why art in Oxford is different. “I feel that many small towns in Mississippi lack the diversity; therefore, most people do not have a great of an interest in the arts. By there not being as great of an interest, art is other small towns tends to not be ‘outside of the box’ and mostly traditional medium and subjects.”

Artist Jaime Johnson has been able to experience Ole Miss and Oxford’s art world in many different dimensions by graduating from the University of Mississippi in 2010 and now working in the art department as an Adjunct Instructor. “The creativity in Meek Hall remains a constant at Ole Miss. With courses in painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics, and printmaking, there is always something new and exciting being created in Meek.” With students constantly learning inside of the classrooms, opportunities outside of campus such as Southside Gallery and The Powerhouse, art enthusiasts definitely look for “out of the box” opportunities. “Now, you can hop on the Double Decker Bus and enjoy the Oxford Art Crawl with excursions to the University Museum, the Square, Meek, and the Powerhouse. More venues outside of Meek Hall have sprouted for displaying art, such as the Residential College” Says Johnston. This fall *The One Night Stand* was presented at the Ole Miss Motel. This show was started in 2007 has been presented in galleries around the country but has also gained a national recognition as well. While many artists from Oxford have found some acknowledgment in life after Ole Miss, how do current students feel about the publicity of the art scene? Sophomore Hannah Holland “The art scene in Oxford has yet to reach its full potential. As an artist I feel it is painfully clear that majority of population’s interest lies outside of the fine art and I think that the general lack of publicity further supports this notion. I believe that there needs to be a revival of the art scene in Oxford to create enough public interest to bring in new faces and rejuvenate appreciation of fine art.” Oxford shows recognition walks a fine line with the amount of opportunities and atmosphere of other local artists producing work that many would struggle to identify within a big city.