

ELLA WALTON RICHARDSON FINE ART GALLERY

New Art in a City Famous for Being Old

Charleston, South Carolina



Though it has long welcomed visitors to enjoy its rich cultural heritage, Charleston is also emerging as a center for contemporary art. A leading player in this trend is Ella Walton Richardson, who opened her gallery in 2001 with an eye toward introducing the region to realist and impressionist painters, sculptors, and photographers working around the world today.

Richardson set up shop in a four-story house erected in 1796; the handsome structure has survived hurricanes and bombardments, and once even housed this country's first African American-owned law firm. Flooded with natural light, three floors of the house are devoted to exhibitions, which are rotated monthly.



Hoping to build long-term relationships with their clients, Richardson and her colleagues welcome visitors with reminders that one need not be an expert to feel comfortable here, and that no question is too small. She discourages buying “art to go with the sofa or wall color. If you buy what excites you, then you will always be able to find the right place for it. I also tell collectors that they are purchasing a fine piece of art *and* making an investment. Art can appreciate beyond their wildest imagination, though, as with good stocks, there are no 100 percent guarantees.”

Richardson is always on the lookout to expand her inventory of artists, whom she selects personally. Today they include Lindsay Goodwin, whose work was featured in the January/February issue of *Fine Art Connoisseur*; William Entrekin, whose watercolors are on view March 2-31 alongside the oils of Scott Moore; Karen Hewitt Hagan, who lives aboard a yacht in Charleston's harbor and sails it from the Bahamas to the Chesapeake Bay in order to paint *en plein air*; and two couples trained in Russia before immigrating to the U.S., Evgeny and Lydia Baranov, and Aleksander and Lyuba Titovets. Unusually, Richardson is also the North American representative for an intriguing group of Dutch artists. Not all Richardson shows are contemporary, however: Every year she presents original works on paper by such past masters as Chagall, Miró, Picasso, and Renoir. In larger cities, this would not



KAREN HEWITT HAGAN (B. 1960)

WINDING MARSH

2006, OIL ON CANVAS, 30 x 30 IN.

\$3,200 FROM ELLA WALTON RICHARDSON FINE ART GALLERY, CHARLESTON

be newsworthy, but in South Carolina, these projects have made headlines and drawn collectors from as far away as Florida.

Education will always remain a vital component of Richardson's business model: “We schedule distinguished guest lecturers, and we also offer workshops with the artists Jove Wang, Craig Nelson, and Lynn Gertenbach, so that participants can enhance their skills.” In a community such as Charleston, this civic-minded (and pragmatic) worldview almost guarantees that Richardson's gallery will grow right in step with her city's own evolution. ■

Information: *Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art Gallery, 91 Broad Street, Charleston, SC 29401; 843.722.3660; ellarichardson.com*