

Allison Gregory

By Jenny Miller
PHOTO: TONY THE ARCHER/ARTISTBYARTIST

Allison Gregory has been painting since she was 10 and rarely sees a brush. Instead, the 29-year-old San Antonio native relies on sticks, nails and the backs of pencils for her pop art style and abstract works. Gregory got serious about becoming a professional artist five years ago, when, freshly in possession of a degree in graphic design from Platt College in San Diego, she had a "breakdown" and instead decided to pursue painting, her passion. Since then she has enjoyed a remarkable degree of success, getting her work into five galleries in Texas and several more out of state. Gregory was also among the local artists selected for Gibson's Austin Guitar Town project, and at the same time she sold several weeks ago her colorful guitar sold for \$26,500 — all of which will go to charity. If you missed Gregory's guitar, check out her artwork at the Starbucks inside the Radisson Hotel. She's also been lucky enough to receive commissions for everything from hotels to restaurants to serious collectors," she reports. "That's always fun — getting to work with people as crazy about art as I am."

How did you get the opportunity to do the Gibson/Town project?

My ex called me and said, "I heard on the radio Gibson is looking for artists — you should be able to apply." I did three or four thousand sketches and submitted them, and then I was notified I was selected. It was quite a privilege.

That's been such a neat project all the way through. Yeah, and it's been fun for me because I did something similar in San Antonio. I was asked by the City of San Antonio to be the first artist for the Texas Fiftieth Birthday campaign. I designed the poster, and that went on buses and T-shirts. I was very honored to be selected for that.



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On your Web site you talk about how you've really worked to develop the business side of being an artist.

The business side of being an artist is the most important side to keep you going. They didn't teach me anything about marketing in school, so when I got my second degree and I came back to Texas, I was like, "How do you get into galleries, how do you do this?" So I just started frantically painting. I think I did 14 paintings in a month. I had my first show about two months after being home.

What did you learn about the business of art?

I learned I have to keep a portfolio like everybody else. Get up at 6 a.m., make my get marketing time on the computer in the morning, then take some time and go out and paint in a garage studio. And then one day a week I sleep.

When I started out, I think I even have contacted six galleries, sending out portfolios, business cards, traveling all over. That was a very good year. I made more money my first year of doing this than I have any other year. Also, the

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And that's not unique to artists.

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I'm not an artist who gets stuck in a style and refuses to change up. My work is constantly evolving. A lot of galleries tend to be snobby if you don't stick to one style, but the wonderful galleries I work with like the fact that I change it up. This is also one of the reasons that I've been able to be a full-time artist at age 29. When I got a commission, some people like pop art, some people like landscapes, some people like wood relief — I do it all. The only thing I don't do is realism.

Any advice for aspiring artists?

Persistence is key. Galleries aren't going to chase you. You have to be persistent and call them, and show your portfolio, work on them. And I think the most important thing people have to remember is that your work is never going to be good enough — you're always going to feel like it could be better. But you just gotta show it to the public. I think I've had, over the last five years, about 100 rejection letters. If I back to my bed every time I get a rejection letter, I'd never get up in the morning.



work was different. And I was working seven days a week after that traveling. I think I flew to about 15 places and drove all over Texas.

I understand you started out with the pop art style. When did you start doing abstract work?

Probably about three or four years ago. It was interesting, because I never liked abstract art. My gallery owner in San Antonio had said words, it is the hardest thing for an artist to be simple and to be accepted in the simple. At first I said, "Give me a break, that's not a few strokes." But through trial and error I found my style.