

Winston-Salem Journal Article

Jennifer Young Oct 9, 2012 Updated Dec 12, 2012

## **Anne Kesler Shields, a trailblazing artist whose work spanned 60 years in multiple genres, dies at 80**

Anne Kesler Shields, a trailblazing artist and major force in nurturing the local arts scene in Winston-Salem, died Saturday evening.

Shields, 80, had been battling cancer.

Her work spanned 60 years across a multitude of genres, reflecting her rich life experiences as well as a willingness to challenge herself.

"She's wholly without peer as an artist for her generation in North Carolina," said Tom Patterson, curator of a retrospective on Shields this fall at three local galleries — Salem College, the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art and Wake Forest University.

Patterson, who also writes about art for the Winston-Salem Journal, recalled that Shields was "relentless in teaching herself and learning from every opportunity that presented itself."

Alix Hitchcock, who teaches art part time at WFU, shared a studio with Shields on Burke Street. She said she admired Shields' strict discipline as an artist, and she praised her willingness to step into controversial arenas.

"Despite the generation she came from, she became an independent woman, an independent thinker," Hitchcock said.

Shields grew up in a traditional environment in Winston-Salem. She attended Summit School, Reynolds High School, and then Hollins College in Virginia, from which she graduated in 1954.

It was a period of controversy for art nationally, and Shields increasingly became aware of approaches different from what she learned at Hollins.

She pursued advanced art studies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine, which she considered a personal breakthrough. She also studied with Hans Hofmann in Provincetown, Mass., and received her Master of Fine Arts at what became UNC Greensboro.

The arts community in Winston-Salem was the beneficiary of Shields' broadening horizons.

In 1956, she joined with other Winston-Salem artists to arrange a group exhibition at a local church — an effort leading to the establishment of Associated Artists of Winston-Salem.

She joined with artists and art patrons to establish the Winston-Salem Gallery of Fine Art, which will eventually become SECCA. Shields was appointed to the gallery's original board of directors for a five-year term.

Patterson noted that Shields pursued her career while maintaining a successful family life. Survivors include her husband, Howard, a retired physics professor at Wake Forest University; three grown children; and several grandchildren.

Her professional work moved over the years from abstract landscapes to geometric paintings and prints, then a long period of portraits, and finally collages that carried "a lot of message," Patterson said.

---

<https://www.mywinston-salem.com/artist-anne-kesler-shields/>

[Home](#) » Who's Who of Winston-Salem: Artist Anne Kesler Shields

---

## Who's Who of Winston-Salem: Artist Anne Kesler Shields

[Kristi Marion](#) Updated: October 22, 2015 [People](#) [2 Comments](#)

---

*This post may contain affiliate links and we'll be compensated if you make a purchase. This doesn't affect rankings.*



A Winston-Salem icon, artist, and trailblazer for women artists in the South, Anne Kesler Shields, lost her battle with cancer October 6, 2012. She was born January 27, 1932, in Winston-Salem and was a lifelong resident. She received a classical art education at Hollins College, and pursued advanced art studies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, ME, and the Hans Hoffmann School of Fine Art in Provincetown, MA (1957). She received an MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She maintained an active art career from her early twenties until her death, resulting in her having been touted as Winston-Salem's "most accomplished, living native-born artist."

## Building the Arts in Winston-Salem

Anne Kesler Shields worked in a variety of mediums and genres, including portraiture, abstract painting, landscape and collages. In her more recent work she used appropriated images from current events and pop culture juxtaposed with classical art works. An active member in developing the Winston-Salem arts community, she helped to found Associated Artists of Winston-Salem and the Winston-Salem Gallery of Fine Arts, which became the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA), where she also served on the board.

## View Anne Kesler Shields' Current Exhibits

Her work is currently being exhibited simultaneously at:

### Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA)

At SECCA you'll find, "Anne Kesler Shields: A 50-Year Retrospective"

### Wake Forest University

At Wake Forest, there is currently an exhibit in the Charlotte and Phillip Hanes Art Gallery: "Anne Kesler Shields: Geometrics 1960's & 1970's"

### Salem College

"60 Years: Portraits & Appropriated Images" is an art exhibit at Salem College today featuring the works of Anne Kesler Shields.

## Earlier Work

I was fortunate to meet Anne Kesler Shields in June, 2011 at a reception for her exhibit, "DIPTYCHS: Appropriated Image Installation Inspired by the Reynolda House Collection". The huge popping prints at Artworks Gallery caught my attention and drew viewers in.



"Proud" depicts a confident Sharon Stone beside an equally sanguine painting of "John Spooner", a work by painter John Singleton Copley in 1763. Demonstrating irony, "Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch," by Edward Hicks depicts a vision of man in the 1800's in harmony with nature, is offset by a photograph of the polar bear, a species now endangered by global warming.

Although separated by decades and color, Shields' gutsy pairings demonstrate the relationship between the two images. The show contains many erotic images. We are reminded that the themes are not new, but Shield's juxtapositions nudge us to see the old in a new light. This ability to expose human nature

through her collages has earned Shields exhibits in places like Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY; the North Carolina Museum of Art, and Hollins University in Virginia, among others.

Quote

***“You and I probably see more pictures in one day than a person living in the nineteenth century saw in a lifetime!...I attempt to put some order into the visual clutter. By comparing contemporary advertising and news photographs with images from art history, we see that human passions change little through the ages and from one culture to another.” – Anne Kesler Shields***

Sources: [www.SouthernAsBiscuits.com](http://www.SouthernAsBiscuits.com), Winston-Salem Journal obituaries, photos courtesy of Kristi Johnson

Marion. All rights reserved