

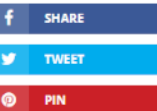
LOCAL STORIES

NOVEMBER 15, 2022

Life & Work with Chelle Ellis



LOCAL STORIES



Founders of Nasty Women Memphis:
Danielle Sumler and Chelle Ellis

Today we'd like to introduce you to Chelle Ellis.

Hi Chelle, so excited to have you with us today. What can you tell us about your story?

Nasty Women Memphis is the Memphis, Tennessee representative and exhibit of Nasty Women Global Art Exhibitions and Activism and the curators/producers of Nasty Women Memphis. We are a group exhibition that demonstrates solidarity among artists who identify with being a Nasty Woman in the face of threats to roll back women's rights, individual rights, and reproductive rights. A minimum of 50% of all sales from our exhibits is donated to Planned Parenthood, with other percentages of sale being transferred to the artist. Many artists elect to donate more, up to 100%, and Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi provides the artists with a receipt of their donation after the close of exhibit. More than 80 exhibits have followed globally, but the original took place in Queens, NYC, after the 2016 election of Donald Trump. Our exhibit also serves as a fundraiser to support Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi, defending these rights and echoing the platform for the organization after the Trump Presidential Inauguration in January 2017. Danielle Sumler and I simultaneously and separately contacted Nasty Women Global in 2016 about running a Memphis exhibit directly following the presidential election. They put the two of us in contact, and together, we put Nasty Women Memphis Art Exhibition, our first exhibit that opened on February 10 and ran through February 19, 2017, at Marshall Arts in Memphis. We exhibited the work of over 100 artists and raised over 5k for Planned Parenthood.

Opening night was a major success, with an estimated crowd of 500. One resident Artist at Marshall Arts said it had been 20 years since he saw an opening with a crowd as big as ours. We raised over 5k that year for our local Planned Parenthood. A year later, Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court of the United States of America, and Danielle and I scrambled to put our second exhibit, Nasty Women Memphis – still here, still fighting, together within ten days. That exhibit opened on October 19, 2018, and ran through the 28th at South Main Artspace in Memphis. We exhibited over 50 artists and raised above \$1,500 for Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi.

Fall 2020 was the 3rd Exhibit of Nasty Women Memphis: Nasty Women Memphis | WAR Paint! and scheduled to exhibit at Crosstown Arts in Memphis, Tennessee, throughout September and October 2020. Due to Covid-19, the exhibit became virtual, opening on October 1, 2020, at www.nastywomenmemphis.com. The exhibit ran through the presidential election, closing on Friday, November 6, 2020.

With this exhibit, we helped influence voter turnout in our area for the 2020 presidential election to remove Donald Trump from office and raised over \$1,300 for Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi. It wasn't as much money as we had hoped but the economic state of a Covid-19-wracked America in 2020, handled so very poorly by the Trump administration, made us very lucky to raise any money at all. We are proud of the exhibit we produced, comprised of all the strong, provocative works submitted by over 60 artists. At the end of May 2022, Steph Albion contacted us because she and her friend, Savi Raught, wanted to put an exhibit together as Roe V. Wade was threatened. Danielle and I agreed to pull Steph's exhibit idea under the Nasty Women Memphis umbrella, teaching them what we had learned in past exhibits and sharing our resources. By the end of June, Roe V. Wade had been reversed, and all four of us were very committed to putting this exhibit together to help our artists voice their rage and to support Planned Parenthood, now under new additional threat. Within weeks of the reversal, getting an abortion in Tennessee and Mississippi became illegal, so they needed our help now more than ever.

Our fourth exhibit, CHOICE Presented by Nasty Women Memphis, was initially scheduled at Crosstown Arts in Memphis for over a month in Fall 2022. But with recent school bomb threats in the nation, our exhibit changed venue to Marshall Arts, with concerns for the high school in the concourse. Crosstown Arts sponsored this exhibit, and Marshall Arts hosted us at a cost rate. Since we started at Marshall Arts, It felt like going back home, and we were excited to work with familiar walls again. High Cotton Brewing Co. supplied and delivered beer for our opening and closing receptions which were a smashing success in views and sales. We opened on October 7th, 2022, and closed on October 21st, 2022, making \$4,303 in art sales for Planned Parenthood of Tennessee & North Mississippi.

We have offered global viewing and sales of the works for three of the four exhibits on www.nastywomenmemphis.com. Photos of our exhibits and opening nights can also be found there.

Our third virtual online 3D exhibit can still be viewed at: <http://warpaint.nastywomenmemphis.com>.

Would you say it's been a smooth road, and what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced along the way?

I paid for the first exhibit out of pocket, which was about 2k. So convincing galleries, artists, and the world that we were worthy of an exhibit that first year was a challenge. Our entries have always been strong. The subject matter makes for a provocative exhibit, so that part has always been the easiest and most enjoyable. We love showing our wonderfully talented artists who have trusted us with their work since 2017. Other struggles were canceled venues because of the polarized state of the nation and our feminist subject matter, and scheduled speakers, like Congressman Steve Cohen. His office received threats after announcements were made of his appearance at our first opening. Otherwise, we've generally been well-received and appreciated in the Memphis arts community. Time has generally been a struggle as we follow closely in reaction to political events regarding feminist issues.

As you know, we're big fans of you and your work. For our readers who might not be as familiar, what can you tell them about what you do?

Chelle Ellis: I am a semi-retired graphic artist and web developer with over 25 years of experience. I own/operate Jaded Artist Internet & Print Media at jadedartist.com. I have worked on staff as Artist and web developer creating an initial web presence and brand for The Commercial Appeal and The Free Lance-Star (VA); as art director for DeSoto Magazine. Information Systems at Raytheon Aerospace et al. I designed/developed the Nasty Women Memphis website at nastywomenmemphis.com.

I am a painter, printmaker, and clay & metal sculptor, working in North Mississippi and Memphis, Tennessee. I create monoprints and mixed media paintings, with found objects, paper, clay, or metal sculptures added to the work. I paint primarily in acrylic on handmade paper, canvas, and wood, focusing on simplified, repeated shapes. I'm also a small metalsmith, so at times I make jewelry. My email is chelleellis@comcast.net.

Steph Albion is the catalyst for the 2022 exhibit. Danielle Sumler has the influencing aesthetic of our gallery hangs. Savana Raught is a natural tour guide with our gallery viewers at our events, always finding a way to introduce admirers of works to their artists, and getting everyone mingling. Please get in touch with these ladies at nastywomenmemphis@gmail.com

What characteristic of yours would you give the most credit to if you had to?

Danielle and I (Chelle) have worked in such a symbiotic way that it has always felt like a greater force was pushing these shows. We all have a shared aesthetic in our hangs and website. We get so many strong submissions from artists, and it is hard to choose for the limited gallery space. All works are available for viewing and sale on the website. We are all four, driven and passionate about women's rights and cannot do nothing while the country goes backward.





Artist, Angi Cooper







Choice Curators: Steph, Chelle, Danielle & Savi



Photography Credit: Kendall Ellis

