



Kimberly Chapman examines her haunting works of white ceramic sculpture.

Discovering the Artist Within

Artist Kimberly Chapman rediscovers her calling with sculpting. **By Jill Sell**

Some artists prefer to create in private. Maybe it's not quite the picture of starving painters in a quaint Parisian garret, but living the life of solo artists is their lifestyle of choice.

So it was with porcelain sculptor Kimberly Chapman of Moreland Hills. After three decades of a successful marketing career representing companies and educational institutions, Chapman decided she was going to become the artist who was always hiding inside her.

"I worked in my basement, alone, in my studio," says Chapman, who fits the description of "emerging artist" at age 60 and who received her bachelor of fine arts degree in ceramics from the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) in 2017.

But, no one spends all of those years in a previous, people-oriented profession without missing networking or the joy

of sharing inspiration and ideas. Thus, Chapman moved out of her basement. She now has a welcoming, spacious studio in a converted garage with white walls, a custom work table and repurposed cabinets from a kitchen remodel. Equally important, she is out in Cleveland's art community, encouraging others to listen to their creative inner voices. That's a huge reason Chapman is making a difference in Cleveland's multigenerational art world.

"I am interested in giving back to CIA, so I sit on the executive committee of its alumni council," says Chapman. "We are a group just getting started again. It had been inactive for years. We are having fun setting up the council and want to play a critical role for students and the community. We are working to create job fairs and mentorships, as well as putting together alumni exhibits that haven't

been around for quite some time. I liked being with the students when I was in school, and I am in contact with them today."

Chapman also was recently asked to serve as a trustee on the board of the Cleveland Arts Prize, which has honored and cultivated outstanding local artists since 1960.

The organizational and promotional skills Chapman used in her former career will help her in both volunteer leadership roles. But, she won't let her own artistic endeavors take a back seat.

Chapman's first solo show, *hush*, runs through March 7, at Youngstown State University's John J. McDonough Museum of Art. Chapman works with "white porcelain clay that is so beautiful it seems like a crime to cover any portion of it with glaze; it is both translucent and ghost-like."

It is an intriguing clay to create her thought-provoking sculptures that depict human cruelty and inhumanity. Many of her subjects are based on historical atrocities, but the modern look of the art and state of today's world (think school shootings, silencing of women and domestic violence) make the pieces particularly relevant and haunting.

Some pieces in the show are especially personal. Elsie's Arsenal is a collection of five porcelain objects that represent tools of self-defense used by her British grandmother in the early 1900s. Grandmother Elsie married a man named Gilbert and lived in a rental house in Akron. To protect the family from her husband's alcoholic rage, Elsie and her older daughter used a hatchet, rolling pin, scissors, hammer and other items. (Good news spoiler alert: Elsie divorced her husband, stopping the domestic abuse.)

"My family calls me Little Elsie because they say we are so similar. I think about her often," says Chapman, who has been married to her husband George Chapman for 35 years; they have three adult children and three grandchildren. ■