

Jenny Pickens is a self-taught artist and a native of Asheville. She tells her creative origin story this way, “My outlet was to be creative. I would take old shoe boxes or soda containers and make dollhouses and make doll clothes from old fabric. Recently, I realized I was creating things as my way of making a safe place for me. Art is more of a healing for me personally. It has to do with me not being raised by her parents when I was a child and the youngest of four. I grew up with my grandmother and that's why I started sewing. At that time, I did not know how to use a sewing machine, but I hand sewed. She would take old clothes and make us quilts out of them and I'd thread the needles so that's how I learned by watching her. I've always done art. I had to work other jobs: but I always made time to do my art in between. A few years ago, I decided that I can't work for anybody else anymore. I just had to take a leap of faith.”

Pickens does not limit herself to specific materials, techniques, forms, or subject matter, yet her work bears a recognizable signature style that could be called “Black Joy.” Featuring vibrant patterns, exuberant colors and usually contemplative compositions featuring naturalistic Black figures, Pickens says her artwork is almost always related to her cultural background, and that is something she never wants to lose.