

# ASHLEY

## BAD. BOLD. & BREAKING & ALL THE RULES

BY KATY DAKOS | PHOTOS BY JAMES GAFFNEY

Ashley Longshore, like her bold and often rebellious pop art, is daring, over the top and in your face. She is. And like her luscious paintings of Audrey Hepburn surrounded by hummingbirds and butterflies, she's also beautiful, immensely

kind and keenly aware of the message she is sending to younger women about feminine empowerment. Gal power is surely having its moment, but Ashley has been long at work pushing the boundaries and representing. Part urban hippie and part rock star glam,

Ashley has a spectacular way with words and she pretty much wears her head, heart and talent on her sleeve. What you see is what you get—exuberant paintings line the walls in her bright white gallery on Magazine Street, an upcoming collaboration with the global

cosmetic company Clé de Peau Beauté features her artful package design and her first book, *You Don't Look Fat, You Look Crazy*, will be published this spring. Oh yeah—I forgot to mention part energizer bunny.





By taking iconic pop culture figures such as Kate Moss, Frida Kahlo, and Anna Wintour or luxury global brand images such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Veuve Clicquot and mixing them with unexpected and potent words, Ashley dismantles preconceived notions in an instant and initiates conversations that can go in almost any direction. The paintings poke fun at consumerism, wealth, and societies' endless fascination with celebrity. The mash-ups are stunning, richly detailed and often wickedly funny. The artwork reflects her deeply felt views on the power of women and explores the endless possibilities for what that can mean. Some of the paintings are lush secret gardens of peacocks, poppies and pansies splendid with color, and dripping with sparkle and shine. Some are garish and vulgar and right to the point. All of them exalt feminine potential and strength with layers of visual commentary on beauty, sex, and power.

Ashley has been profiled and featured in almost every national magazine including Vanity Fair, Fortune Magazine, and Elle Décor and her collectors are world-wide. But it is in New Orleans that she loves to make her art. "This is where I feel safe and comfortable to work. New Orleans celebrates art and is fertile ground for

creativity," she explains. "And New Orleans doesn't judge. I can walk around here and I may look weird, but I'm not the weirdest and that doesn't happen in any other city." Self-taught and highly motivated, Ashley travels the globe for business meetings, installations, and art events, but she routinely finds time to mentor young artists in New Orleans and speak to students at Tulane and Louisiana State University. "I tell them that I'm proud to be here and that New Orleans makes me brave as a woman. It's a small southern city that inspires me to redefine what it means to be a female artist and businesswoman in today's world."

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With a fierce sense of humor and an intense work ethic, it is no surprise that her artwork is gaining such notoriety as she continues to partner with fashion and design powerhouses such as Chloé and Anthropologie on everything from handbags, lampshades and furniture,

to dishware and a soon-to-launch line of home goods. As she tells college students quite candidly, "this did not happen overnight. There were many sixteen hour days, many roadblocks and if it feels 'easy,' you're on the downhill, because the uphill was hard." She lends these lectures serious street cred, because she's as much a shrewd and savvy entrepreneur as she is an inventive artist with a truly authentic voice and mission. "I hope my greatest legacy will be that I motivated artists to represent themselves in the business world and that I empowered women to define themselves. What makes you feel different is what makes you unique. That's your greatest strength. Embrace it!"

