



Butrus finds the Southern landscape ripe for exploration. "I like having it somewhat documentary in fashion," she says of the research she incorporates into her works.

Annie Kammerer Butrus

With a poet's sensibility and a scholar's smarts, this Birmingham artist explores the changing landscape

WHETHER SHE'S EXPLORING THE SUBURBAN state of development or the symbolic nature of cake, Annie Kammerer Butrus gets right in the middle of the action. The artist delights in sensory experiences, so it's no wonder her work often deals with consumption or the lack of it.

With an infectious enthusiasm and curiosity,

Butrus tackles the current outlet for her preoccupation: a series of paintings titled "Fallen Fruit." At once abstract and representational, the images of multihued grounds dotted with apples have a serenity and complexity that only someone as thoughtful and skilled as Butrus could pull off.

In 1999, the now 33-year-old Chicago native

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moved to Birmingham, her husband's hometown. The topographical shift in the land caught her attention, as did the realization that something as modern and ubiquitous as suburban sprawl could eat away at a formerly essential and honored way of life.

"The farmer's story is very compelling," says Butrus. She armed herself with a year's worth of research before contacting state offices to find the people who would open their homes, their fields, and their stories to her. "I really wanted to get the farmer's take on the changing use of land," she explains, so she sought out third-generation farmers and those who were phasing out of the family business. She recorded their conversations, creating an archive of oral histories, and took photos of their land.

One particular image—a pastoral scene of fruit going to waste on the ground—became her muse for the "Fallen Fruit" series, which is, in the artist's words, "an interesting mix of

both a nostalgic, sentimental view and an incredibly practical acceptance of the current state of matters."

Butrus loves dichotomies. Before moving to the South, her work dealt mainly with cakes, which she decorated with materials such as gold leaf (edible) and polymer clay (not). She would invite viewers to enjoy bites of



ABOVE: Butrus began contemplating the intersection of nature and architecture, as seen in *Greystone Trees* (11 by 14 inches, oil on panel, 2001), after moving from Chicago to Birmingham. BELOW: Butrus creates intentionally subtle works, such as *Fallen Fruit: Summer, orange* (11 by 14 inches, gouache on paper, 2003).

