

The Art of Home

Keith Meacham, co-founder of Nashville-based Reed Smythe & Company, searches far and wide to find handcrafted objects and artisanal collaborations. Fresh from a move to a new retail location, she shares what's currently catching her eye.

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“The whole thing sort of started by accident,” says Keith Meacham of the Nashville-based lifestyle brand she co-founded with her childhood friend, the late author Julia Reed. “Julia had this idea to design and sell beautiful, handmade wares for the home and garden that you couldn’t find anywhere else. I had just left a career in technology, and I knew enough about e-commerce that I thought I could help. Honestly, I had no intention of doing much more than that—helping Julia get *her* gig going. But the more we schemed and dreamed about it, the more invested we became in building something special together.”

That was roughly five years ago. Since then, Reed Smythe & Company (which combines Julia’s last name and Keith’s maiden name) has blossomed from a pet project operated out of Keith’s Belle Meade basement to a thriving online business and most recently to a brick-and-mortar store in West Nashville. The 2,200-square-foot emporium entices patrons and window-shoppers inside for an immersive experience where they can see the sparkling, colored glassware and smooth Mocha ware bowls; touch the handwoven baskets and embroidered suzanis; smell the intoxicating aromas of the hand-poured candles; and taste the decadent small-batch French chocolates. The store’s generous footprint also offers room for things like antique case pieces, overscale artwork, and sprawling vintage rugs that Keith scours the globe to handpick for the store.

“I love the thrill of the hunt—poking around auctions, flea markets, and artists’ studios to discover things that speak to me,” says Keith, who plans to spend two weeks sourcing in Paris and Normandy later this summer. “There is a major downside to these buying trips, though. I get tempted to keep things for myself. But the upside is that I can ‘borrow’ stuff back whenever I’m hosting a party. I’m an enthusiastic—albeit amateur—gardener,



In her Nashville shop, Keith Meacham creates a tablescape inspired by the “Charlotte” tablecloth she designed in collaboration with Lisa Fine Textiles.

SHOPPING



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
An early 19th-century William IV sideboard displays a collection of ceramic vessels by Atelier MVM, while a handmade table made from zinc and reclaimed barnwood displays garden items and gifts. • Antique opaline trinket boxes from Italy and France shine in the light of a “Shroom” lamp by Atelier MVM. “I love that the lamp is a little cheeky,” Keith says. • David Austin roses and butterfly ranunculi in subtle peachy hues soften the striking palette of blues, purples, and teals in the tabletop décor. The marbled plates are by Christopher Spitzmiller.

SHOPPING

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In a cozy corner, an antique French Empire daybed dressed in sunny mohair stands beside a metal console table customized in Farrow and Ball’s Vardo. A resin tulipiere and vintage vases top the scalloped-apron piece, while a pair of antique insect engravings hang above it.

flower arranger, and party thrower, so a lot of what we sell supports those passions. Before I buy, I ask myself, ‘Is this something I would want in my own home?’ If it is, it’s shipped back to Nashville. If it’s not, I say goodbye.”

Even with all the tiles, textiles, vessels, and other fascinating finds that she brings back from locales like Morocco, Mexico, France, and Spain, Keith claims that her personal favorites are the exclusive items conceived in-house and developed hand-in-hand with the artists, artisans, and tradespeople she graciously calls her partners. When she wanted to copy her own collection of antique forcing bulb vases, Keith called on her glassblower to make a mold and create reproductions in the most popular colors of the 19th century. At the suggestion of a friend, she made oyster knives by working with welders at a Texas foundry to perfect their shell-shaped handles cast in high-polished bronze. And when she became enamored with an expensive antique Dutch tulipiere, Keith called on her sculptor to fabricate a more affordable cast-resin version with a contemporary profile and classic paw feet. She also worked with the sculptor to make small, polished bronze dishes shaped like ginkgo leaves, as well as bronze corkscrews featuring a dog head bearing a striking resemblance to Julia’s beloved beagle, Henry. Most recently, Keith joined forces with celebrated textile designer Lisa Fine to create a bespoke collection of tablecloths and toppers. Based on eight patterns from Lisa’s extensive line, the collection depicts fanciful florals and playful paisleys in saturated colorways and exaggerated scales.

“What I love about all of these collaborations is the constant flow of creative energy,” says Keith. “I have zero ability to paint or sew or throw clay or turn wood, but I’m a huge admirer of people who can. I want to showcase their talent and help them thrive. When we were online only, we were limited to sales. Now with the shop, we can bring people together for events, book signings, and floral demonstrations in a setting that feels as intimate as a living room.”