

STATEMENT PIECES

COLOR PLAY

Artist and entrepreneur Kristi Kohut started as an Instagram sensation, but her vibrant success sparked plans to open her own gallery in Libertyville this fall. —*Jenny Muslin*

Perhaps you've spotted Kristi Kohut's art on Instagram, on HGTV or in *Elle Decor* as one of the "7 Next-Big-Thing Artists." By using bold, vibrant colors and mixing textures, Kohut's masterpieces can't help but make you feel uplifted; her Instagram handle is @hapiart, after all. Her atypical rise to success is an inspiring story. After working in advertising, she left the industry to be a mom. Her love of painting turned into an unexpected career and, now, she is part of a new wave of artists who connect with customers directly via social media.



RAINBOW CONNECTION ↑ Collectors include celebrities and Hall of Fame athletes, but it's her clientele on the North Shore (where she resides) that have inspired her to open a Libertyville gallery this fall. *346 N. Milwaukee Ave., Libertyville, kristikohut.studio*



SWEET SEAT ↑ Design addicts flock to Kohut's home line of furniture, pillows, poufs, textiles and wallpaper. On the horizon? A custom Lucite furniture line incorporating her original art.



FLOWER FEELS → "I've clocked a lot of hours at the Chicago Botanic Garden! There's so much beauty and inspiration for my work," Kohut says. *1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, chicagobotanic.org*



PERFECT PARTNERS ← Since launching in 2014, Kohut's studio reached the million-dollar mark with 97 percent of sales through Instagram or her website. The exposure has led to collaborations with Anthropologie and West Elm, among others. "I am passionate about shattering the starving-artist myth," Kohut says. "I love telling my story to inspire others to follow their dreams and make them a reality."

KRISTI KOHUT PHOTO BY CHELSEA MAZUR. PRODUCT PHOTOS BY DUSTIN FOREST