

CYNTHIA BLAIR-ANTONELLI

Jamestown, Rhode Island

Cynthia Blair-Antonelli keeps a digital camera in her glove compartment to capture those unexpected moments of inspiration. "As I drove by a local bakery, I was struck by a row of these huge, radiant sunflowers as they glowed in the early afternoon sun," she says of the subject for her award-winning painting *Sunflower Solstice*. Although she's drawn since a

very early age, Blair-Antonelli credits her keen observation skills to her training from the Rhode Island School of Design, where she received a bachelor's of fine arts in illustration. "They taught me not how to draw as much as how to observe and interpret," she says.

The Long Island, New York, native balances her pastel work by

experimenting with many different media, from printmaking and oil painting to silkscreening and Web design. She's even worked in the nightclub scene, collaborating with neon artists and DJs to paint large murals and interiors. "All these diverse experiences have come together to enrich and complement my pastel work," she says.

Sunflower Solstice (18x24)



Blair-Antonelli's diverse interests parallel her attraction to all genres of painting. "I don't favor any particular genre," she says. "Rather, I look for images that are compelling because they've captured the essence of the subject. In the case of *Sunflower Solstice* it would be the towering plants, the huge, broad, coarse leaves and the majestic presence of the flowers themselves."

To achieve depth in her work, the artist relies on a broad spectrum of colors and never paints on white or black. For this piece she used Colourfix paper with a terra cotta ground, working in two layers to cover the entire surface, and fixing it

before going on to the final layer. "I usually choose 50 or so pastels from my collection to start a painting, which I keep separate to limit my palette and ensure unity throughout the painting," she says.

To convey the texture of the flowers' seed pods and establish their shape in the shadow areas, Blair-Antonelli let the orange ground show through, especially around the petals where the intensity of the sunlight glowed. "I often intensify the local color of a focal point, using its color complements adjacent to it to charge the painting with more emotion," she says.

Now, Blair-Antonelli, who's a signature member of the Pastel Painters

Society of Cape Cod and the Connecticut Pastel Society, is working on a nightlife/figurative series. She derives further inspiration from her Jamestown, Rhode Island, home on Conanicut Island, which, she says, is "remote enough to have an old, small-town feeling, unspoiled by the droves of tourists that haunt Newport." She visits her old, Long Island stomping ground each summer, photographing favorite subjects along the way, which become references for future paintings.

To see more of her work, visit www.cba-studio.com.