Lifelike Expressions
This pastel artist blends fantasy and reality

Jamestown artist Cynthia Blair’s pastel work has the unique qualities of being realistic and ethereal all at once. Viewing the pieces, especially the ones that include water, you get the feeling that if you touched the painting, a ripple would appear that you would be able to step through and become part of the scene. Blair loves the vivid colors and textures that she is able to conjure from the oil pastels. “I use very little fixative on my finished work so as not to muddy the colors,” she says. “Because pastels are so easily smudged, the originals must be framed with glass.” Fortunately, the colors transfer well to print and Blair has started to print onto canvas, providing a new way to showcase her work.

Blair discovered Rhode Island when she arrived to attend RISD. Having grown up in a small, coastal area on Long Island, she felt very much at home in Jamestown and decided to stay. A vibrant, curious person with diverse interests, Blair sampled a wide range of art styles and media before graduating with an illustration degree. Over the years, some teachers tried to rein her in by telling her to focus on just one genre, but she was having too much fun to be corralled. “All of my experiences ultimately end up forming the whole of each work,” she explains.

Blair does illustration work such as logos, theater posters and murals, but since picking up the pastels in 2002 she has been happily creating a body of work that evokes the small coastal town “feel” of both her hometown and her current home. Along the way she also returned to RISD for classes in website design and other art related computer programs. She brings her design skills to the websites she creates and especially likes to help other artists by creating sites that reflect their style and craft while promoting their work. Blair doesn’t teach, but she loves to mentor younger artists and connect with artists of all ages to share ideas and solve problems.

Her latest project, stunning charcoal portraits of musicians, began as a fun way to help her daughter learn to draw. Being music lovers, they decided to attend concerts and give the originals to the bands. In doing so, Blair found that many musicians have charities they support so now donates originals and the proceeds from limited prints to the specified charity. She often donates finished pieces or offers of pet or human portraits to local charities as well. “I’m thrilled that some of my work is out there doing good things,” says Blair.

View more work at www.cbastudio.com or www.cynthiablair.com or contact the artist at cblair7@gmail.com or 401-560-0030. You can also see her work at The Schock Gallery, 47 Conanicus Rd., Jamestown.