

ArtistSPOTLIGHT

Victoria Cooley's paintings connect with her clients

By Kathy O'Flinn
kathy@swspotlight.com

Sunflowers just brighten Victoria Cooley's day. They also brighten the days of her clients.

"People don't want to live with things that disturb them. They want to feel some kind of connection to what they're looking at and how they want to feel. They often tell me, 'I feel very peaceful and happy and that's why I want this painting.'"

Cooley was born in Nantucket Cottage Hospital but has lived most of her life in Sarasota. "My dad was an artist forever in Nantucket and I would always paint with him and draw with him from the time I was 5 years old," she said. "It's really in my blood."

Often the family would return to Nantucket in the summer and



"Beach Throne" 24"x36" acrylic on canvas

Cooley would capture the Northeast light, which she describes as cooler and crisper.

Cooley attended Ringling College of Art & Design in Sarasota and graduated with a bachelor's. Since then she painted murals, called Whimsical Walls, while her kids were in school. Then she had a little gallery in Sarasota which was fun for a while. But now she is doing just the outdoor art festivals which she describes as the most fun and rewarding because she enjoys the camaraderie with other artists and developing a rapport with the people that put on the events.

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"I call this my mobile gallery," she said. "My husband is retired and he is behind the scenes. I couldn't do this without him. We do this together. He takes care of loading the van, putting up the tent, making sure we have everything secure. It's definitely a two-person operation but I do love it – the energy of it."

Coastal paintings, flowers and pet portraits make her feel happy. She loves dogs and cats and she has great compassion for people who lose an animal. Usually she does the pet portraits on small canvases working from a few photos so she can capture their personalities.

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Victoria Cooley at the Naples Downtown Art Festival



"Happiness" 30"x50" acrylic on canvas



"Lily" 5"x7" acrylic canvas panel



"Taking a Dip" 18"x24" acrylic on canvas

When she paints how she feels, it usually translates onto the canvas and people feel it, too.

Cooley said, "You're living in their home so there has to be something they're going to relate to. They wish they were on that beach chair. They wish they were looking at that sunflower seeing it blow in the wind. That kind of little fleeting moment is important to me."

Cooley's favorite flower is the hydrangea because it reminds her so much of Nantucket. You cannot grow them here so she has to paint them. Her customers really love them as well, she said.

The next local art festival Cooley will attend is the Naples Downtown Art Fair on March 25 and 26. In the meantime, visit her website baileycology.com to see more of her art.