

# Teri Gortmaker

## COLOR & CONTRAST

Colorado artist Teri Gortmaker grew up on her grandparents' farm in an area of southeast Texas called The Big Thicket. "My childhood was pine forests, vegetable gardens, flower beds, cows, pigs and hunting dogs," she says. "The landscape was always changing and miraculous. It seemed the logical subject matter for me, as an artist, because it was what I was most connected to."

Later, as a transplant to Boulder, Gortmaker found she was still attracted to the land; and Colorado, she says, has attitude. "It's rugged, bold, diverse and filled with dynamic color contrasts—big mountains, flat gold prairie all the way to Kansas, and a giant blue sky hanging over it all." On the subject of that sky, Gortmaker

adds: "It just stuns me with its clarity. How can anything real be that color of blue? And what is that color exactly? It's always exciting to paint that blue next to the gold of aspen trees or the stark cold whites of new winter snow."

The aspen, mountains, prairie; these subjects continue to thrill because they're never the same. "I often paint my favorite places again and again," she says, "and it's different every time. Nature is always in flux so the possibilities are endless."

Gortmaker's approach to painting begins with the organization of shapes and colors into what she refers to as "a visual dialogue that works." For larger paintings, she prefers to work in the studio, but she does enjoy working *en plein*



**Feedin' Time (16x20)**



**Rain Day (16x20)**

*air* for small paintings and studies. "You can really see color on location," she says, "especially in the shadows. It's tough to get that from a photo unless you know it from being there."

For Gortmaker, the *plein air* work is more intuitive and provides a reminder of what caught her eye and stirred her emotion at the scene. "It's so exciting, because all your senses are firing. Back in the studio, I can calm down, take more time to evaluate my design and color decisions, and plan a larger piece with more confidence. Both ways of working have their challenges and rewards," she says.

The artist is diverse in terms of her choice of materials. Unlike many pastelists who find a favorite surface and stick with it, she chooses to work on three or four different types. *Feedin' Time* (opposite) and *Rain Day* (above) were both painted on a piece of Richeson black pastel paper, but the artist also works regularly on Wallis sanded paper in both gray or white (with a watercolor underpainting), on Canson, and on a highly textured bright orange surface she composes out of pumice and gel medium on Gatorbord.

Regardless of the materials, or the particulars of the scene in front of her, Gortmaker approaches each painting with one objective: to capture a sense of place. "I want to draw viewers into the scene and hold them there to enjoy the same excitement—or peace—that I felt when I painted it," she says. "I want them to feel they can and want to step inside the frame."

Teri Gortmaker ([www.terigortmaker.com](http://www.terigortmaker.com)), a signature member of the Pastel Society of America, has exhibited with the Salmagundi Art Club, Knickerbocker Artists and the International Association of Pastel Societies. She's an associate member of Women Artists of the West and the American Impressionist Society. Gortmaker uses income from her art sales to support Women for Women International ([www.womenforwomen.org](http://www.womenforwomen.org)), an organization that provides career training for women in war-torn countries.