

WOMAN TO WATCH

# Portraits of Perfection

ARTIST GRACE COLE is a perfectionist with her portraits. Specializing in remarkably life-like portraits, Grace takes up to 800 photos of her subject in order to capture the subtleties that make each person unique. So be prepared to strike a pose if you'd like Grace to do a portrait for you.

"My aim is to capture the true spirit of my subject. I do

One particularly tough subject just couldn't relax. After a bit of brainstorming, Grace asked the man to sit on the couch and watch television. Soon he became so absorbed he forgot about Grace clicking away with the camera who got the shots she wanted.

Although Grace admits to always having a propensity for art, her devotion to art as a career came after marriage and raising children. "I was always interested in art. I liked being surrounded by beauty, but I never tapped into my artistic inclination until later in my life. It was after being married and raising three children that I dedicated my life to art. I really don't believe in the notion of being 'born' with a talent. I think that if you really love something you can achieve some level of success at it. We all have talents and the sad thing is that so many people go through their entire lives without ever discovering them."

Grace's training includes working with private instructors, accepting studio apprenticeships and studying at The Art Institute of Chicago. In addition to her portrait work, Grace teaches in her studio, located at 410 South Michigan Avenue. "I teach a very intense, detail-oriented method for serious artisans and students. It's an updated version of the atelier program, which is structured more as a workshop than a class. The method dates back hundreds



These are two very lifelike portraits by Grace, who captures the true spirit of her subject, often by taking hundreds of photos before putting her brush to the canvas.

this by taking hundreds of photos. The photos serve as animated snippets of the personality," says Grace, who realizes that most people would rather endure a root canal than pose for a picture.

Grace's dedication to producing picture-perfect portraits comes from much patience, enthusiasm and love for art. Sometimes taking up to four months to complete a single portrait, Grace feels that the hardest part is often in the beginning. "I certainly don't want to paint someone looking stiff and unnatural. Since most people aren't immediately comfortable in front of a camera, I resort to trying different techniques to relax my subjects," she explains. One trick is to not load the camera with film until she sees that her client is beginning to relax.

of years. Masters Michaelangelo and Leonardo learned through this technique. It doesn't appeal to everyone, but those intent on producing fine art find it very rewarding."

As a one woman force in the art world, Grace Cole has made an indelible mark with her beautiful paintings. And, she's carved a career out of something she truly loves - bringing art to life with careful and exacting brush strokes. ■

Tanja Zaric

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