



HOME: MADE HERE

Portraits reflect a house as home

Susan Stillman paints portraits, but she doesn't worry about her subjects holding a pose.

A house, after all, doesn't have to scratch its nose.

Home Portraits by Susan Stillman was created in 1989, and Stillman continues to run the business out of her White Plains home. An airy attic serves as the setting for her work interpreting Cape Cods and Colonials, cottages and castles.

And while each painting is an aesthetic treat, it's also filled with meaning for the recipient.

A portrait might be done for a family that has sold its longtime home and wants to remember it forever. Another might be painted for a husband as a gift to his wife, a symbol of the place where they raised their children. Yet another could be a gift for a first-time homeowner.

Stillman presents each with equal authority, her attention to details bringing out a property's character.

"I do these paintings that are really kind of bright and colorful and really show the house kind of ... as a portrait," she says.

Stillman, who got her start as an illustrator and continues to teach at Parsons School of Design in Manhattan, continues to paint beyond her house portraits. She has had her work featured at the Katonah Museum of Art and at the Northern Westchester Center for the Arts in Mount Kisco. A selection of works, "The Color of Light," is on

display at The Gallery in the Park at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation in Cross River through Dec. 31.

In creating her house portraits, Stillman has developed a process that enables her to get a real sense of each property. She visits the home, taking countless photographs from most every angle. Then she discusses with the clients just what they want to show. Next, Stillman creates a pencil sketch. Work-in-progress reports are given during the next phase, allowing clients several chances for input.

Stillman's not above a bit of artistic license. She says she'll move a pool into view, or widen an angle to incorporate a landscaped feature, if that's what a client wants.

"I trim the trees when you can't see the house," Stillman says with a smile.

Stillman says she's found success because she's tapped into a truth about people and their homes.

"People are so very invested ... I am, too. Everybody I know puts so much

into their house," she says.

Stillman most enjoys the collaborative nature of her work.

She wants to please her clients and have them be a part of the creation of what may become a family heirloom.

"They feel ownership of this painting," Stillman says. "They feel like they've participated in this work of art."

In Brief

BY MARY SHUSTACK

