

**Bill Baker**

Bill Baker (born 1961) is something of a renaissance man. Trying his hand as a musician, a builder, a painter, he has achieved great success in these fields and more. While he painted sporadically starting as a teenager, it didn't become a calling until 2000. That year, he truly came to dedicate himself to pastels as a medium. Entirely self-taught, Baker not only had to learn the techniques necessary to create a balanced, lively composition, but also had to - as many artists put it - discover how the creative spirit within himself wanted to come out through his newfound abilities. His dedication has paid off handsomely for his pastel creations already demonstrate him to be a master.

Baker has long had a fascination with indigenous peoples the world over. Their dignity and good-natured spirits, often in the face of many social ills, shine through in the bright colors used to capture everyday scenes. These scenes may be everyday in nature, but that does not translate to commonplace. To Baker's way of thinking, color evokes emotion and he hopes that people viewing his work will not only discover the emotion that he was feeling while painting, but also experience their own as viewers. Thus, a connection between viewer and subject matter, and hopefully viewer and artist, will be formed.

Black paper is used as the surface for all of his pastels. Baker then builds up layer upon layer of pastel colors to achieve the final desired outcome. As a layering agent, he uses a fixative spray. The technique has proven to be remarkably successful for the artist. In 2001, he was awarded Best of Show as well as a second place prize for Visual Arts at the New Mexico Arts Exhibition. The artist was awarded a second place overall finish at this same exhibition the next year. He followed these honors with first place awards at both the 2003 and 2004 exhibitions as well. Also in 2002, Baker was awarded the Terry Ludwig Award for Excellence at the 11th National Pastel Exhibition. Even more impressive, Baker was awarded the first prize honor at the 12th National Pastel Exhibition the following year. He was also awarded the Windsor-Newton Award at the 2005 National Pastel Exhibition.

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