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## Nashville artist lands coveted magazine cover

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Staff Writer

Most artists rely on gallery exhibits to get the public's attention, but for the next month, Nashvillian Camille Engel will show off her work at newsstands all over the country.

The local painter's Sunflower at the Old Factory is the featured image on the cover of American Artist magazine's May issue, where it took top prize in the publication's annual cover competition.

Engel's painting, which depicts a close-up exterior scene of The Factory at Franklin, beat out roughly 300 other entries from across the country.

"It's a huge honor and a huge issue," the artist says. "The competition was extremely steep. American Artist is celebrating its 70th year of publication this year, and it's an icon for artists working in representational styles."

While Art in America and Artforum may be the country's pre-eminent publications for art criticism, American Artist is different in that it serves as a resource for aspiring professional artists, offering a mix of profiles, critiques and informative tips.

"Camille's piece was skillfully done," says Alison Malafronte, associate editor of American Artist. "She has a mastery of line, color and value, and those are all things that we feature in our magazine. In judging the competition, we look first for skill level, but once we select finalists, we mock up the magazine cover and see what works best, because the winner has to be conducive design-wise as well."

### Painting traverses U.S.

The recognition is well-timed for Engel, whose art career has been on a steady rise since she first picked up her paintbrushes six years ago. The former graphic designer has been featured in a number of gallery shows across the country, including the 2006 International Guild of Realism Exhibition in Santa Fe, N.M., where she received the Artist's Choice award. Next year, her Sunflower at the Old Factory will be part of a touring museum exhibit, titled The New Reality: The Frontier of Realism in the 21st Century, that contrasts work by modern-day figurative artists with their celebrated forebears. Sunflower will show alongside one of Vincent Van Gogh's sunflower paintings.

Engel calls her style "contemporary realism," a nod to the idea that this oldest and most conventional of styles continues to thrive and reinvent itself in an era when installation work and time-based media tend to get more attention. For this painter, realism is the most direct and true form of self-expression. In her hands, the result is at once luminous, saturated with color and rich in detail.



"It's a long process to create each of these paintings," Engel says. "I try to add layers and layers of color. There's more interest in the painting than what you see on the surface. That's one of the things that separates me, because I revel in the painstaking detail that others find tedious.

"It's a very introspective view for me: It's realizing the beauty we have on earth, and also realizing the beauty in unlovely things. I have a painful background, and part of the healing process I prescribed for myself was to find beauty in what was around me and not in how I was being treated. I look at the world and people around me with wonderful gratitude, and exploring realism in detail is part of that process."

Engel's work can be seen at several local venues at the moment, including Centennial Art Center, Nashville International Airport and Midtown Gallery, but the artist admits that she has fared better selling her work in Santa Fe, where she is represented by Manitou Galleries.

When the artist showed at the International Guild of Realism Exhibition last year, she found herself courted by several New Mexico galleries. "It became a tremendous assurance that I was doing the right thing," she says. "I found an appreciation there for the quality of my work, and I can get the prices I need to get for the amount of time I put into it."

Of late Engel has begun taking a more abstract approach to her realist canvases, tightening her focus to the point where the patterns of rust on an old bucket might form the bulk of her composition.

"Most artists have an opportunity to learn in college, but I learned while I was doing the job," she says. "So I feel like I'm just graduating college and starting to find myself. I'm really enjoying it now."

## **Where to find Engel's work**

In addition to being featured on the cover of American Artist magazine's May issue, Camille Engel's work can be seen at several local venues and elsewhere in the country:

- Flora & Fauna, an exhibit running through Friday at Centennial Art Center, teams Engel with Joan Lawler and Anne Carothers; all three painters explore natural subjects in their work. The art center is at the 25th Avenue North/Park Plaza corner of Centennial Park. For more information, call 862-8442 or visit [www.nashville.gov/parks/cac.htm](http://www.nashville.gov/parks/cac.htm).
- Flying Solo, running through June 3 at Nashville International Airport, features a large installation of paintings of local flora. On view in the airport's departing lobby; enter the departing flight doors and look left. For more information, visit [www.artsattheairport.com](http://www.artsattheairport.com).
- Engel also has work in ongoing exhibits at Elm Tree Gallery, 317 Main St., Suite 105, Franklin (791-8444) and Midtown Gallery, 1912 Broadway (322-9966).
- Manitou Galleries in Santa Fe, N.M., will include Engel's work as part of a feature exhibition in May. Artist reception is 5-7:30 p.m. May 18. For more information, call 1-800-283-0440 or visit [www.manitougalleries.com](http://www.manitougalleries.com).
- The Blue Spiral 1 in Asheville, N.C., will feature Engel's work as part of a still-life exhibition in May and June. Artist reception is 5-8 p.m. May 3. For more information, call 1-800-291-2513 or visit [www.bluespiral1.com](http://www.bluespiral1.com).

For more information about Engel, visit her Web site at [www.camille-engel.com](http://www.camille-engel.com).

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