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Awaiting Spring (detail; oil, 36x48) by Brent Cotton.

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RESIDENCE: Sarasota, Florida

MEDIUM AND SUBJECT: "I work in soft pastels, painting contemporary landscapes and seascapes that are increasingly abstract in style."

HOW I GOT STARTED CREATING ART: "I'd retired from legal practice in the U.K. to move to the U.S. with my husband in 1999. I hadn't tried pastels—or even heard of them—until I met a local art teacher at a show in New Hampshire

intense or interesting enough. Now I use my photos more as a brief reference. I also used to paint very cool paintings with lots of blues and yellows and purples, but now my paintings are much warmer. The change really came about when I decided to try a different brand of pastel paper, which meant experimenting with a whole new collection of background colors and an entirely different texture. This was a challenge I really

COMPETITION SPOTLIGHT

Jennifer Gardner

who encouraged me to take classes with her. That's when I discovered that I really loved to paint and found out what a pastel stick looks like."

MY PROCESS: "I always start a painting from my travel photos. For this painting, I initially stuck fairly close to the photograph but soon discovered there were elements I didn't like—colors that weren't

enjoyed, and it ultimately eased my transition to more abstract landscape work.

INSPIRATION FOR THIS PAINTING: "I love the lines of trees you see all over the French countryside, usually in the middle of nowhere. But the main reason was that I wanted to try out a new color scheme and this line of trees was the lucky winner for the composition! ♦

Jennifer Gardner's *Avenue of Trees, Champagne, France IV* (pastel, 18x24) was a finalist in the 2005 Art Competition.

