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CLAUDIA HARTLEY

# Across the country



**A**fter five years spent living near her grandchildren in Georgia and South Carolina, landscape painter Claudia Hartley returned to Arizona. With that kind of absence, a returning resident might look upon the desert and its vivid colors and feel like they were seeing it for the first time all over again. Not the case with Hartley. “It just felt like home,” she says. “I couldn’t wait to get back out in it, to sketch it and hike it and capture its beauty. Seeing it all again rekindled my love for it.”

While she admires the East Coast and the South, the land there is different, most noticeably when it comes to poking around and discovering new places. “Much of the land is owned by somebody, so you end up seeing a lot of ‘No Trespassing’ signs. But in Arizona, there is no limit to the adventure you can have with the open spaces,” she adds. “Just yesterday, I hiked up Camelback Mountain, not to the top, but to the second amphitheater where I could sketch and admire the views.”

Hartley’s new acrylic landscapes will debut in a new show, *Across the Country*, on February 11 at Bonner

David Galleries in Scottsdale, Arizona. Among the new works are *Return to the Desert*, *Moon Valley*, and *Running Cloud*, all of them filled with Hartley’s colorful vegetation, distant mountains and dappled skies.

“I have taught drawing from first graders all the way up to adults, so composition has been ingrained in my head for many years. I know what I want to look at and paint, and how to put that in a painting or sketch,” she says. “I compose right up to and off of the edge of the canvas or sketchbook. I want things to go off, as if extending off the edge so when you’re looking at a piece it feels like you’re walking into it, and it feels like it’s going on forever.”

The Arizona artist is particularly known for her use of color, which she uses freely and with joyful abandon. She says her style developed mostly as a child. “I would spend hours coloring, and I loved to get a new box, a big box, of crayons because the crayon names would fascinate me. I loved turquoise and Prussian blue and periwinkle—it was one of my favorites,” Hartley says.

**1**  
*Running Cloud*,  
acrylic, 36 x 60"

**2**  
*Moon Valley*,  
acrylic, 48 x 60"

**3**  
*Return to the Desert*,  
acrylic, 36 x 48"





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“I didn’t realize until later that the crayons would change color names every few years, which saddens me because young people aren’t using the same names as I once used.”

Crayons eventually led to oils until she developed a sensitivity to oil paints. That sensitivity, though, pushed her into acrylics, which she has had tremendous success with. She says her use of acrylics helped her create her unique skies, with warm and cool blues painted over a warm yellow ochre underpainting.

Today Hartley says she just wants her works to inspire happiness in her audience.

“I want them to experience joy and peace, particularly in today’s world, where the news is full of terrorism. We all need a mental break from the trials of the world—they’re real, and they’re here,” she says. “Life can be hard, but art can provide a little rest in the midst of everything.” ●



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