

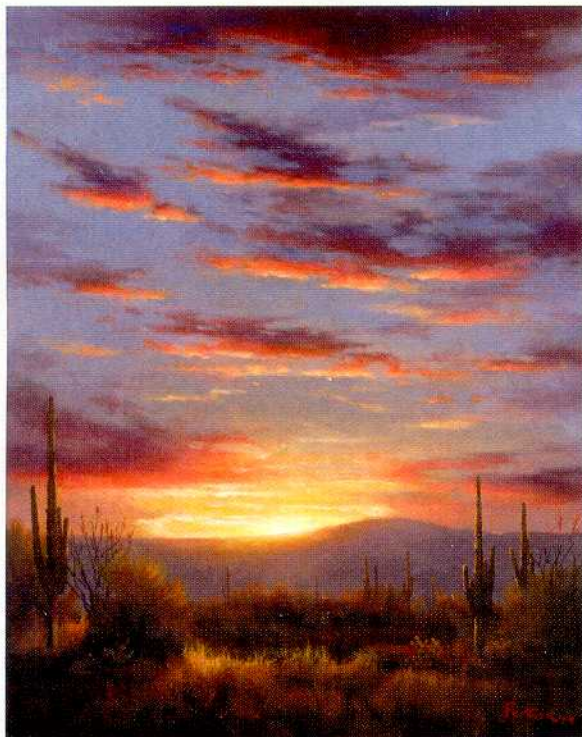
PHOENIX, ARIZONA'S DAVID FLITNER



CLOUD INTERPRETER

Sunset is the high point of David Flitner's day. The artist responsible for the image depicted on pages 8 and 9 of this magazine relishes the opportunity to bask in Arizona's pink skies and wide horizons. No wonder that desert clouds are a favorite subject.

Flitner first encountered these vistas more than 30 years ago. Arizona was the last stop during his father's lengthy military career. David recalled that "I was so tired of changing locations every two or three years, I would have stayed in Alaska if that's where we had landed." Instead, Arizona's vibrant panorama soon captivated his imagination—and inspired a career. After graduating from Arizona State University, he attended the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where he learned "wonderful fundamentals of art."



Afterward, he returned to the desert, a place he describes as "intriguing, mysterious and hostile. There are things with horns, rocks that are sharp and animals that sometimes sting. Yet, if you stay long enough, the subtle beauty is amazing and irresistible."

An inclination for figurative Western art—horsemen, Native Americans—jump-started his career. But the landscape pulled at his senses. "This land evokes a simpler, quieter life. I have a great appreciation for the vastness of this country, and painting the clouds is very liberating. Clouds leave more to the imagination. They can be developed more freely," said Flitner.

Interpreting the natural world is a life's work in progress, he explained. "Each year I try to get a little bit better. I try to understand more, to get a better interpretation of what I'm seeing. Just last week I went out and photographed another of our outstanding sunsets. It was the perfect definition of panorama—unbelievable reds and oranges, over the top of you, in front of you."

Capturing the image on film is just the beginning of Flitner's art. "The photograph to me is a tool, a memory device. The human has two eyes; we focus differently; we don't see peripherally. A camera records all the details. People only focus on one thing at a time. I know a person can paint photographically, but if you do that, then to me you're not painting how you see, not painting the spirit of the moment. It's the artist's job to internalize the information the photograph doesn't record. The camera is a cold, unfeeling instrument. If you quit short and just copy photographs, you miss the thing that all artists should be pursuing—that sense of how we feel about what we're looking at.

"I think cloud painters tend to be dreamers. Dreamers don't necessarily paint 'things.' They paint the spirit of the place. That's what I aim to do."

For more information about the artist and his work, visit www.davidflitner.com or www.reneetaylorgallery.com. ■

left: *Brilliant End of the Day*, a 14" x 18" oil painting reflects David Flitner's fascination with Arizona's skies. "The intensity draws even the most casual observers. Sunsets always intrigue me," he said.