

## ART



## Bob DeSantis brings photo-like paintings to Huntington

BY MELISSA ARNOLD

Nothing defines a Long Island summer more than lazy days at the beach. And even though autumn is settling in now, it's still easy to imagine the sun on your face and the water lapping at your feet.

Huntington artist Bob DeSantis has made a career of capturing beloved memories on canvas. Now, art enthusiasts of all kinds can imagine themselves in those scenes with an exhibit entitled *Being There*, currently on view at the Main Art Gallery at the Huntington Public Library.

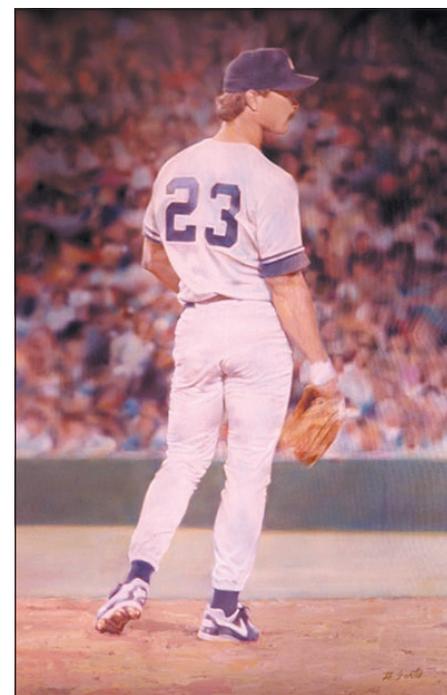
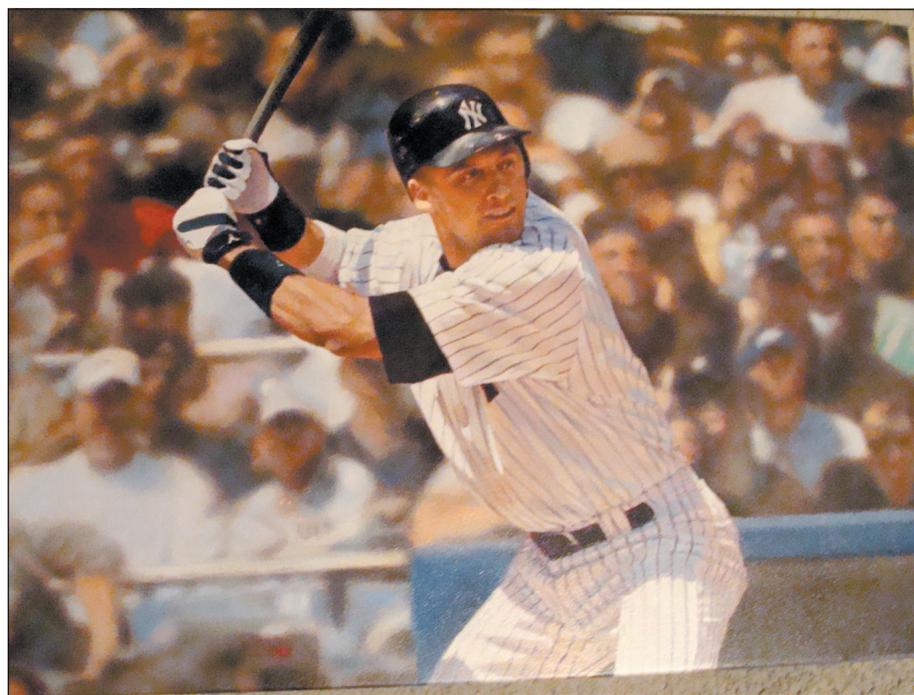
"Most of my scenic pieces are fairly large, so when you hang them up in your home it's like looking out your window and seeing, say, Shelter Island. That's why people buy my paintings — they want to bring those feelings into their homes," explains DeSantis, 69, who was born in Brooklyn but has spent most of his life on Long Island.

When you see DeSantis' art for the first time, you might have to do a double take. Many of his paintings are photorealistic — painted in a way that resembles actual photographs.

Art has been a part of DeSantis' life for almost as long as he can remember — he even listed becoming a professional artist as his future goal in his high school yearbook. He went on to receive an associate's degree in commercial art from Farmingdale University (now Farmingdale State College) and a bachelor's degree in fine art from Hofstra University in Hempstead.

That varied education enables DeSantis to combine the best practices of both fine art and modern technology, as he works with a combination of oil and acrylic paints as well as an airbrush for a smooth, almost flawless texture.

His lengthy career has included graphic design, commercial and fine art that's been featured all over the country. His paintings have been displayed in galleries and even on products like phone book covers and light boxes. He



Images from Huntington Public Library

Top, from left, 'Cape Lookout 1' and 'Northport'; above from left, 'DJ' and 'Donnie Baseball'

also plays several musical instruments and was once a member of the band The Silvertones.

For the past 25 years, he's worked as an art restorer, helping to correct and repair artwork that's been damaged through aging or disasters. He has also worked closely with well-known landscape painter Diane Romanello and Civil War artist Mort Kunstler.

While restoration takes up much of his time, DeSantis is always looking for inspiration for his own art.

"I'll take a ride out to the Hamptons with my camera and if I see something that inspires me, I'll take photos of it. Then, I might take a photo of a barrel with flowers in it and incorporate that into the scene," DeSantis explains.

Using the image editing program Photoshop, DeSantis will experiment with combining scenic photos with furniture, people and decorations. Once he's satisfied with a concept, he'll paint it on canvas. "I can duplicate anything

I see and focus on replicating each little detail exactly, which is what makes it resemble a photograph" he said. "It's a skill that has served me well, both in restoration and my own artwork."

While some of DeSantis' most popular art features Long Island hot spots, he's also known for his portraits of famous people, particularly athletes.

"Years ago I was working for a company doing sports prints of small children wearing the jersey of a prominent athlete," he explains, adding that the prints were meant to represent those athletes in their early years. He has done similar work featuring child athletes looking up into the sky at their adult selves.

DeSantis is a loyal Yankees fan, and some of his favorite athletes to paint are the greats from that team, including Derek Jeter, Don Mattingly and Joe DiMaggio, among others.

The exhibit at the library will feature more than 20 of DeSantis' favorite paintings with a variety of subjects, says

Laurene Tesoriero, coordinator of the library's art gallery.

Tesoriero says that the library hosts a number of art exhibits throughout the year. She's particularly impressed with how realistic DeSantis' work is.

"[The scenic art] almost looks like [it's drawn with] pastels. Everything he does is very interesting and draws people in right away. You feel as though you're a part of the scene," she says. "And typically you don't see a lot of sports art around. It's so crisp and vivid and I think that has a wide appeal."

*Being There* will be on display at the Main Art Gallery at the Huntington Public Library, 338 Main Street, Huntington, through Nov. 22. The exhibit may be seen during regular library hours. Admission is free. For more information, contact Laurene Tesoriero at 631-427-5165, ext. 258, or visit [www.myhpl.org](http://www.myhpl.org).

Learn more about artist Bob DeSantis by searching his name at [www.Art.com](http://www.Art.com) and [www.Giclee.com](http://www.Giclee.com).