

# PICTURE PERFECT

We meet two artists whose striking still-life portraiture defies expectation



**THE ART:** This beautiful, evocative piece of work is entitled 'Roughage', and is painted with oils on panel (a flat pane of wood). For more information on the artist, go to [werteric.com](http://werteric.com)

**THE ARTIST:** A native of Portland, Oregon, Eric Wert received a BA in Fine Arts from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997 and has been painting professionally ever since. He's known for his larger-than-life (but nonetheless pretty realistic) still life paintings and drawings, most of which is based around plant life and food. It's his textural play that we love most about his work – these cabbages and lettuces manage to look both hyperrealistic and wildly ethereal at the same time. "I want to create an image that one can be lost within," he says. "To me, still-life painting is about looking intensely. It's about intimately exploring a subject."



THE ART : 'The Salt of Life' captures an unashamedly genuine vision of kitchen spices. It's nothing if not bold, with primary colours and contrasting textures at work. For more information on the artist, go to [plusone-gallery.com](http://plusone-gallery.com)

THE ARTIST: Just a selection of Waitrose spices, right? Wrong. This is the work of Madrilenian artist Antonio Castello – and it's not a photograph;

it's an oil painting. Yes, really. Castello takes the realism seen in Wert's work and gives it an alternative spin, creating photorealistic compositions with trappings of contemporary life within them (like the Waitrose logos in this shot). By incorporating truly breathtaking levels of detail – like capturing light in glass and on fruit – his work becomes almost more real than a photo.





RIGHT: 'Pineapples' boldly depicts exactly that; painted with oil on linen, Castello's inescapable textured fruit loom so large on the canvas, they become a spectacular rolling landscape. Serve on cocktail stick with rubbery cheese.



THE ART: 'Grapes III', delicately painted with oil on linen, is an example of Castello's incredible realism, as well as his tendency to paint fruit at peak ripeness "stopped in all its fragility", and to stretch the boundaries of the still-life genre.



THE ART: Wert's eye for snaking textures continues in 'Capsicum', a composition full of colour so rich it looks like it could bleed out of the panel. The eponymous vegetables are almost sweating with intensity.

