

Painting with Pastel: Focus on Color and Application

Mary Padgett

Saturdays April 10 & 17, 10:00 a.m. –4:00 p.m., Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center

Welcome! I look forward to meeting and working with you! If you have any questions about the class or supplies, please email me at marypadgett@gmail.com

For those of you who do not have pastels, the following is intended as a guide to help you select the best type of pastel for you. We will be working from floral arrangements (there is a \$10 flower supply fee) in the studio. You may work as realistically or abstractly as you like. Bring your cameras to photograph our floral arrangements as well as any photos of flowers and/or gardens you'd like to consider for paintings.

In this workshop we will examine various surfaces and ways of applying pastels. So that you can prepare a custom surface bring in at least one sheet of 100% rag paper, either a smooth (hot press) watercolor paper (min. 140#) or a printmaking paper (Arches or Rives). Bring along any brushes, acrylics and/or gouache paint that you already own.

Supplies

You will want to have about fifty pastel sticks, enough to give you a variety of color, saturation, and value. You will want to choose supports (i.e. papers or boards) to work on that are appropriate to the type of pastel you will be using.

Pastel is versatile; it can be a drawing medium or a painting medium, a colorful line or a painterly mark. There are many pastel products available so it is important to consider your preferences and intentions as you acquire supplies.

If you prefer to work in a more linear style, use hard pastels. If you like heavier applications with broader marks choose soft pastels. I have many different brands of pastels in my box; you may decide too that you want to use a varied selection.

For a good overview of pastel supplies visit Rochester Art's web site www.fineartstore.com. Most of the pastel brands I mention are sold by Rochester, and many are also available at Commercial Art Supply in Syracuse. Additionally, some are available through internet/catalogues like Dakota Art Pastels, Jerry's Artarama, etc. Most pastel manufacturers offer pastels both open stock and in sets. A set is a good way to begin to build your palette. (1/2-stick sets are a good value.) Some companies put together still life, landscape, or portrait sets.

Hard Pastels:

If you prefer working with line, select a hard pastel or one of the "harder" soft pastels. Hard pastels contain more and different types of binders than soft pastels. They are "cleaner" than soft pastels; the pigment tends not to crumble or powder. Hard pastels are firmer and can easily be sharpened to a point. They enable the artist to draw with colored lines, laying them side-by-side or weaving them together to create form. Sticks can be laid on their sides to create a broad swath of color. Because the sticks are firmer than soft pastels, the pigment will typically not apply onto the surface in as dense a fashion as with softer pastels, so the resulting color may not be as intense.

Hard pastels include **NuPastel**, **Farber Castell**, **Cretacolor**, and **Holbein**.

Harder soft pastels include **Grumbacher, Rembrandt, Yarka, Winsor Newton, and Art Spectrum.**

You don't need to have a paper with a "toothy" surface for hard pastels; rag drawing paper or printmaking papers work well. Canson Mi Tientes, Strathmore, and Fabriano are fine for hard pastels and also work for harder soft pastels. Art Spectrum's Colourfix paper is a good surface for harder soft pastels and for most soft pastels. Generally the softer the pastel stick, the more significant the surface, or "tooth" of the paper needs to be. The paper and the pastel must enhance one another. Other appropriate surfaces for soft pastels include LaCarte Pastel Paper, Unison Pastel Paper, and Kitty Wallis (my favorite).

Consider the color and value of your paper. With hard pastels you can allow some of the paper to show through in the final drawing. In our meeting we will discuss the influence of toned paper on your drawings. Especially if you have a limited palette, you will see how the paper will influence the colors and values of your pastels.

Canson Mi Tientes is available as a board. The advantage of this and other board supports is that they are rigid, great when you are working outdoors in the wind!

Soft Pastels:

Sennelier is a great product, particularly when it is pored with La Carte Pastel Paper. There are 552 colors. I have noticed a variation in density, often the darker hues are harder, and the lighter hues and tints are softer. Purple #361 is a must for a rich, cool dark! White tints, with varied warm and cool casts, are especially nice. Rochester Art sells 1/2 stick Sennelier sets of 10 blues, 40 and 80 mixed hues.

Girault has a line of 300 unwrapped round sticks. At first glance they look like a hard pastel. They have a nice firmness yet behave like a soft pastel and can impart a beautiful dense tone.

Townsend Soft Form Diane Townsend started making her own pastels about 30 years ago and still produces them in small batches, consequently color as well as shape and size vary from one lot to another. Her gorgeous colors include iridescents, fluorescents, pearlescents, and metallics. Generally the sticks are about the size of a finger or thumb, so they are good for broad, tonal work.

Terry Ludwig Like Diane, Terry started to make his own pastels to give himself more color options about twelve years ago. His sticks are square and squat, with an especially nice selection of greens. Visit his website www.terryludwig.com and read his helpful Pastel FAQs.

Mt. Vision Another newcomer, Karl Kelly, developed this line in his studio across the street from the Mt. Vision, New York, Post Office! About 200 colors, the sticks are large, a very good value for the money.

Schmincke are made in Germany and always my favorite for intense reds and darks.

Unison is made in England, more than 350 hues, especially nice warm and cool grays.

Great American are *extra* soft. Breathe on these wrong and they crumble to powder.

Despite that they are perhaps my favorite pastel. Bob, the founder of Great American, has a real sense of humor and has named each pigment (For example Burnt Reynolds, Merlot, Surfangel – can you guess what these colors are?)

Soft Pastels with pumice binders: With pumice added as a filler more pigment is used to form a stick so the result exceptionally intense color. I use these on sanded papers but because of the pumice you can use them on smooth surfaces as well.

Henry Roche Handmade in Paris since 1720, use these and you are working in the tradition of Whistler and Degas!

Diane Townsend Terrages were inspired by Roche pastels and developed especially for Wolf Kahn to use on his favorite Lana paper. Diane's **Thinline** is a new product, similar in texture to Terrages yet thinner and slightly longer in size.

Miscellaneous Supplies:

Fixatives are not always necessary. If you are working with soft pastel on a textured surface, the tooth of the paper will hold the pigment. In my experience even hard pastel on smooth surfaces stays in place- that is, when the drawing is handled carefully.

Fixatives can be used to isolate a layer of pastel from subsequent applications.

Recommended brands are Sennelier's **Latour** or **Lascaux**.

Glassine paper is a smooth, archival, interleaving paper that will protect pastel pictures in transport and storage. In a pinch you can use wax paper, or any very smooth paper.

Skin protectants and barrier creams like **Dermashield**, or vinyl gloves, will protect your hands. I have used these products in the past but lately keep a package of wet-wipes handy for frequent clean-up.

An assortment of **brushes** can be useful for blending and for removing soft pastel from drawing surfaces. Blending tips are useful also, especially when a finger is too large for a small area!