

Plein Air Weekend

with Mary Padgett

offered through the Schweinfurth Art Center

June 2-3, 2018, 10-5

Art Supplies

Plein Air Weekend is an opportunity for you to experience the plein air painting process and to receive individualized instruction. I value working plein air because it is an opportunity to focus on the landscape with all our senses. My emphasis is on the process of recording what we see. I will be working with soft pastel, a medium I prefer for its immediacy, brilliant color, and portability. I will give technical instruction in pastel for those who wish. For those opting to use other media, I will offer individual feedback on technique as well as the universal elements of picture making: compositional design, determining value and color, rendering space, and creating form. I will offer feedback and assistance in developing a personal style. My role is to create a supportive working environment, encouraging creative exploration, and furthering each participant's evolution as an artist. This two-day program will celebrate the landscape through an artist's eye!

In addition to soft pastel, you may opt to work with watercolor, gouache, oil or acrylic paint, oil pastel, pencils, pen and ink, and charcoal. A discussion of soft pastel supplies follows below. For watercolor, oil, or acrylic bring a set of basic hues and/or what you enjoy working with. For all media you will need a rigid support like a piece of lightweight foam core, a sketchbook, or a watercolor block. If you have a portable easel and would like to bring it along, please do so, but it is not necessary to have one. I have several extra easels I can share. Without an easel, bring an outdoor stool or chair to use. If you will work in this fashion (and I often do) with your paper/support in your lap please bring an apron or lightweight towel/ cloth to protect your lap from any pastel pigment dust or paint splatters. Other recommended supplies include masking tape, wet-wipes, skin protectants (barrier creams or vinyl gloves to protect your hands), a few brushes for blending and for removing soft pastel from drawing surfaces or to apply watercolor, and a few sticks of vine charcoal for sketching and value studies.

Pastel Supplies

For those of you opting to work with soft pastel, the following is an overview of pastel materials. There are many pastel types and paper/board surfaces on the market so if you have not worked with pastel before read below to understand the general effects of each type of pastel before you purchase some.

You will want to have a minimum of about twenty pastel sticks, enough to give you a variety of color, saturation, and value. I break my sticks into halves or thirds in order to travel with a greater variety in a small package. I pack my sticks in a box protected with foam pads, securely closed, and wrapped in a plastic bag.

You will need papers to work on that are appropriate to the type of pastel you will be using (see below for a further explanation of combining various pastel products with papers). I recommend bringing an assortment of different colored and valued papers to give you more options in the field.

Cut your papers into a size that you are comfortable working on. I typically use papers approximately 12 x 9" when I pack for plein air work, but you can work larger or smaller. Plan on executing two to four paintings a day, in painting sessions lasting approximately 2-3 hours.

Purchase a large sheet of 1/8" foam core and cut it into three pieces, each slightly larger than your paper size. One of these pieces will be a surface upon which to place your paper when you are working, thus affording a rigid support (you'll need this for other media too). The other two pieces of foam core will sandwich the sheets of paper you have prepared, thus protecting them. Interleaf each sheet with a piece of glassine paper, a smooth, archival, inter-leafing paper that will protect pastel pictures in transport and storage. (In a pinch you can use wax paper or smooth newsprint.) Your art supplier should have both sheets and rolls of glassine available. The glassine will protect the finished paintings for the trip home.

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 that you want to use a varied selection.

For a good overview of pastel supplies visit Rochester Art's web site www.fineartstore.com. The site also has links to online instructional videos focusing on

various pastel brands, pastel papers, and techniques. The pastel brands I mention here are sold by Rochester, and many may also be available at your local art supply store. Additionally, some are available through internet/ catalogues like Dakota Art Pastels, Jerry's Artarama, Blick, etc. Most pastel manufacturers offer pastels both open stock and in sets. A set is a good way to begin to build your palette and 1/2- stick sets are a good value. Some companies put together still life, landscape, or portrait sets.

If pastel painting is new to you I recommend purchasing one of the following sets of pastels: NuPastel (a hard pastel product) set of 24 or larger; Art Spectrum (moderate density) 20 or 40 1/2-stick set; Rembrandt (moderate) 30 or 45 full stick or 60 1/2-stick set; Schmincke (softer pastel) 15 or 30 full stick set; Sennelier (softer pastel) 20 or 40 1/2-stick set. You can see all of these at www.fineartstore.com.

If you select NuPastels, Art Spectrum, or Rembrandt your paper doesn't need to have a "tooth" to hold the particles of pigment. You can use any manufacturer recommended paper for charcoal or pastel. I recommend buying a couple of large sheets of hot press (smooth) watercolor paper or Arches or Rives printmaking paper and cutting it to the size you'd like to work with. Additionally purchase a couple of sheets of Colourfix in any colors you'd like to try. Colourfix has more of a tooth so it will hold more pigment, the resulting painting will have a richer quality. It is fun to work on colored papers because the paper's color will affect the appearance of your pastel hues and values.

If you purchase Schmincke or Sennelier, both softer pastels that need a "toothier" surface, you'll want to use Colourfix, Canson Mi-Teintes Touch, LaCarte Pastel Paper, Unison Pastel Paper, Pastel Premier Sanded Paper, Pastelmat Pastel Card, Richeson's Unison Pastel Surface, and/or UArt (a toothy sandpaper-like surface available in 4 grits, non- archival). You can see these papers on Rochester Art's website.

If you have any questions please email me at marypadgettffineart@gmail.com