

A Pastel Primer



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Website: [Http:// southworthjamesr.tripod.com](http://southworthjamesr.tripod.com) The entire day's workshop is online as a downloadable PDF file.

This is a hands-on workshop with the premise that we learn by doing! After today you should be ready to tackle your own projects with some confidence!

- As we get to know our pastels, we will cover some basic concepts that are essential for vibrant paintings: color harmonies, dynamic shapes, exciting textures, and compositions to enhance center of interest (focal point).
- Workshop Outline
 - Colors
 - Textures
 - Aerial perspective or values
 - Composition

We will be doing many exercises or studies together so lots of hands-on pastel time is in store! Be sure to ask questions....

One goal of the workshop is to give maximum time using the pastels. We will do several studies where quantity and having fun is the goal. Along the way, I will have little chalk talks and demonstrations to illustrate the topics. I may have planned more projects than we have time for, so if we don't finish everything, that's OK. It just means there is a reason to paint tomorrow.

Art and Fear is a great motivational book to jump start myself when enthusiasm ebbs. I'll read an excerpt from the book.



"Vacation"

Why pastels are fun to use

Reason One:

Spontaneous and fun

”Carefree”



Reason Two:

Very bright saturated colors

“Joy”



Reason Three:

Easy to control light/darkness

“Newport Morning”



Reason Four:

Show expressive strokes

“Victoria Night”



Reason Five:

Easy to change in midstream

“The Sanctuary”



Reason Six:

Dry Pigment, no mixing, what you see is what you get

Drawbacks:

Expensive and need to be protected from damage by framing.
Allergies, pigment dust

Pass out the PASTELS!

Safety note: Do not blow on pastel paintings. Tap pastel dust into paper bag.

Soft Pastels are the purest form of artist color, formed almost exclusively from pure pigment with only enough binder to allow them to be formed into useable sticks. They vary from hard (Nu pastels) to very soft (Schmincke) with many variations in between. The extensive color lines like Sennelier allow artists a choice of many subtle color variations.

We are going to use a twenty color set by Sennelier. The sticks we're using are ¼ sticks, just right for expressive strokes. If you run out of a color ask me for a replacement.



Sennelier extra-fine soft pastels are the Rolls Royce of pastels. Their intensity of pigment and exceptional softness have been appreciated by pastelists since the turn of the century.

Their world famous beauty made them the preferred pastels of Degas. They are produced the same way today: by hand. Sennelier's are so highly concentrated and velvety that the most gentle strokes deliver a solid, powerful line of brilliant color. Fine variations of shading and the mellowest of tones are possible because of their high quality composition, complimenting every surface.

Over the years the original 700 color range narrowed down to the present 552 colors, presently the widest range available in the market.

Ours is a very limited palate. If you want to explore pastels in the future, consider buying at least an 80 stick ½ size set, for about 50 dollars online. By far best deal available in soft pastel line.

Paper

Pastel paper has either a sandpaper-like surface or a heavy texture to hold pastel on its working surface. We will be using both types today. The Canson pad costs about \$11 or \$1.5 a full sheet, and a full sheet of La Carte runs \$8. In my finished works, I usually use La Carte Pastel Board since it holds more layers of pastel and feels wonderful. Up front is a sample of most major other brands.

CANSON MITIENTES

Canson MiTientes can be used for pastel, graphite, colored pencil, gouache, watercolor, acrylic, offset printing, silk screening, laser printing... just about any time that you need to use paper! Canson Mi-Teintes has long been a standard colored paper surface for pastelists, and one of the few offered in rolls for large scale work. It is a 67% cotton and 33% cellulose fiber, acid free, machine-made 160 gm weight paper. The surface has a very fine tooth, one smooth side and one textured side. The rolls are 59" wide and 11 yards long.

LA CARTE PASTEL BOARD

This pastel board is made on a 200 lb. pH neutral stock. The surface is a finely ground pH neutral vegetable flake which is applied by hand. The surface is very uniform and slightly abrasive which promotes excellent pigment adhesion without requiring a lot of pastel for coverage. The binder used for the surface is water soluble, so care must be taken to keep it dry. La Carte has a soft 'touch' when compared to other sanded pastel papers. There is a nice subtle color range of 14 neutral colors. Six of the colors are available in an intermediate sheet size.



Colors available:

We are using Salmon and the Blue-gray color paper because they are both good medium values. The Salmon works well with both warm (reds, yellows) and the Gray with cool colors (green and blues).

Later on I list a few other papers. The paper is considered the "ground" and by having a toned paper the composition can have some unity right off the bat.

Exercise 1: Color Strokes

Goal: To begin feeling comfortable using the pastels

Demonstration.....Use the sides of the ¼ sticks as I am demonstrating. Think of the side as a wide brush!

- Use a piece of (warm) Salmon La Carte paper.
- Make geometric forms using each twenty pastel; don't overlap between colors. Some great effects are achieved by leaving areas of the paper showing between colors. See detail of hat



detail of "Petal Sweeper"

- Leave ½" or more of untouched paper around borders
- Tap off dust into paper sack every so often, Remember: don't blow!
- Start with light colors and wipe fingers with Kleenex as needed. Diaper wipes work great for a final hand cleanup
- Repeat exercise using a full piece cool (blue-gray) Canson paper



Think about nice look shapes and interesting relationships between colors. Don't copy this example but make up your own

There is a whole lot written about color theory but we must first start by observing for ourselves.

Learning to see take time and practice.

- Note that the light blue/green is very soft and may crumble.... When a color is used up I have replacements.
- The Canson paper has two sides: one smooth and one textured...take your pick!
- Expect your fingers to get colored! It's part of the fun, but do use Kleenex when going from a dark color to a light color...

Color Chalk Talk

Organizing colors (hues) and lights and darks (values)

Goal: Organize our colors into a workable palette



A short explanation of the color wheel and terms!!

Definitions:

Warm colors: yellow to red



Cool colors: green to purple



Tint: color with white added, i.e. pink



Tone: colors with compliment added

Complimentary colors: Colors across the color wheel from each other, i.e. red/ green

Analogous colors: Colors next to each other on wheel, i.e. red orange

Shade: Colors with black added.



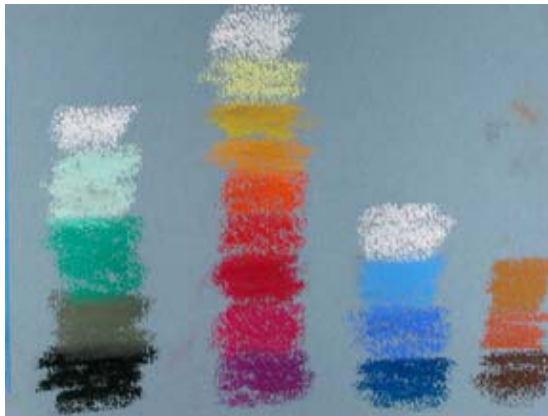
Earth Tone: Tones of yellows and oranges and reds that are darkened

Exercise 2: Blending Strokes

Lets do this exercise 3 times using ½ sheet of gray, then sienna and white Canson paper

Place one inch blocks, as in the photos. We will go from dark to light and make a color chart
We will divide the palette into cool greens, warm red , cools blues, and warm earth tones
This is a good way to understand some basic blending possibilities and color ideas.

Detail of “Cabo palms” showings how blends in sky can be used:



blends of green, reds, blues,
and earth-tones

Tips:

- The colors are darker in value at bottom so add black here if you want and also add white at the top of column for fun.
- The green also goes well also with the earth tones and the light blue/green goes nicely with the blues

Fixative: I use Krylon Workable Fixative throughout the painting process. If used, the color will darken some but future layers can be overlain very cleanly.

Exercise 3: Hatch Strokes

Goal: Learn the strokes and the feel of our pastels

Hatching or side by side strokes:

Place vertical or oblique strokes of each of the 4 color pastel groupings from the last exercise, on to ½ sheet of red/gray and sienna Canson paper. Again, we will do four areas on each paper: warm colors, cool colors, earth tones, and greens. Use color chart exercise as a guide.



Note; let some of the paper show through for sparkle

Try:

- Using edge of pastel not wide side
- Try adding the green to the earth tones as this green is really a toned green so blends well



detail of "Bush Park II"



Notice how some colors vibrate next to each other. There is no right or wrong here. We are just having fun. If a pastel get other colors on it, wipe it with a Kleenex. Fill in most of the page but leave at least ½ inch untouched paper around the border. As dust builds up, tap your paper off into your paper bag.

Finally, blend several of the areas with your finger. See how this softens the surface

Tip: Blending earth tones with other colors really "muddies" them. Use these color spots carefully! Of course mixing black with a color will not be pretty!

Exercise 4: Side Strokes

We repeat the same color blends but now use the side of the pastel sticks. The paper is gray La Carte paper. This ¼ size piece is perfect for these strokes. Be bold in your strokes.

Goal: Learn to make more expressive strokes. Again, if you pastel crumbles, get a new piece.

Demonstration!



Why side strokes?

Answer: By using the sides we keep the surface painterly and avoid the distraction of fussy details and overworking the composition. On finished paintings, I add detail to the center of interest that blends in with the rest of the work. I also blend areas that eliminate the strokes, especially for a soft backgrounds.

This can also be used on an otherwise "dead" area to enliven it

Note: In a single painting I will use several types of strokes for visual variety.

Tip:

- Keep alternating the direction of the stroke to add interest to areas.
- Add yellow/orange, yellow, and light yellow to the top of the earth tone column
- Don't worry about fingerprints on your paper: they are better than a signature!
- If you must try and remove a mark, try a stiff brush followed by a kneaded eraser. It's probably better to fix the surface and add a new layer of pastel

Exercise 5: “X” Strokes

Tip: Use a color paper that is the major color of the foreground.



Place “x” strokes of each of the color pastel groupings on bluish and yellowish Canson papers (thus four areas on each paper: warm colors, cool colors, earth tones, and greens)

Note:

- This time we are not making columns!
- Have strokes look random... various lengths, sizes, thickness
- Make sure some of the paper shows through

This stroke can be used in warm colors to suggest foreground vegetation or in cool colors suggesting movement in water or foreground shadows

Detail of “One in a Million”



“X” stroke used here and color of paper showing through

Exercise 6: Grass Strokes



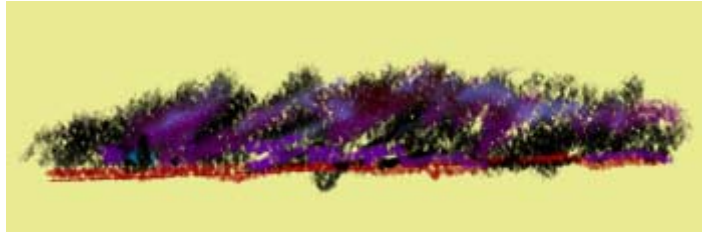
- We will do this exercise on yellow Canson paper, then Salmon La Carte
- First, we use yellow to red from left to right. Blocking in major shapes adds to vibrancy of color unless color is earth tone or back.
- Now add strokes building up nice grass shapes
- A few strokes of blue adds a complimentary color note as does the blue/green foreground

“Smith Rock” and “Sparks Lake” have good examples of grass shapes



Exercise 7: Dark Strokes

Lets use yellow Canson paper for the next mountain exercise!

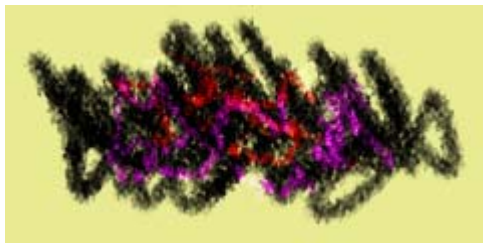


Now try some mountains.

- Black first....let some of the paper sparkle through
- Purple over the top,
- then blue over that
- and finally, a red line on the shore for warm contrast.

In some of my paintings, I use a metallic black that sparkles, adding life to the dark areas

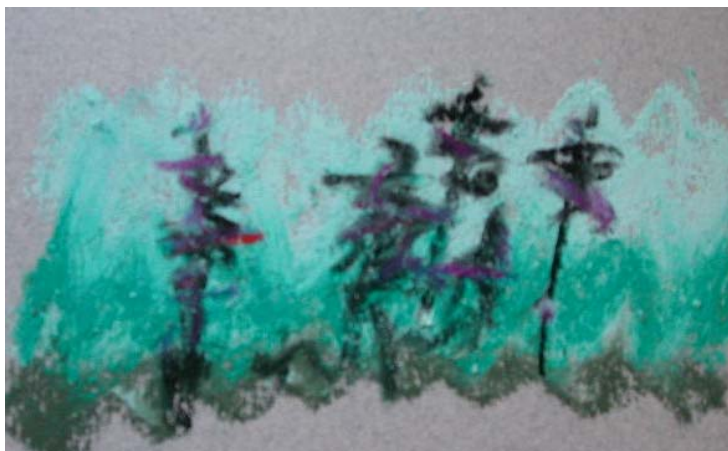
An idea to try at home. The “sprinkle” technique



To do this, scrap some shaving off the pastel with a palate knife, then press them on the paper

Exercise: Trees

- Red/gray paper
- Blend in green, blue/green, blue/green for sky
- Quick black sketch of fir trees
- Purple over trees



Exercise 9: Putting It all together

Goal: To combine our grasses with trees and loose foreground

I'll demonstrate first, then have you do this study three times. Try not to fuss. If you make a major mistake learn from it and correct it the next time.

Use a warm and cool Canson paper and salmon La Carte paper. Notice how each colored paper changes the feel of the piece.



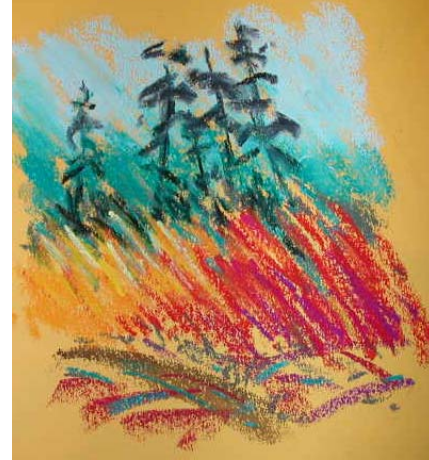
Grasses



Sky & Foreground



Tree Trunks



Finish Each Area