

10 Top Tips for Drawing with Pastel Pencils

Your quick reference for confident, colourful drawings

LIGHT LAYERS

THINK OF PASTEL PENCILS LIKE WATERCOLOR, NOT PAINT. BUILD YOUR COLOURS SLOWLY WITH SOFT LAYERS RATHER THAN PRESSING HARD. THIS KEEPS YOUR COLOURS CLEAN AND PAPER TEXTURE ALIVE. THIS GIVES YOU ROOM TO ADJUST MISTAKES AND CREATE DEPTH WITHOUT FILLING THE PAPER TOO SOON.

BLEND SPARINGLY

YOUR FINGERS ADD OIL AND CAN DULL COLOURS. INSTEAD, USE A SOFT SPONGE, BLENDING STUMP, OR JUST LET THE LAYERING CREATE THE BLEND. A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

WORK CLEAN & REST YOUR EYES

TAP YOUR BOARD OFTEN TO LET DUST FALL AWAY. STEP BACK EVERY 10–15 MINUTES: YOU’LL SPOT COLOUR IMBALANCES, MUDDY PATCHES, OR OVER-WORKED AREAS MUCH FASTER

SHARP SHARP SHARP

A SHARP PASTEL PENCIL GIVES YOU CONTROL. USE A CRAFT KNIFE AND FINE SANDPAPER, NOT A NORMAL SHARPENER, TO AVOID BREAKAGE AND KEEP STRONG POINTS FOR DETAIL

NO MORE MUDDY COLOURS

MUDDINESS HAPPENS WHEN TOO MANY LAYERS ARE BLENDED OR WHEN COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS ARE OVER-MIXED (LIKE RED + GREEN).

TO FIX THIS:

STOP LAYERING AND GENTLY LIFT WITH A KNEADED ERASER. ADD A CLEAN, BRIDGING COLOUR (LIKE A NEUTRAL GREY OR SOFT WHITE) BEFORE RE-LAYERING.

PROTECT YOUR HIGHLIGHTS

RESERVE YOUR BRIGHTEST WHITES AND LIGHTEST TONES UNTIL THE END. PASTEL PENCILS DON’T ERASE TO PURE WHITE, SO KEEP THOSE AREAS CLEAN FOR SPARKLE

MATCH BEFORE YOU DRAW

USE A COLOUR CHART OR REFERENCE TOOL (LIKE OUR COLOUR ATLAS) TO COMPARE PENCILS ACROSS BRANDS BEFORE YOU BEGIN. THIS HELPS YOU CHOOSE THE CLOSEST MATCH FOR YOUR SUBJECT AND KEEP YOUR COLOURS CONSISTENT

THE RIGHT PAPER

PASTEL PENCILS LOVE TOOTHY SURFACES. PAPERS LIKE PASTELMAT OR VELOUR HOLD MANY LAYERS WITHOUT FILLING TOO QUICKLY. SMOOTH PAPER LIMITS YOUR OPTIONS

FIXATIVES

USE WITH CAUTION. I NEVER USE IT AS THEY CAN DARKEN AND FLATTEN COLOURS.

THINK IN SHAPES, NOT LINES

BLOCK IN BIG SHAPES OF COLOUR AND SHADOW FIRST, THEN REFINE. PASTELS REWARD “MASSING IN” - BLOCKING IN BIG SHAPES RATHER THAN DRAWING TINY DETAILS TOO EARLY