

***Pastel Painting Studio: Working from Photos***  
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West Lake Road School House, Canandaigua

Ontario County Arts Council

**Friday June 2, 2023, 1pm - 5pm, Saturday June 3, 2023 10 am - 5pm (1 hour lunch break).**

Photographs are a fabulous resource for painters offering subjects that we may not have an opportunity to otherwise observe. Photos capture a moment in time with specific atmospheric and light conditions. They can be digitally edited, enhanced and improved. Yet a photo is static and the trick is to know what information to take to the painting, what to leave out, and how to imbue the subject with energy, i.e., how to make the painting not look like a copy of a photo.

This workshop is an opportunity for you to receive individualized instruction in the pastel medium. For individuals new to pastel, my goal is to educate you about the broad range of pastel products and techniques, to assist you in developing your personal style, and to encourage creative exploration. For experienced pastellists my goal is to provide feedback in a supportive working environment.

We will be working from photos that you will provide. Your goal will be to make a painting that uses the information in the photo but that is not a mere copy of it. It will be a challenging work session examining the structure of the image, interpreting it, and translating it to an exciting painting.

Bring in several photos to choose from, have one black and white copy and another in color for each. The photos should be no smaller than 8 1/2 x 11". Look for photos with good value contrast, i.e., variations from light to dark. Once you decide on which photo to work from I will explain how to enlarge it onto your painting surface maintaining the existing proportion. Your final painting will be larger than your photo.

The next step will be to make a black and white study of your composition. Once that is successfully completed you will move onto color. We will end our two-day session with a critique and discussion.

If you have any concerns about selecting photos or questions about the workshop or supplies, please email me at [marypadgettfineart@gmail.com](mailto:marypadgettfineart@gmail.com).

### ***Pastel Supplies:***

You will want to have a minimum of twenty pastel sticks, enough to give you some variety of color, saturation, and value. More pastel sticks will give you more options so I encourage a larger selection when possible. 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 that you want to use a varied selection.

For a good overview of pastel supplies visit Rochester Art's web site [www.fineartstore.com](http://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. Syracuse's Commercial Art Supply offers a limited selection of pastels: NuPastel, Pan Pastels, Rembrandt and Jack Richeson's Minis, a new product I like very much. If you shop at Commercial be sure to bring in this supply list, with it they will offer you a student discount.

Pastels are also available through internet/catalogues like Blick ([www.dickblick.com](http://www.dickblick.com)), Jerry's Artarama, etc., and Amazon. 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: Prismacolor NuPastel (a hard pastel product) set of 24 or larger; Art Spectrum (moderate density) 20 or 40 1/2-stick set; Rembrandt (moderate) 30 1/2-stick set; Unison (soft) 30 1/2 stick set and other assortments available; Sennelier (soft) 20, 30, or 40 1/2-stick set; Great American (very soft) 60 1/2-stick set. You can see all of these at [www.fineartstore.com](http://www.fineartstore.com).*

To experience the range of pastels available I recommend purchasing one of Rochester Art Supply's "Tasty Pastel Samplers". They retail for about \$26. <https://www.fineartstore.com/s-1396-samplers.aspx>

I own a variety of different pastels, each purchased for its hue and value. Among my favorite manufacturers is Terry Ludwig, [www.terryludwig.com](http://www.terryludwig.com). Sign up for his newsletter and you will receive notifications of his sales. Another favorite is Blue Earth Pastels sold by Dakota Pastels, located in Washington state, <https://www.dakotapastels.com>.

### ***Pastel Papers:***

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, for example Canson Mi Tientes or Strathmore. Other options are Colourfix or Mi Tientes Touch. Both of these papers have more of a tooth and will hold more pigment so the resulting painting will have a richer quality. They are available in a variety of colors. 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 any of the "soft" pastels (Schmincke, Sennelier, Unison, Great American, etc.) you'll want a "toothier" surface to grab the particles of pastel. Use Pastel Premier Sanded Paper (available in fine or medium grit and in 5 colors), LaCarte Pastel Paper (14 colors, cannot take water based media), Unison Pastel Paper, Pastelmat Pastel Card, Richeson's Unison Pastel Surface, UArt (a toothy sandpaper-like surface available in 5 grits from course to fine, takes water-based paint), Colourfix, and/or Mi Tientes Touch. You can see these papers on Rochester Art's website: <https://www.fineartstore.com/s-1285-surfaces.aspx>

Dakota Pastels ( <https://www.dakotapastels.com> ) sells Lux Archival Pastel Paper which is similar to Pastel Premier or Kitty Wallace. Dakota has monthly sales on selected products that are often good deals.

### ***Miscellaneous Supplies:***

In order to make a black and white study from your photo bring some inexpensive drawing paper (white, gray, or tan) and few sticks of vine charcoal, compressed charcoal, and/or conté. You will also need a straight edge ruler to create a grid on your photo.

If you have a portable easel please bring it with you. You will need a rigid backing for your papers as well. If you don't have a drawing board buy a sheet of 1/8" or 1/4" foam core and cut it to a size that is larger by several inches than the paper you will be working on.

For pastel painting 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. Rochester Art Supply is now carrying Colour Shapers, silicone tipped tools for blending. They come in 5 sizes/5 shapes. I find Pan Pastel Sofft Tools, particularly Sofft Sponges, very useful.

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 painting is handled carefully. However, 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, inter-leafing 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 (Gloves in a Bottle or Dermashield) or disposable powder-free gloves will protect your hands and make clean up easier.