

Heather Jolliffe - Pastels

March 2017

Heather began by explaining her role as a demonstrator for Derwent Art Products - coloured pencils, brushes, watercolour paints, and papers etc. She also explained how through her it was possible to get free copies of the SAA magazine.

Today, she is going to demonstrate two kinds of pastels - oils pastels and chalk.

She described the 'Academy' range of oils pastels as representing very good value, selling at 24 sticks for around £10. The Sennellier oil sticks are the top quality range and she would be using both. She also had a set of Derwent chalk pastels - both oil and chalk had an excellent colour range.

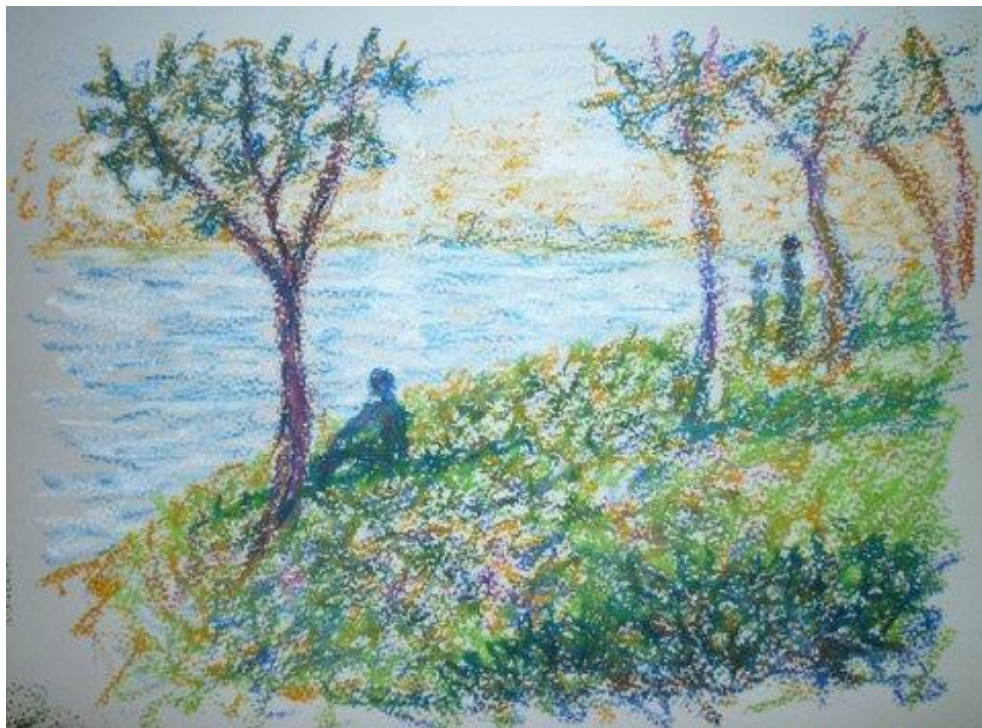


“I’ll use the oil pastels first, drawing a copy of this Seurat picture in his ‘pointillism’ style. I’m using a tinted Bockingford paper which has a nice texture for pastels, more like watercolour paper. I’m using the Sennellier sticks – they feel creamy to use, and quick. Their softness is well suited to the small marks and dots of the ‘pointillism’ approach. The blue for the water is a bit dark but I’ll tone it down by blending in some white. Because it’s an oil pastel, I’ll not do this with my fingers, but with a piece of rag, or a brush – even using some turps. You can’t really rub out oil pastels – it’s not like chalk which you can just lift off.”

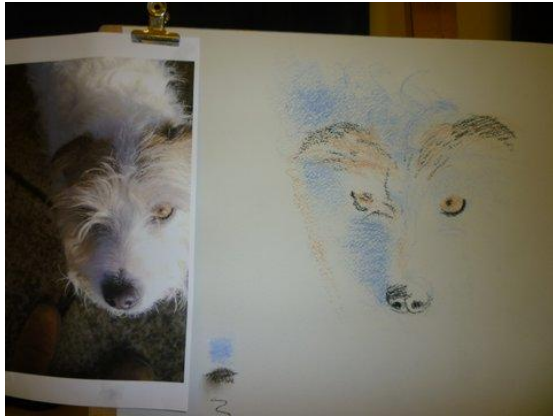
“The tree trunks are terracotta, darkened in the shade with some deep blue. The foliage against the light is a darker blue, toned down with some yellow ochre. I’ll scrape it with a palette knife or the end of a pencil to give it some texture. I’ll put the man in dark blue with his shadow ehind him, and the shadow of the tree in a greeny blue.”



“I’ll put in some other people along the shore to the right. The background yellow is a bit strong, so I’ll tone it down with white. Pastel papers often have a stronger colour which you can let show through. The general rule is to build up from light through to dark - test your colours on some spare paper to see what colours will go over others. The more expensive pigments will be stronger to put on top of others, for example I can always do final highlights with Sennelier white.”



“Now for the chalk pastels. You can blend colours together with water, or with a dry brush. I’ll copy this photo of a terrier dog, doing a foundation drawing in a light brown. The nose is grey which will later be mostly black”.



“See how the texture of the paper affects the way the pastel sits on its surface.”

“Using the flat side of the chalk enables you to cover larger areas at a time. Now, using a piece of stick, I’m doing a broad measurement of the distance between the eyes in relation to the position of the nose.”



“If you make a mistake, you can lift off the chalk pastel using a putty rubber or piece of Blu-tack. Make sure you have a clean surface otherwise it may smudge. You can get pencil sharpeners specifically for pastel pencils - there’s nothing worse than a pencil with a broken wobbly point. And of course you can ‘fix’ chalk afterwards with a professional fixative – but you can fix your work as you go along - it’s often better than relying on one dose of fixing at the end. I’ll blend chalk with my fingers – as I do with charcoal – but if you don’t like that you can use paper stumps. Here I’ll use a damp brush to blend the colours. What was powdery becomes more connected, almost like a watercolour.”



“Spraying the work with a fine water spray will smooth the colours together very effectively. What I’m doing here won’t need a fixative – the water is keeping it all together. I don’t mind using pure black for the eyes round the eyes, and I’ll use a grey background to define the shape of the head”.



“Note in this picture the patches of colour to test the shade is what you want. The range of pastel papers is of course immense. They range from a very rough ‘sandpaper’ to an almost totally smooth ‘velvet’. I’m leaving some of the white paper to show through to give the full contrast, and I’ll do the white hair over the dog’s eyes last, so that they will be really bright and fresh.”



“I hope I have encouraged you to try some artwork using one of these pastels. They are so quick and easy to use and as you see, can create a variety of very subtle effects.”

Robert McLeish