November 2025 : Nina Squires – Seascape in pastel

Nina began with a clear message that Unison soft pastels are the most forgiving medium. Pastel use dates back to cave paintings so their use is in our genes. The evening turned into more of an interactive tutorial than a demonstration.

Her first comment was to evaluate the pastels she uses, made by Unison, are high quality with the highest proportion of pigment to binder. Price wise they are mid range for the quality. She explained the surface quality of the papers she uses. Art Spectrum Colourfix Original is a paint coating applied to paper or card to offer sandpaper texture. This evening she used Uart Premium Sanded Pastel Paper in sand colour. The quality of the prepared surface is vital, the more toothed the surface the denser is the deposit of pastel, you can feel the difference.

She began her seascape with a mid-blue sky over which she applied a pale grey. Grabbing her atomiser spray she applied a gentle spray of Vodka (she uses this because it dries or evaporates quicker than water). This apray liquified the pastel into a paint quality for easy blending with a brush. Less discerning with her brushes, she used a flat thin hog hair varnish brush, also good for flicking.

Nina teaches, demonstrates and undertakes commissions. Injecting energy, character and movement into your artwork is your unique investment. Faber Castell pastels and Caran d'ache are useful, given they are water soluble, with a carefully blade sharpened point enable detailed character and shape for drama and contrast, particularly while rotating in use. Her Sketchbook work across the pages she says is good discipline to keep your hand and eye in.

Working upright with these pastels gives less drop off, she doesn't use fixative unless applying multiple layers. She dispelled the mysteries of application, is a member of the Pastel Society, and contributes to International Artist Magazine.

A great evening of both tutorial and question time.