

# Introduction

Greetings and welcome to the London Art College's Pastels course. We trust that you'll find the study plan we've prepared both enjoyable and beneficial as you advance in your painting and drawing skills. Our primary goal is to offer a relaxed, pressure-free, and enjoyable approach to nurturing your artistic abilities through the captivating medium of pastels.

Whilst we encourage you to complete the various study units in sequence, there is no rush, study in your own time - but try to keep a bit of momentum going. If possible it is a good idea to set a regular time each week, or day and to stick to it.

If you have any difficulty understanding the course content or the assignments, please do not hesitate to reach out to your dedicated personal tutor. Upon finishing each set of assignments and allowing your tutor the opportunity to review your work, you will receive valuable feedback and guidance. The course is designed to be fun as well as educational.

We will cover all the practical issues related to drawing and painting with pastels except for making your own. So you can expect a comprehensive (but not exhaustive) coverage of the medium. At the end of the course you should have built up a collection of work and we will suggest further avenues of study and development.

You will require: a drawing board of about 55 x 70 cms and 1 - 1.5cm deep. It should be made of plywood or MDF (medium density fibreboard) and should be flat, clean, grease free and have no rough edges. If you are unable to get one then use the card backing to a sketch pad or a table top that you are happy to work on. The advantage of a drawing board is that work in progress can be left on it, it can be put away, takes up little space and protects and supports the work. Art shops sell them ready made, it is cheaper to buy the pre-cut material from a hardware store and sand down the edges yourself if you have the time, space and energy. After this you will need to wipe off any dust with a clean, damp, lint free cloth.

You will also require a selection of papers to draw on (sizes and types are listed in study unit 4). Some tracing paper will help and you should have some pencils, erasers, paint brushes, fixative, masking tape, gum strip, scissors / craft knife and straight edged rule. A dust sheet helps (available from DIY stores) and you will require an area to work in which has some daylight to it. If you plan to work into the night, then you are advised to get a daylight adjusted bulb for accurate and sensitive colour usage. Some sort of folder is necessary for you to keep work in. These can be expensive and vary in size and type. Ideally you should have an A2 sized one which is usually made from card. You can get stronger, plastic presentation ones, but these are not really necessary. Or you can make your own, using cardboard from boxes (used to package large things like fridges etc.) and parcel tape.

## COLOUR AND PIGMENT

Terminology can be perplexing; red, yellow, and blue pigments are also referred to as primary colours, and it's these that you should focus on. We label them as primary because they cannot be derived from any other hues. Primary colours can be combined to produce secondary colours, and the method of mixing is an integral part of your technique. Your technique evolves through your studies with us and your openness to experimentation.

The colour wheel displays secondary colours, which are the products of mixing any two of the primary pigment colours. For example, when red and yellow are combined, they yield orange, which is a secondary colour.

Furthermore, you can mix secondary colours with primary ones in equal proportions to create tertiary colours. For instance, blending red with orange results in a reddish-orange hue, a tertiary colour.

This represents the most basic explanation of colour pigment mixing theory. The theory of colour and its practical application can become quite intricate. Before delving into further details, there are a few additional aspects of colour theory to consider. If you examine the colour wheel, you'll notice that specific colours are positioned opposite each other; for example, red is opposite green, yellow is opposite blue, and orange is opposite blue/violet. We term these pairs of colours "complementary." They possess the ability to accentuate each other, causing them to resonate or harmonize. However, this effect is greatly influenced by the quantity and form of the colours present. At this stage, it's important to be aware of this phenomenon.

Another facet of colour theory involves the idea of a colour's temperature or the emotions it conveys. Red, for instance, is considered a warm colour, although we can find cooler shades of red within the spectrum of colours we encounter. Red possesses a unique characteristic in that the human eye can perceive more variations in tone within the red part of the spectrum than in any other area.

Looking at paint, Ultramarine, apart from being a fairly transparent pigment, is quite a warm blue, with hints of red. Cerulean Blue is cooler and greener. So we can identify properties in a colour which can be put to use to give a feeling to part of a picture.



## HISTORY OF PASTELS

Pastels became popular during the eighteenth century. They were invented by Jean Perre'al at the turn of the fifteenth century. The term derives from the Italian 'pastello', meaning pasta or paste. A Venetian artist called Rosalba Carriera (1675 - 1758) was the first artist alleged to have worked exclusively with pastels.

By 1870 - at the advent of French impressionism, there were 2500 pastellists working in Paris. Pastels suited the style of impressionism because of their luminosity of colour, spontaneity of application, and their tendency to produce broken colour. Edgar Degas, an artist who worked around that time has produced some of the most memorable artworks there are in pastels. Artists have continued to use pastels to good effect up to the present day, one of the most notable contemporary artists to utilise pastels is R.B. Kitaj. No matter how indirect the connection may seem, by selecting pastels as your preferred medium, you become a part of this distinct artistic context.



Degas



## LAYERING OR FEATHERING

This method has already been mentioned in unit 6. One of the best aspects of pastels is the way broken colour can be worked with to achieve desired effects. Degas liked to do this and developed quite complex ways of working. By lightly applying colour, fixing it and then applying another thin 'veil' of colour over the previous one, you can get the colour to shimmer and suggest more than one or a hybrid colour quality. This is helpful particularly when describing areas which are indistinct or neutral in appearance. However, most colours appear to consist of a number of variations and it is advisable to practice and learn about layering early on. You will need to use fixative for this; we re-emphasise the precautions mentioned in unit 4.



## SGRAFFITO

This is a word of Italian origin. They have a word which means 'to scratch' - graffiare, which is what this technique consists of. If soft pastel is worked over another layer which is fixed, it can be scratched off using any sharp implement to reveal something of the under colour. This again produces broken colour and can be used to good effect to redraw or draw with the underlying colour. A wire brush could even be used to get textures so long as care is taken not to go through the support. The top layer should not be fixed until work is finished and the underlayer can consist of the paper colour, a layer of paint or an ink stain. Experiment with this technique if you feel it is appropriate to do so.

## BLENDING

Creating the appearance of one colour merging into another can be achieved by: carefully observing the colours which you can see and making positive decisions about what they are. Choosing good equivalents from your pastel stock and applying the colours to follow the form. Shifting one colour into another can be achieved by using the tip of an appropriately sized, round headed brush, a finger or a paper torchon. If you use torchons, the tips will require constant peeling as they will soon become grubby and pollute colours if you are not careful. A certain amount can be done with the pastel during application or by layering. Where blending is most likely to be of use is where the form of a subject changes direction or where the light changes i.e. from light to dark. Take care in doing this not to overwork the surface or become hooked on the effects. However, to keep a pastel drawing fresh it is inadvisable to do too much blending. In fact this is the reason why there are so many different tones/tints of any particular hue.

## HATCHING AND CROSS-HATCHING



This is another way of applying pastel colours as you draw. It is used to build up areas of tone. By placing parallel lines of the same colour alongside one another, with varying widths and lengths of mark and gaps between them you can build up an area of tone and/or colour. This can be dense and saturated or light and airy to impart feeling to areas of your picture. Often it is best if the marks follow the form of the subject. You can intensify the application by cross hatching. To do this, make another layer of marks at right angles (or an angle) to the original set of marks so that the colour is denser and less of the support shows through. It is a technique often used in pen and pencil drawings and in etching. Again, you should experiment with it and see where you may apply it in your work. Don't just do cross hatching because it is there to be done, use the technique judiciously.