

Pastel Pencil Techniques

Starting out
with

Pastel Pencils

Second Edition



Created especially for the pastel pencil artist

No.1

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Introduction

This is the first in a range of instructional booklets covering all the techniques associated with the pastel pencil medium. When I started using the pastel pencils in 1985 they were not thought of as a medium in their own right but as a sketching tool or to add fine detail to the soft pastels. There were no books or information of any kind on how the pastel pencils should be used even though they had already been around for over 40 years at that time. Therefore I had in effect a blank canvas to work on and was at liberty to use them in any way I chose. As I was already an established watercolour artist I worked on the same principle as watercolour that is building up the colours from light to dark. This worked very well and is still the main technique that we use with the pastel pencils today.

Pastel Pencil Materials

I am going to list here the materials and tools you will need to use in conjunction with the pastel pencils. I will also explain why it is important to use the right materials and the advantages of having the correct tools.

Pastel Pencils

There are at least six makes of pastel pencil on the market but I only rate four of them as suitable for the techniques we use. The three pencils are:

Faber-Castell's Pitt range is my favourite. They are reliable and can be sharpened to a fine point, this is really important for detailed work. If there is a fault with them it is that they do not have a large colour range, especially in the grey tones.

STABILO Carbothello These pencils are ok but they are prone to splintering down the length of the 'lead', however they do perform well and I would suggest their use, if you can find them.

Cretacolor is a pastel pencil that has the same quality as Pitt and has 72 in their colour range. There are some unique colours in the range that I wouldn't be without, mostly the 229 brown grey (vital to my "shadow" series of tutorials) and their pinks and other greys.

Caran d'Ache is a new pastel pencil to the market. They are the most expensive on the market but the quality of the pencil is very high indeed. The texture these pencils are very soft and creamy and great for combining with other hard pencils such as the PITT brand.

Pastel Paper

There are a large range of pastel paper on the market and the choice you make depends on the kind of work you will be doing with the pastel pencils. The best of the bunch is PastelMat made by Clairefontaine. It has a sand paper like texture and is very thick (300gsm). It can take a lot of layers of pastel and the end results you can get are amazing. However, I have found that this paper is not ideal for beginners starting out. This is because even though Pastelmat is a great paper, the texture is not easy

to work with. The paper I would recommend for beginners is the Fabriano Sand Coloured Ingres. I have used this paper from the beginning and it has a horizontal tooth that runs across it which grips the pastel from the pencil. The reason I like this paper for beginners and taught for many years with this paper is because you can easily erase mistakes on it using an ordinary eraser. The sand colour of the Ingres (also available in Pastelmat) is a great neutral tone and compliments all subjects. The other colours in Pastelmat that I have found that deliver great results are the dark grey and the light grey (also ideal for coloured pencil work).

If you are living in another country and cannot get hold of these papers then UART 800 Grit is a very similar paper to Pastelmat and can be widely found in the USA. Another paper that is also good is Canson Mi-Teintes Touch.

Blending Tools

The best blending tool you have is your finger, but you will need others depending on the effect you are trying to achieve. The paper blender is a good tool as it is gentle and does not overwork the blending process. Use this if you want to lay down a base colour that still requires texture on the finished detail, i.e. roofs, brickwork, hair etc. The colour shaper, however, is the best tool and will help you to achieve a smooth finished detail, i.e. fine hair, skin, skies etc. It is also ideal to use in backgrounds and other awkward areas where you can't reach with your finger. The colour shaper is a tool that I can confidently say has **transformed** my artwork. A colour shaper is a brush-like tool with a rubber end. It can in fact be used as a brush because you can use the colour that transfers onto the end to mix with the other colours in your picture. We also hold it and use it in a similar way, with brush strokes. They come in different shapes and sizes and in a grey (firm tip) or ivory (soft tip) version. The grey is a great all rounder and the ivory will give you a softer blend which is ideal for things like skin tones. If you are struggling to find them in your local art shop then we do sell them on [our website](#). If you can only afford to buy 1 type of colour shaper then we would recommend the Grey Chisel Size 2 Colour Shaper.

Sharpening Pastel Pencils

Because Pastel Pencils are different to other colouring or graphite pencils, they are more difficult to sharpen. They have a chalk lead and generally a thicker casing to house this lead, this makes them tricky to sharpen. So what are your options?

Using a Blade

Since Colin first started using pastel pencils and realised that a standard sharpener wouldn't cut it, he resorted to using a blade. Mastering this technique takes a little practice but the pay off is worth it. You can get a lot of control over the point and thickness of the lead. You can use either a safety razor blade (Colin's preferred tool) or a Stanley Knife.

This technique doesn't work for everyone though and if you still prefer to use a sharpener then there is a solution.

Why don't all sharpeners work?

There are a couple of reasons why sharpeners struggle with pastel pencils. One is that they vary in size and shape. For example Faber-Castell have a round casing and Caran d'Ache have a hexagonal casing (and are also slightly bigger). This means that these pencils simply won't fit in all sharpeners.

Another reason is that the blades that are inside these sharpeners simply aren't durable enough to handle sharpening pastel pencils.

Years ago we thought we had found the solution with one of the swordfish ikon manual hand-crank sharpeners because they did such a good job. We posted a video showing just how well they sharpened pastel pencils. The video was a success and gained thousands of views. Sadly though we didn't realise that after several uses, the blade inside started to blunt and would soon stop working.

This soon became a problem and swordfish quickly contacted us to stop recommending the sharpener because they were getting so many

complaints about the blades blunting! It simply wasn't designed for pastel pencils and so we went back to the drawing board.

The Solution

Luckily though, our fellow pastel pencil artist and friend Jason Morgan, found a solution to keep the blades working for longer. Interestingly enough it's still the Swordfish Ikon sharpener that is the best choice but there is a way to keep the blades going.

The key? A woodless graphite pencil.

Every now and again, if you use a woodless graphite pencil on the sharpener, it will lubricate the blades and keep it going for longer. It doesn't guarantee the blades from blunting but does keep them going longer.

Erasers

As previously stated, one of the main advantages in using the pastel pencil medium is the fact that it can be erased. All the light colours can be erased completely whereas the medium and dark colours can be erased sufficiently so as to allow you to correct your work. You will appreciate as you move on through the techniques of using the pastel pencil that the medium and dark colours generally need a base of light colours to be applied first. This means that in nearly all cases the pastel pencils will be able to be removed completely most of the time because the darker colours have been cushioned by the lighter ones. I would recommend that you use a soft eraser for the complete removal of the pastel, as this will not damage the pastel paper. A putty eraser is ideal when you do not want to remove the whole of the pastel application but wish to remove excess colour you may have applied. Here it is advisable not to rub the colour off but to dab it off instead, this avoids the possibility of dragging the underneath colour to where it's not wanted. A really useful tool is Faber-Castell's double ended eraser pencil. It looks like an ordinary pencil but has a white point at one end and a pink point at the other. The pink point is equivalent to a soft eraser while the white point is harder and will completely remove strong colours. The white point also removes a little of the pastel paper surface so care should be taken when using this end.

Stick Pastels

Stick Pastels are particularly useful in skies, water, human hair etc. and can be added to give an impressionistic look to pastel pencil pictures. For years I loved and used the Polychromos Pastel Sticks from Faber-Castell. In 2021, they discontinued the range sadly so I have resorted to using what stock I have left and also the 24 half-stick soft pastels from Faber-Castell which are also quite a good product. Generally, hard stick pastels like the Polychromos sticks fall somewhere between pastel pencils and soft pastel sticks. They are a little softer than the pastel pencils therefore can be placed on top and indeed mixed with the pencils to create added strength and brightness.

Soft Pastels

Unlike the Polychromos pastel sticks, very soft pastels (such as those made by Rembrandt) and pastel pencils do not generally work well when mixed together in a picture owing to the different consistency. But they do work well when added as final touches to pastel pencil work or when applied on top of a pastel pencil base for backgrounds. The exception to this rule is when a rough rather than smooth pastel paper is used (e.g. Pastelmat). The pastel paper that resembles fine sandpaper will accept all the pastel mediums mixed together and indeed will allow light colours to be placed over dark, a technique that is not successful with the Ingres paper.

Other Materials

There are several other tools allied to the use of the pastel pencil that will certainly make life easier for the artist. The lead or graphite pencil best used with the pastel pencil medium is an HB pencil. Anything harder will dig into the pastel paper and form an impression that is hard to cover up. 2B or softer will smudge and tend to discolour the lighter colours. If you choose to use a transfer carbon to transfer the images or line drawings to the pastel paper make sure that it is black and of a good quality. I always tape my pastel paper to a stout board using masking tape or sticky tape, smooth hardboard is ideal for this.

It always amazes me when I see my students and other artists compromising their artistic work by not having the right materials by them while they work. You will greatly benefit if you take on board the tools and materials that I have recommended. Don't leave anything to chance, the better prepared you are the better chance you have of pulling a masterpiece out of the hat.

Start with a line drawing

The worst dilemma an artist can face before starting a picture is the blank drawing surface staring back at them. Having decided on a subject that they wish to draw and paint the next move is to produce a drawing or plan of that subject onto the drawing surface. There are many ways this can be done and it depends on the artists drawing ability. Different subjects require various levels of drawing skills, for instance a simple landscape would rate as possibly the easiest whereas a human portrait, where a likeness is necessary, would require a great deal of drawing skill.

If you are one of the 95% of the human race that needs to be helped by some form of drawing aid I am going to explain how you can easily overcome this problem. I personally use my square drawing system for all but the simplest of my pastel paintings, and I can assure you that many of my professional colleagues use a drawing aid of some kind for their work. So don't be fooled into thinking that you are the 'odd one out'. Think back, how many times have you seen the demonstrating artist draw out the subject they are about to paint. The answer is rarely if ever would this be considered because it takes so long to map out a subject and many would not wish to own up to using some kind of drawing aid.

Let's start by discussing the different ways in which you can produce a line drawing. It is always a good idea to produce your line drawing on thinnish cartridge paper first and not directly onto the drawing surface you are going to paint on. This will give you two main advantages, you would be able to alter and erase your pencil marks without spoiling the painting surface and should you 'mess up' while painting the picture, you can reuse your pre-drawn line drawing for another attempt. Let us now go through the different methods of producing a line drawing (of which is provided in every one of our tutorials).

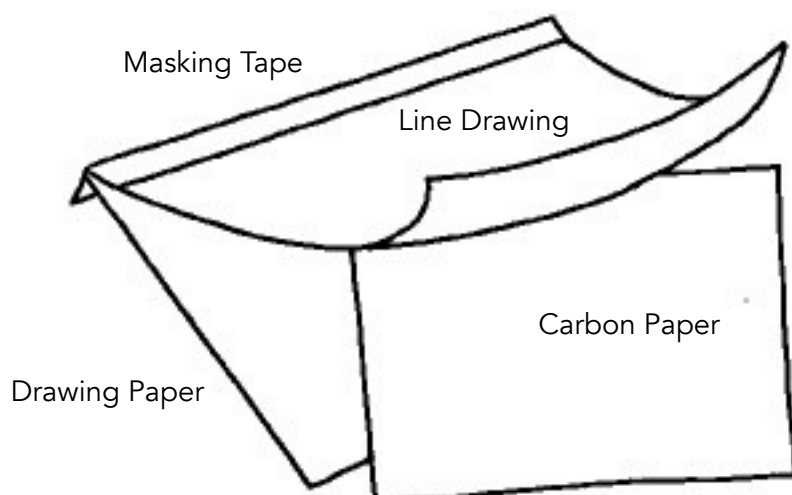
Square Drawing

This is my preferred system of drawing because it is an accurate way to proportion your reference source. It will also allow you to slightly alter the subject in the picture if you want to enhance a detail or two. It would be

wise to purchase the transparent grids through our [website](#) if you decide that the square drawing system is for you, because they are accurate and the lines are very fine. But it is possible to make your own by marking off squares on transparent film with a marker pen.

Armed with your grids you now need a good reference picture to work from; remember the better the reference picture the better chance you have of producing a good picture. Another top tip is to have the reference picture laser photocopied to A4 size (close to Letter size in the US), this will help you see the details easier and will mean less risk of errors. To use the square drawing system you place the 1 inch square transparent grid over the reference picture securing it in place with masking tape. If you want the line drawing to be the same size as the reference picture, draw out 1 inch squares on a piece of cartridge paper, (or use the readymade 1 inch squared paper from our pack). If you want a larger drawing then increase the size of the squares on the cartridge paper. Once you have decided on the size of your picture simply draw what you see through the transparent grid onto the respective square on your paper grid then complete the rest of the picture square by square. Once the line drawing is complete you will then need to transfer it to your pastel paper.

This diagram shows how to set up the transfer of the line drawing to the pastel paper. The line drawing is taped to the pastel paper and a black carbon is placed between them. A sharp pencil is used to transfer the line drawing to the pastel paper.



Direct Trace Method

This is the easiest way of transferring a reference picture to the drawing surface and although it is termed as cheating remember that unless you tell someone you have used this method or they watch you during the transfer, how would they know? It may help you to know that thousands of artists use this method, are you surprised?

The basic idea is to have the reference picture laser photocopied in black and white; it's cheaper than colour, and enlarged to the size you want the finished picture to be, ensure that the photocopy is produced on thinnish paper. The photocopy is then placed directly on top of the pastel paper and the graphite carbon is placed in between. If you choose to use this method you will certainly be tempted to use the reference picture to transfer the image instead of getting it photocopied. While this does seem to be an easy option don't be tempted. By drawing over your reference picture you will certainly spoil the lines and edges of the subject, therefore when you refer to the reference picture during the construction of the painting you will struggle to see the finer details.

Scanning Your Reference

This is the age of the computer and if you are able to use one or know someone who can, then it is possible to scan in your reference photograph. The photograph can then be enlarged to the size you want and then printed out to give you the right sized picture for you to use the square drawing system or the direct trace method.

Overhead Projection

This is another simple way of transferring the outlines of a photograph to the painting surface. The problem here is that the projectors are pricey and the projected lines can be fuzzy, if there is a lot of detail to transfer then you would have a problem. However this is a good system and works as follows. You place a reference photograph in the projector and the image is projected directly onto your pastel paper, the further away the projector is from the pastel paper the larger the image becomes. You then use a sharp pencil to draw round the outlines of the image.

As I have stated I prefer the square drawing method because although you are using a drawing aid it does require some skill, and is therefore more satisfying to the artist. What is important is that when you are drawing animals and people you must be accurate in the proportions; therefore I would never take a chance by drawing freehand without the support of a drawing aid. It is possible to think you have got it right and continue with the picture, only to see it hanging in an exhibition in front of hundreds of people and then notice a glaring proportional error.

When not to use a drawing aid

You may be interested in subjects where I would never consider using a drawing aid. The reason is that these pictures are better to have no predicted form therefore appear more natural. In these cases I would sometimes use an outer line to give a perimeter but leave out the detail, i.e. trees, water, human hair and sometimes I allow the subject detail to develop its own perimeter, i.e. clouds, backgrounds etc.

It is very nice to think that all you have to do is pick up pencils or paints and your natural ability will produce wonderful images for you and others to admire. But in the real world there are few who would fit that category, the overwhelming majority of us have to face up to the fact that we need some help. This booklet is named 'starting out' so see it as a launching pad for your future works of art, be prepared to call for help when you need it. One thought you might like to take with you on your artistic journey is; the more you use the drawing aids the more you will understand and appreciate proportioning.

How to use the pencils

It is time to start thinking of getting to 'grips' with pastel pencils, so let's start with how to hold them. This may seem a silly statement but as you will see there are different ways to hold them, different pressures and many more techniques that we will explore, all will have a bearing on the way you structure the picture.

Holding the pencil

If you are using the pencil for detail then you would hold the pastel pencil in the familiar angle you would use for writing. If you are shading in then you need to lower the pencil, this will mean that you cannot hold it in the familiar upright angle. The way to practice this grip is to lay the pencil on a flat surface and then pick it up. Note the way you pick it off the flat surface and that is the grip you need, so don't switch to the upright angle. These two angles also help you to create the correct pressure for different effects. Generally the upright angle will allow you to exert more pressure and the lower angle less pressure.

Using the natural angle

This technique is so obvious when you hear it explained you wonder why you did not think of it yourself. For this technique to work you will have to have followed my advice and taped your pastel paper to a stout board. This means that you are able to turn the picture round even upside down with ease. Let us start this exercise by drawing a straight line across your pastel paper (if you are doing this experiment use cartridge paper). Chances are that you would have a pretty straight line. Now from the middle of that line draw another one to the top of the paper. It will look straight when viewed from the position you are in but now try turning the board on its side. It will now appear to be crooked and wobbly; this is because you have not used the natural angle of your hand and eye. If you had turned the picture around before you drew the line to the top of the page the line would have been straighter, try this a few times and see the difference. This simple experiment shows you that all you need to do is to turn the board/pastel paper around as you complete the picture and you

will take full advantage of your natural drawing angles. I have never counted how many times I move my board when I am producing a picture, but I bet it runs into hundreds of times.

Time for another experiment, this time drawing a circle. Keep the board in the same place without moving it, now draw a largish circle on the (cartridge) paper, try to be as accurate as you can. It will probably appear to be quite a good attempt. Now try it again this time as you draw the circle move the board around half a dozen times during the procedure. You should now see quite a difference between the two circles; this is because you have now used your natural hand angle and your eye together. All the lines you will encounter during the production of a picture will be somewhere between a straight line and a circle so you are off to a flying start.

What's the 'point'?

Let us examine what would, to most of you at first, be an obvious statement, how to use the 'point' of the pastel pencil. As you will see it not only important to have different types of points on the pencil but also there are several interesting techniques that depend on the way you use the point. Let us deal with the point first. If you are completing a detailed area then it is wise to have a good point on the pencil so as not to stray over the designated lines and spoiling the effect you are trying to achieve. If you have crucial, detailed areas then the point would need to be needle sharp. When the pencil is this sharp there is a likely chance that it could break so care must be exercised in using it. For most of the pastel pencil application it is not necessary to have a sharp point as you will be constantly sharpening it, and this could be irritating. If you are laying in large areas of colour i.e. skies, background etc. then I would suggest that the point is quite stumpy, this will allow the pastel area to be covered quicker and the pencil will not require sharpening so often.

Pastel Pencil Angles

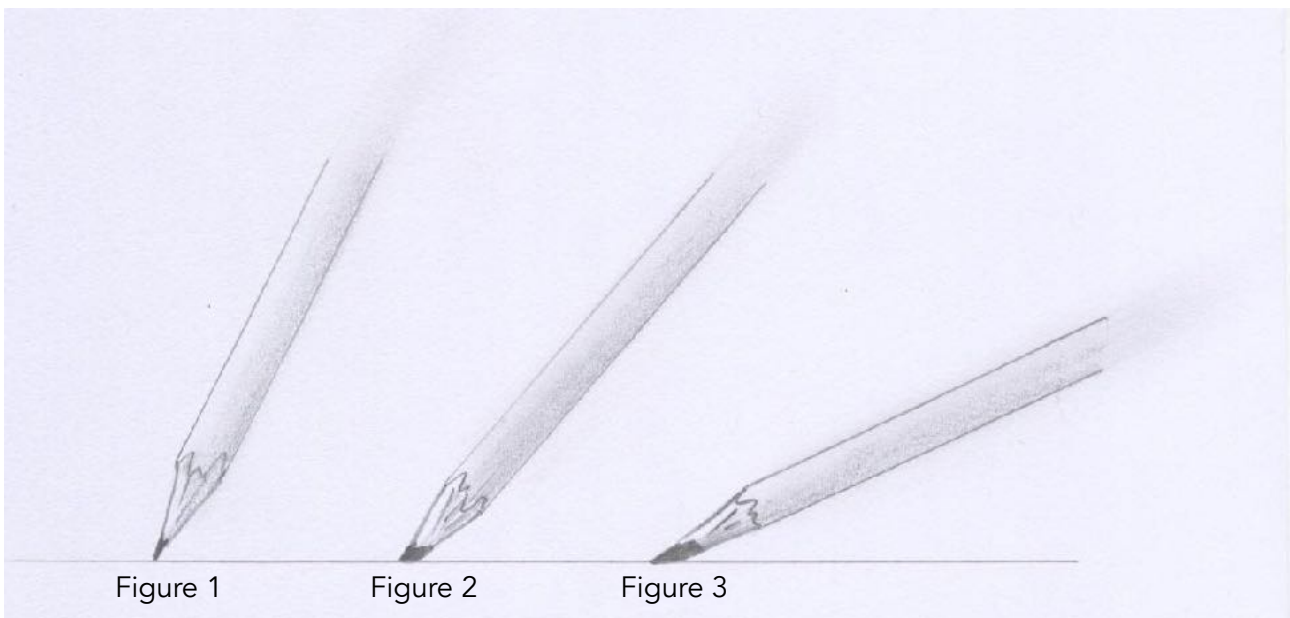
The angle you use to apply the pastel pencil to the pastel paper will also help you achieve better results. There are three main angles that we will discuss here and with the help of the sketch on the next page you will

have a better understanding of the techniques. The first angle is an upright pose; this will allow you to create just the right amount of pressure and in turn will mean that you are able to deal better with detailed areas. See **figure 1**.

The second angle is lower so that you are using the side of the point; this is the most commonly used angle for general applications. See **figure 2**.

The third angle is much lower and allows you to use the side of the pencil for large areas and general filling in colour. Another area where this angle is useful is when you want to apply a light touch of colour, or in the pastel pencil blending process that we will be dealing with in future booklets.

See **figure 3**.



First steps in using the pastel pencil

It is time to introduce you to the pastel pencil and some simple exercises that will help you develop the basic techniques. Generally the pencils are applied from light to dark, that is, the colours are built up by placing the selected light colours on first and applying the stronger colours on top of them. The end result of this build up is that you have more subtlety and a more natural look to your pictures. However sometimes this technique is taken too far and if too much light is applied the subsequent stronger colours will be weakened and appear 'wishy-washy'. Conversely, if too little light colour is applied then the stronger colours will appear too harsh and spoil the effect you are trying to achieve. So a balance has to be struck with just the right amount of colour to produce the right effect. Although this will seem at first very difficult to understand, if you persevere, practice this advice and most importantly learn from your mistakes then it will make sense in the end. To help you understand this technique better I am showing you a set of three exercises that you can try for yourself. I am going to use four colours from the Faber Castell PITT pastel pencil range and produce three bands of colour. The pencil numbers are: 103 ivory, 187 burnt ochre, 283 burnt sienna and 177 walnut brown.

In **figure 1** I have applied 103 ivory onto sand coloured Ingres pastel paper, starting from the right hand side and extending two thirds of the length of the band and rubbed it into the pastel paper with my finger. I then applied 187 burnt ochre starting from the left hand side and extended the colour two thirds of the way across the band, this was again rubbed in with my finger. You will see how well the colours blend and are very compatible.

Figure 1

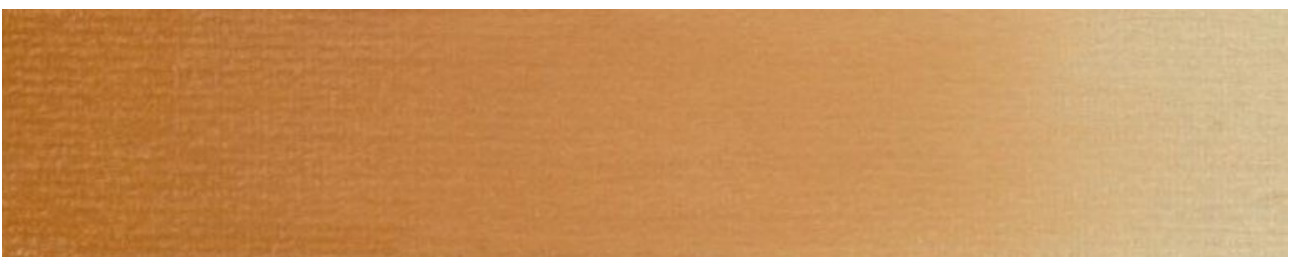


Figure 2



Figure 2 shows the 283 burnt sienna being added on top of the 187 and extending halfway across the band from the left. So far there has been no clash of colour because the colours are harmonious. However should the 187 not have been deep enough around the middle of the band, cushioning the effect of the 283, then the 283 would have appeared harsh on top of the 103 ivory.

Figure 3

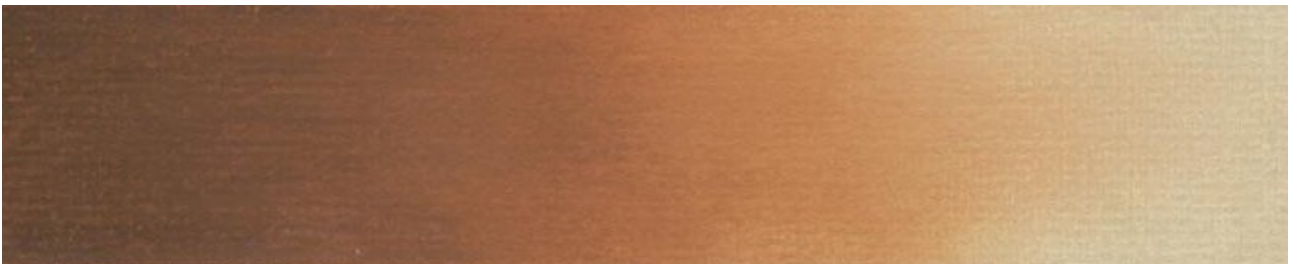
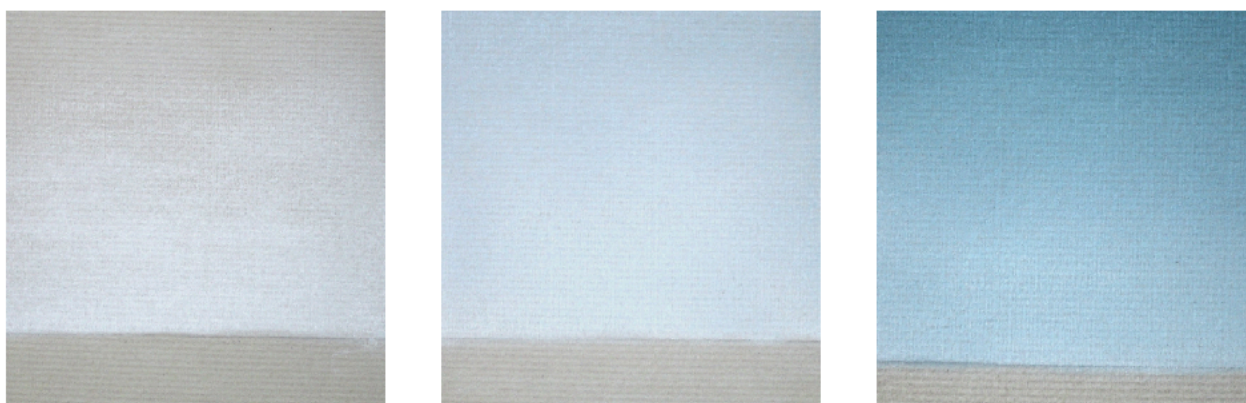


Figure 3 adds the last colour to the band. 177 walnut brown was applied on top of the 283 and extended to one third of the way along the band starting from the left. This is where you could easily come unstuck. Let's look at what could go wrong. 103 ivory and 177 do not like each other and would never be mixed together. To achieve the depth of colour on the left hand side there must be no light base, this means no 103. Should 103 have been placed as base from the start the end result would have been weak and muddy. If we had not had sufficient 187 and 283 as a base then the colour would have been less rich. If you can sort out this rather muddily set of do's and don'ts then you stand a good chance of cracking this very important technique. In any event you will be able to return to this section when you come across this problem, because believe me you will.

Pastel Pencil Base Colours – Sky

The question I am most frequently asked is 'how do I decide what base colour to put on first'. I am going to deal with this very complex question more fully in the next booklet, but it is a good idea to introduce you to the basic techniques now. The exercises above will already have given you an idea of how the base colours work so here is another good example of this technique. We are going to create a clear blue sky and then go on to complete a simple picture by adding distant hills and water. The colours I am going to use are: 101 white, 151 (Cretacolour) light blue, 143 cobalt blue and 151 (Pitt) Prussian blue.



The following illustrations show the sky being built up using the light to dark rule and the base colour technique. In **figure 1** I applied the 101 white pastel pencil to the pastel paper and rubbed it well in with my finger. You will see that I started at the horizon line and then gradually faded it off around two thirds of the way to the top, similar to the ivory in the previous exercise. In **figure 2** I then applied the 151 light blue starting at the top of the sky and blending it into the white. This has provided me with a good base in which to apply the stronger colours. In **figure 3** I applied 143 cobalt blue and rubbed this in, again starting at the top but this time fading off around the halfway mark. I followed this by rubbing 151 Prussian blue on top of the 143 this time only applying it one third of the way down and again fading it off by the time I reached the halfway mark.

Let us move onto the next step of the exercise by adding a misty distant hill and water to the picture **figure 4**. I am going to use the same colours and the same light to dark technique as the sky. The first application will be a generous 101 white over the whole water area. This will form the base for the light blue which is applied by starting at the bottom of the picture and working up to the horizon. The darker colours are then applied to form the distant hills and the darker colours in the water. Once these colours have been laid the white can be reapplied to give extra brightness between the hills and in the water.



Pastel Pencil Base Colours - Sunset

We will now move on to something a little more adventurous, the base colours in a sunset. We must keep to the same principles as before that is light to dark and cushioning the stronger colours, but there will be an additional technique - a dark base colour. The Faber-Castell colours I am using are 101 white, 106 yellow, 109 orange, 192 Indian red, 143 cobalt blue and 199 black.

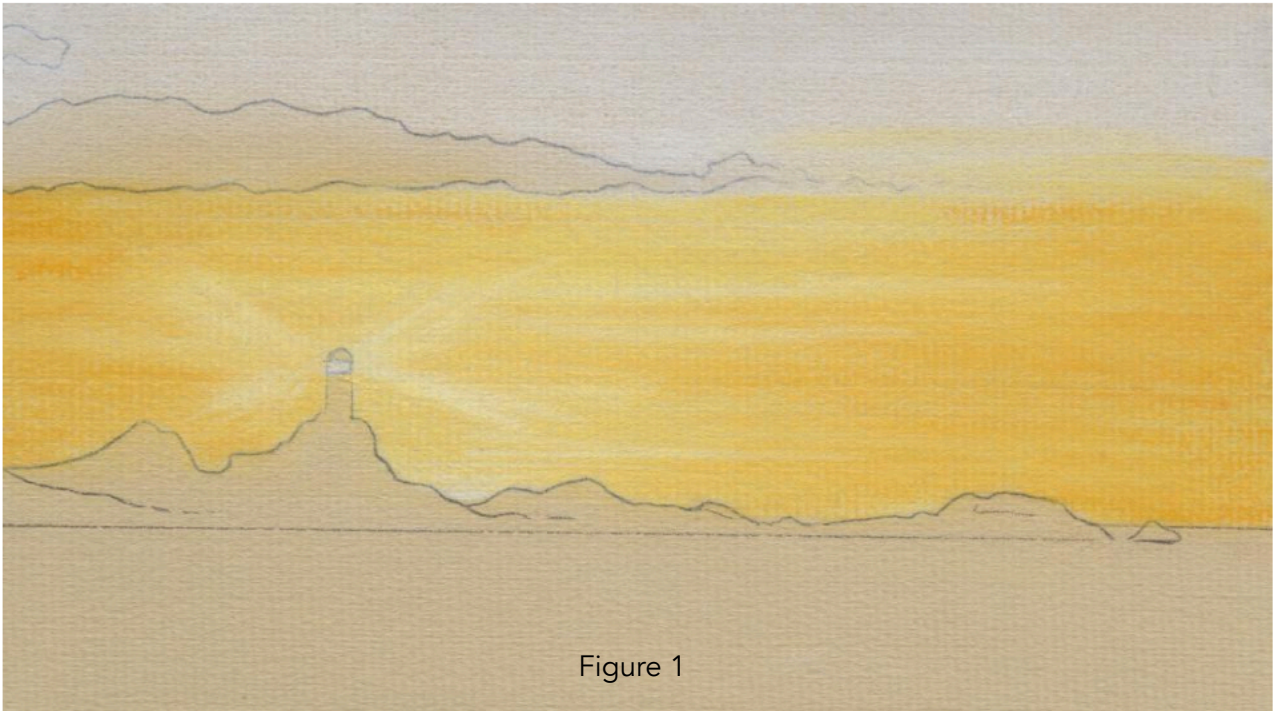


Figure 1

In **figure 1** the white, yellow and orange have been applied in that order, strictly light to dark. The colours were rubbed in with my finger one at a time, and the white was reapplied to add the light streaks after the last colour, 109, was applied. Another thing you will notice is that I have erased all the stray colour from the lighthouse, rocks and clouds. Now it is time to add the blue to the top of the sky, here I will have to be careful not to stray too far onto the orange and yellow otherwise we will have a green sky.

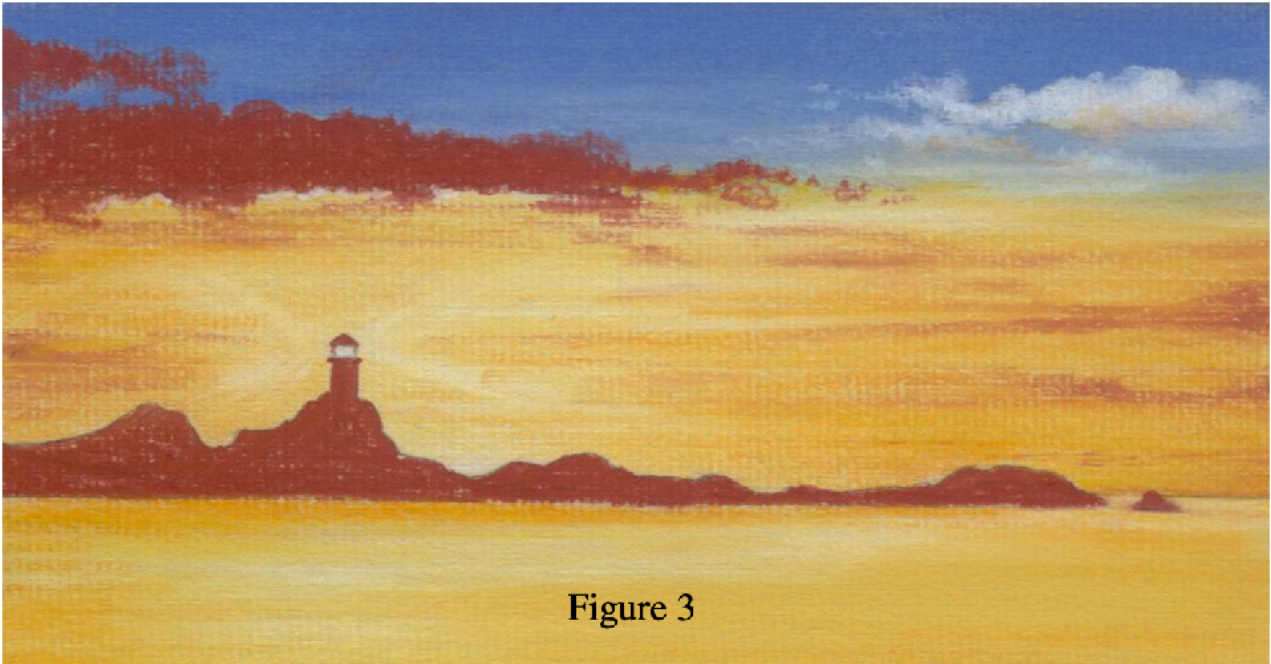


Figure 2

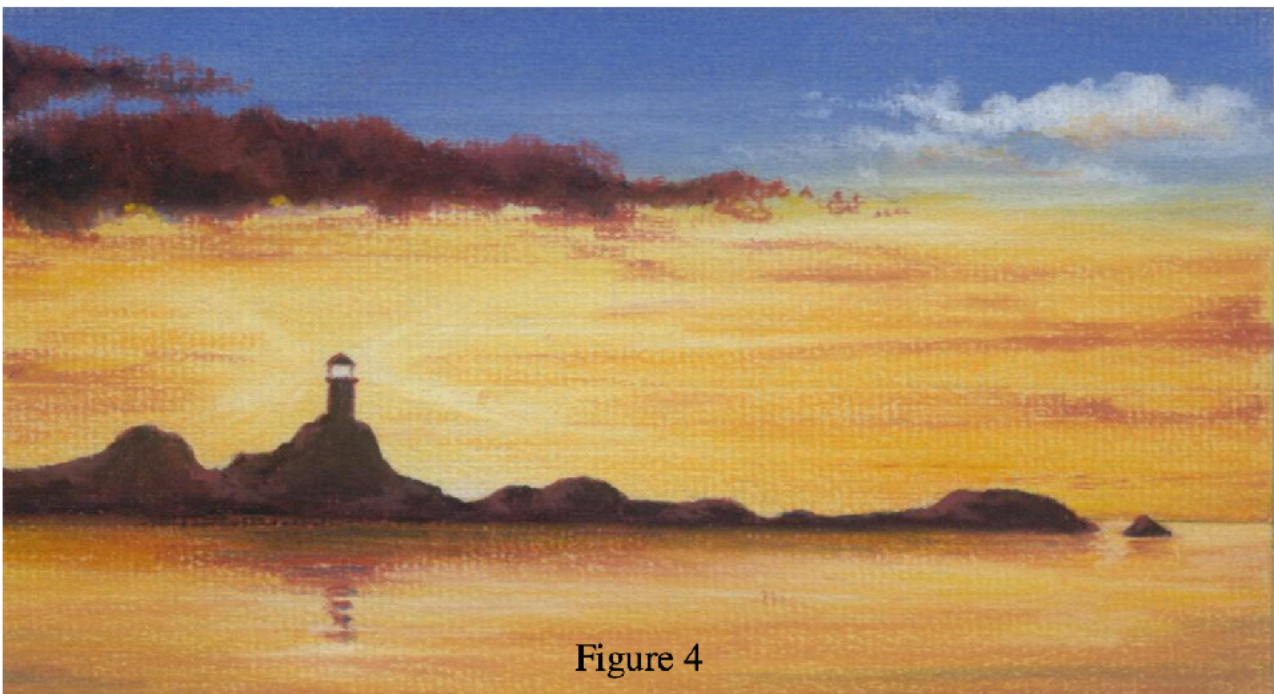
The illustration in **figure 2** below shows the 143 blue added and rubbed into the white base using my finger.

I have again removed any colour that had strayed onto the clouds and I have decided to add a white cloud in the blue sky, so I have erased a section of the blue ready to add the white to it. If I had placed the white directly over the dark blue the cloud would have been very weak and not acceptable. Now we will add the clouds, rocks and lighthouse. This brings us to the new technique. We are looking for two criteria, firstly we want a very dark colour to contrast vividly with the light tones, and secondly we will want a colour tone to harmonise with the colours in the picture. I am choosing to use 192 Indian red as the colour to fulfil both criteria because I will also be adding this on top of the orange in the sky and the water to add strength and colour.

The next illustration **figure 3**, shows the 192 being applied as a base for the darker colours, and also to add colour, strength and tone to the sky. I am also completing the white cloud and applying the light base colours for the water.



The picture is almost complete, time to add the darker colours to add the contrast. **Figure 4** shows the effects of adding the 143 blue to all the dark areas followed by the black on top of the blue. Once this is complete the 192 is reapplied to soften some of the black areas and also to add weight to the water.



To Blend or not to Blend

Another important technique and one that brings up a lot of queries is when do we blend and when do we not blend the pastel pencils. Also how do we decide what blending method to use. This is a complex question but as you will see by the end of this section quite logical and not too difficult once you know the rules. There are several tools that are used to blend the pastel pastels and I am going to take you through them one by one and explain why and where you should use them and also give you examples of the effects that will be achieved.

Your finger

Your finger is one of the best blending tools because with practice it allows us to feel and totally control the blending process. Some people have a moist finger and when used to blend the pastel it takes off the pastel rather than blends it in. You can get over this problem by wiping the finger on a towel and then rubbing it onto spare pastel paper before touching the pastel. When the finger is used on the pastel it may absorb some pastel at first but the pastel will soon 'dry out' the moistness. You can use your finger in any area that allows you access to it, i.e. skies, water, skin etc. and is particularly good for backgrounds. The previous sunset exercise would have given you a good idea of this technique.

Paper Blender

The paper blender is a good tool to have by you when working with the pastel pencil because it has a unique function. The first time you use the paper blender after purchasing it you will find it tends to take off the pastel rather than blending it. This is because the tips, they are double ended, are slightly absorbent being new. You can get over this by lightly rubbing the tips onto some light coloured pastel applied on spare pastel paper. The tips will pick up the pastel and you then twist and rub the tips into the end of your finger. Do this a few times and you will find that when you then blend with the blender the effect is much better. So armed with our fully charged paper blender what will it do for us? The best way of explaining this question is to show you some examples.

When laying in mid tone pastel pencils as a base the effect you are left with is a 'sparkle' on the pastel paper, that is you can see the pastel paper through the pastel application. The paper blender can be used to blend in this 'sparkle' effect and give you a smoother look. This may not sound very exciting but as I am going to show you it is vital in producing the right effect for detail in a picture.

This exercises on the next page shows a roof and a chimney being produced using several pastel pencils colours. I have only used three pastel pencils so as to keep the exercise simple. In case you would like to try this exercise for yourself here are the colours used – 186 terracotta, 283 burnt sienna and 176 Van Dyck brown (all Faber-Castell).

The first illustration, **figure 1**, shows the 186 being lightly applied to the pastel paper, notice the amount of 'sparkle' of the pastel paper you can see through the colour. **Figure 2** shows the colour being blended in using the paper blender; I have extended the roof so you are able to compare the final effect.

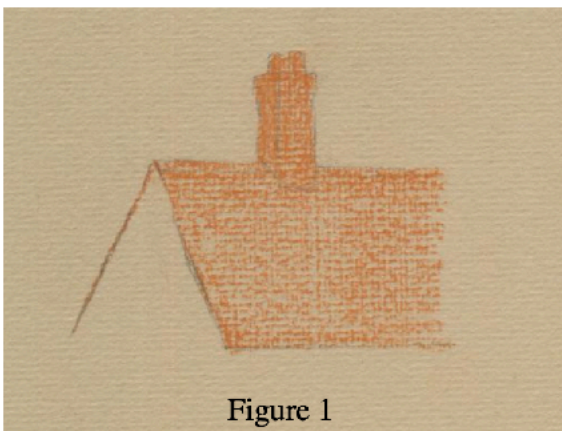


Figure 1

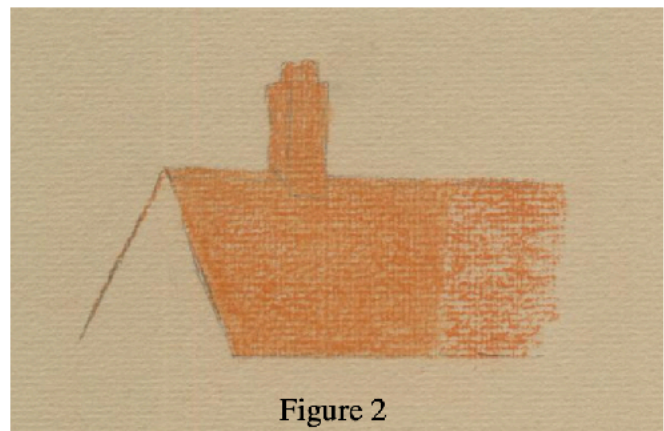


Figure 2

The first picture below, **figure 3**, shows the main details being outlined using 283, and then the 186 is applied again, with strength on the side of the chimney and in a random design over the whole roof area except the ridge tiles, I have left this detail alone to help define them better. Notice that the texture of the pastel paper helps to add to the illusion; there will be more about this unique effect in future booklets. In **figure 4**, the 283 has been applied to the shadow on the side of the chimney then at random over the whole roof area. The 'sparkle' is really showing through now the darker colours are being applied.

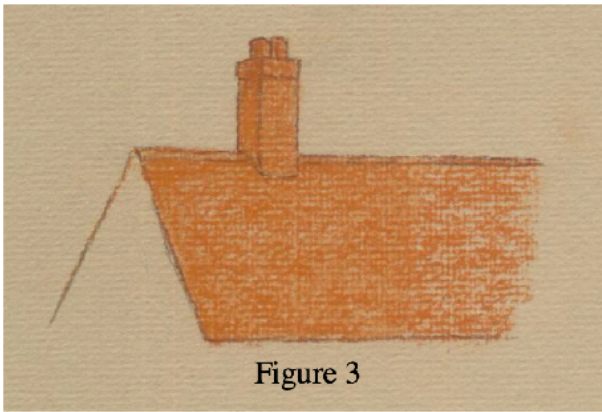


Figure 3

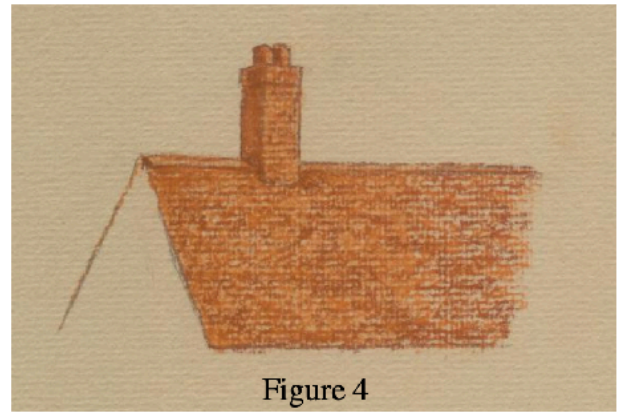


Figure 4

In the final picture opposite, **figure 5**, I have added the 176 to create more shadow to the side of the chimney and more depth to the roof. Notice how raw and harsh the colour is where the 176 has touched the pastel paper without being cushioned by a blended base colour on the right hand side of the roof.

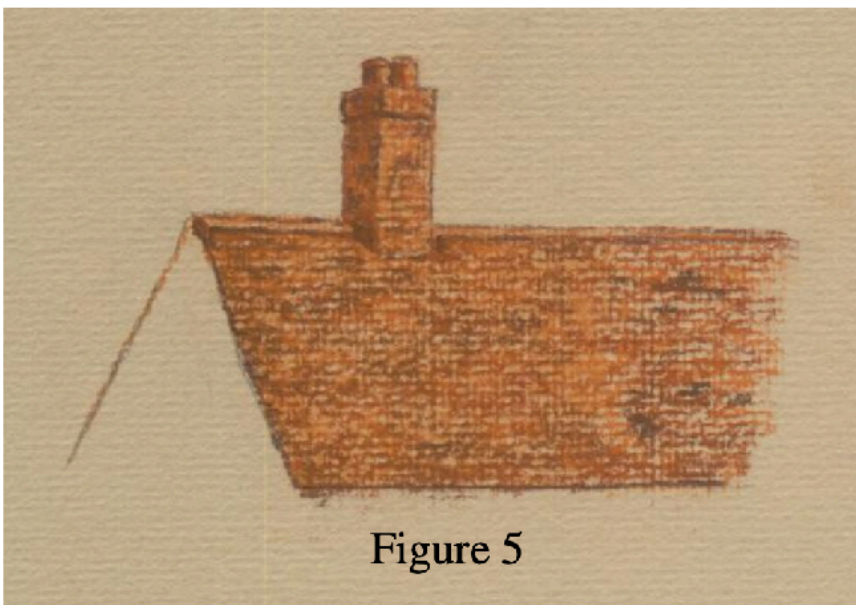


Figure 5

The Colour Shaper

As we have stated previously, the colour shaper is similar in shape to an artists paintbrush but has a 'rubber' tip instead of hairs on the painting end.

There are many functions of the colour shaper in blending the pastel pencil and I will give you the most common uses. One use is to blend where the finger can't reach. Difficult detailed areas, eyes, ears, windows etc. are among many that could benefit from this tool. Another common use is where you would need a very smooth base for subsequent pastel application; human hair would fit into this category. The colour shaper is also ideal for creating a silk like finish where required, human hair again and some animal hair would benefit from this technique.

Pastel Pencil Blending

Pastel Pencil blending is one of my favourite blending methods because it is easy to control and allows you, with practice, the freedom to gauge the colours correctly. I am going to give you an example of how to use the pastel pencil in this way. I am going to build up an eye of a grey cat using only the pastel pencils and no other blending tool.



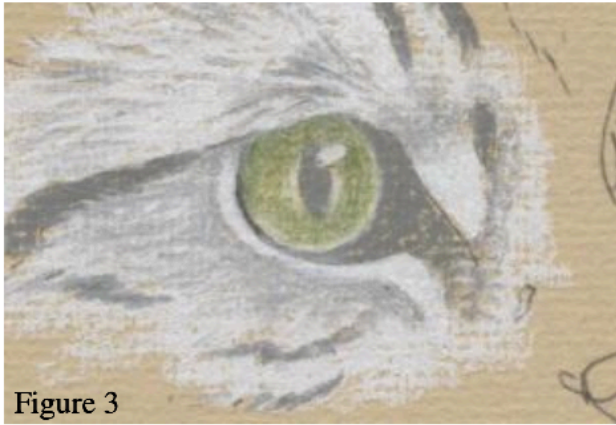
Figure 1



Figure 2

The first illustration, **figure 1**, shows the white being applied. Where I want the strongest white to be I have simply used a more generous application of the white. In **figure 2**, 273 mid grey has been applied over the white and directly on the pastel paper as a base for the darker colours.

The next step is to add the 183 yellow ochre and 174 dark green to the eye, see **figure 3**. Notice how the pastel texture in the eye does not yet achieve the glassy look. This is the time to start the pencil blending technique by blending in the olive green using the previous colour, 183 yellow ochre, see the difference this has made in **figure 4**.



Time to add more depth to the coloured eye and the eye surround. I am reusing 174 dark green for the eye and 181 Payne's grey followed by 199 black to strengthen the mid grey. I have then used a 103 ivory to pencil blend the green in the eye, this has given us the glazed look, I have also added a touch of ochre into the surrounding fur, see **figure 5**. To put the finishing touches to the eye I used a sharp white 101 to add the highlights and complete the exercise, **figure 6**.



Summary

In this booklet I have introduced you to all the techniques you will need to get started using the pastel pencils. It is now time to put what you have learnt into practice and join the thousands of pastel pencil artists around the country enjoying success with this great medium.

If you would like to learn more about Pastel Pencils then the best resource is our online school: <https://school.colinbradleyart.com>

We have many free classes which take you through the basics and beginners subjects that will build your confidence and experience. If you enjoy the free classes then we have 500+ subjects that you can get your teeth into. All can be unlocked with our membership. For more details visit our website.

We also have starter packs, which you can find in our [online store](#). All these packs are designed for the beginner and come with Pastel Paper and pencils (optional).

If you have any questions regarding using the Pastel Pencils then please feel free to get in touch with us via email: support@colinbradleyart.com. We'd love to hear from you.



*These instructional booklets have been designed to help the pastel pencil artist **overcome** the difficulties they are likely to encounter whilst working with the medium.*

*Collectively they will build into a reference library showing **all the techniques** needed to produce **great** works of art in pastel pencil.*

*The range of subjects this medium is able to tackle is **limitless**; therefore we expect the techniques would be limitless too.*

*With this in mind we intend to continue to publish more booklets. We hope that you will enjoy the series and that the techniques will help **you** produce the great works of art pastel pencils are capable of achieving.*

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