

Tip #122

Watercolor Pencils, and Crayons

These handy, lightweight tools are becoming more popular all the time – they’re great for sketching or even a fully-realized painting -- but you may like to try a few quick tips on how best to use them to get the effects you want!



Those unfamiliar with the medium might think you just put down all the colors and then wet them—and *shazam*, a finished painting! That works—sort of—if you’re only using one color, or perhaps two, but if you try to blend them all at once you’re likely to get a big muddy mess.

122-1



My favorite use of watercolor pencils is as a sketching tool ... this quick squirrel sketch was done with my favorite Derwent Blue Grey that goes everywhere with me. A quick touch with a damp brush gives me a lovely subtle range of values and suggests volume, form, light and shadow at a touch.

122-2 - Lift from the tip



People sometimes complain that the colors are weak and wimpy...and they can be. It depends in part on the brand and quality. Faber Castell's Albrecht Dürer are among the most saturated, smooth and buttery. You can lift almost all the line up into the wash easily—others will leave the lines showing through, but sometimes that's the effect I'm after! Derwent, Prismacolor and a few others tend to be a bit harder than the Dürers, but I love the linear residue, at times. It all depends on what you want.

This example was done with Aquatone pencils, which are ALL pigment, no wood (there are several brands like that, including Aqua Monolith and Neocolors, which are more like crayons)...but the same applies to most. If you lay down the color on the paper and then blend it, usually you will get a lighter, more pastel effect. If you lift color from the tip of the

pencil with a wet brush, the effect is much more vivid. Again, it's all in what you want.

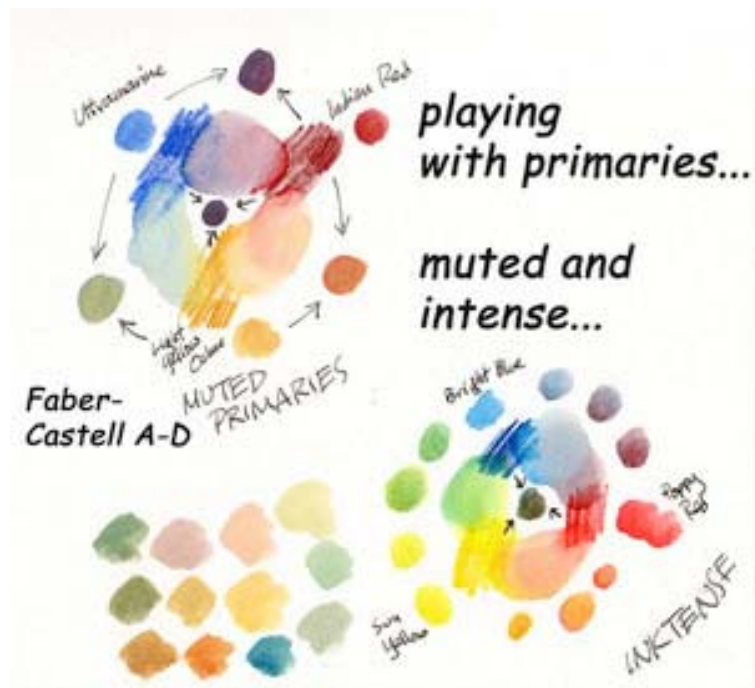
122-3 - Go toward the light ...



... but be aware your colors may fade! Some watercolor pencils are considerably less lightfast than others ... you may want to make up your own set, from open stock. Many brands have lightfast information printed right on each pencil, or online. If that's important to you, do check it out! This image was inside a closed journal, so it may be more than a lightfastness issue ... some colors are just more fugitive than others.

122-4

You don't need all the colors in the world, of course, tempting as that huge, gorgeous set may be. Buy a few primaries and see the rainbow of colors you can get from them, then you can add more "convenience colors" as you feel the need.





Unfortunately my *Watercolor Pencil Magic* book I mentioned in Tip #60 is out of print now, but I was able to use much of the information for my CD, *Watercolor Pencil Workshop* (available at <http://www.cathyjohnson.com/cdfolder/cd-11.html>), expanded it with new work and information, and reinstated one whole chapter that had to be cut for space reasons in the book. It's been one of my most popular tutorials, so I KNOW people are fascinated with watercolor pencils.

You may also like my Watercolor Pencil Mini-class ... for more information, read here: <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/watercolorpencil.html>

Check out all my YouTube videos for lots more art tutorials, youtube.com/user/KateJosTube.

I'd love to have you visit my artist's blog at katequicksilver.livejournal.com/, my brand new Etsy store where I'll be offering some of the demos from my classes at etsy.com/shop/CathyJohnsonArt, my catalog where you can find instructional CDs for artists, or drop by for a visit on Facebook, facebook.com/cathy.johnson1!

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