

Making Everything Easier!™

# Pastels

FOR

# DUMMIES®

## Learn to:

- Produce colorful drawings and paintings
- Improve your artistic skills with full-color, hands-on instruction
- Complete full-scale projects
- Discover your inner artist

**IN FULL COLOR!**

**Sherry Stone**  
**Anita Giddings**

*Authors, Oil Painting For Dummies*



# Pastels For Dummies®

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# ***Pastels For Dummies***®

## **by Sherry Stone & Anita Giddings**



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## Dedication

For my father, who helped make this possible. —SS

For my mother for all her support over the years, and for my students. —AG

# **Authors'**

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# Introduction

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Nothing cries color like pastel. Maybe you came to pastel because you love Degas's ballet dancers, Mary Cassatt's simple domestic scenes, or Toulouse-Lautrec's dance hall scenes. Regardless, when you pick up pastels, you join the legions of artists over time who have been seduced by the medium's color and rewarded by its endless possibilities. A box of pastels can produce anything from a few simple sketches to elaborate artworks that beg to be called paintings. Pastels are limited only by the potential you see in them to create art.

In this book, we help you get started with pastel. If you have a little experience, we can help you fill in the gaps or give you the tools to take your artwork farther. As we help you build your skills, we also help you develop your voice as an artist. You can find many good books on pastel, but what sets this book apart is that it's geared to help you work at your own level, even if you have little experience with art.

This book follows our philosophy as artists and teachers. We bring to these pages the concepts and techniques we use every day in our classrooms.

## About This Book

We designed this book with you in mind. We've taught hoards of students over the years and know how difficult learning on your own can be, but we believe you can discover how to make beautiful pastel drawings. In this book, we arm you with everything we think you need to

know to establish a good foundation for making pastel drawings and to continue to develop as an artist for years to come. We don't teach you tricks — we lay out a time-honored process that helps you become the artist you were meant to be, not the shadow of someone else.

The format for this book is easy to follow. We start with pastel basics so that you can get a handle on the technical aspects of pastel and paper and set yourself up to work efficiently. Because drawing and modeling forms is so important to pastel, we provide some easy-to-follow instructions for mark-making and give you a basic primer in drawing and color. After applying those skills in simple still life, we explore ways that you can express yourself and experiment with different approaches to pastel images. Finally, we help you get started working in genre painting — landscape, portrait, and figure — so that you can have a broad range of skills to build on as you move forward with your pastel artwork.

Throughout this book, you find sketchbook exercises and step-by-step instructions for projects. Never fear if you're a rank beginner — we don't assume you already know how to draw well. We provide beginning strategies for drawing and include step-by-step sketchbook exercises so that you can practice your new skills. On the other hand, if you come to pastel with a little drawing under your belt, you can tackle complex subjects and new ways to make art.

We limit the discussion in this book to chalk pastels because of their versatility and ease of use. Chalk pastels can look like both drawings and paintings, and they're friendly to anyone just beginning to draw. Even though oil pastels have the advantage of generating less dust, we

advise you to save them for later. They're more difficult to control if you're still working on your drawing skills.

Color is an important part of working with pastel. To help you develop fluency, we include chapters that give you a good foundation in color. Additionally, a running conversation about the role color plays in an artwork weaves through this book. We also refuse to let you get away without talking about designing your artwork well and how to avoid rookie mistakes.

As you work your way through the book, be patient with yourself. Give yourself permission to make mistakes and think of them as learning opportunities. Forget the word *talent*. Hard work, a willingness to learn, and being objective as you evaluate your work are worth much more. If you work regularly, you discover something new with every pastel work you do. If you have a troublesome drawing, don't get bogged down by it; just move on and churn out more work.

## Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate this book, we use a few conventions:

We use *italics* for emphasis and to highlight new ideas and terms that we define within the reading.

We use **boldface text** to indicate a set of numbered steps (you follow these steps for many of the projects). We also use boldface to highlight keywords or phrases in bulleted text.

Web addresses appear in monofont.

The main drawing projects in the book have their own project headings so that you can easily identify them as you flip through the chapters. Every project tells you what you need, when you need it. Before you start any project, read all the way through the steps to make sure that you have the supplies you need.

## **What You're Not to Read**

This book is set up so that you can find the information easily. This book is full of essential material, but you can skip over the sidebars if you're short on time. These shaded gray boxes house information that's interesting or technical but not necessarily need-to-know; skip 'em for now and come back later if you need to.

## **Foolish Assumptions**

In writing this book, we have made some assumptions about you:

You have done a little drawing in your life but want to improve those skills.

You're interested in and appreciate art. You may have a little knowledge of art history, but only artists commonly known by people on the street.

You like pastels and may have tried them but are looking for ways to avoid muddying them and want to go beyond merely "coloring" with them.

# How This Book Is Organized

We've organized this book so that you can drop into the conversation at any point and flip from one area of the book to another following your nose. At the same time, if you prefer to work sequentially, the organization supports that approach as well.

## Part I: Getting Started

In this part, we bring you up to speed on the basics of pastels and help you gather materials and set up a space to work. We give you an overview of the different kinds of color drawing materials and how they're different from pastels. We also discuss what working with pastels is like.

## Part II: The Lowdown on Beginning Techniques

We discuss the basics of working with pastels in a comprehensive way in this part. It walks you through the basic skills you need to address each step of the process and then begins with an overview of the process of making a pastel drawing. We help you choose papers and apply pastels in different ways, as well as give you the skinny on when and how to use spray fixatives. We provide primers for basic color and drawing and give you concrete techniques for using value to develop the drawing so that it looks realistic. Finally, we pull it all together in a full-blown still life.

## **Part III: Heading to the Next Level: Intermediate Techniques**

Part III is all about taking the skills in the earlier parts and finding your voice as an artist. It begins by walking you through some techniques for subjects that many people find difficult, such as glass and metal. Then we look at expressive ways to work with pastels. We finish with a wild dive into abstraction and give a nod to conceptual approaches to pastel and art-making. Buckle your seatbelts, because you may never look at pastel the same way again after this part!

## **Part IV: Drawing Places and People**

In Part IV, we bring you right up to speed in portrait and drawing people, with easy to understand steps for drawing realistic people even if you have little or no experience. If landscape is your thing, we address how to approach landscape, including drawing on-site.

## **Part V: The Part of Tens**

This part is chock-full of ideas for projects for those days when your brain just can't think of anything fresh to draw. Part V also provides essential advice for handling and storing your artwork, something you may not consider until you find yourself with a pastel drawing in hand and no safe place to put it.



# Icons Used in This Book

The icons you see in the margins direct you to some really cool information:



This icon saves you time and energy by letting you know an easier method for doing something.



You know you're looking at important information whenever you see this icon. It may serve to remind you of something already covered elsewhere in the book, and at other times it lets you know to remember this informative tidbit for later.



This icon addresses potential dangers to you or your artwork so you can avoid potential headaches.



This icon points out practical sketchbook exercises you can practice in your own sketchbook to help you develop your skills.

## Where to Go from Here

We wrote this book so that you don't need to read it sequentially. If you're just starting out, we suggest that you start with Part II, which gives you an intensive course in the basics. If you have been working with pastel for a while, some of the information in Part II may fill in the gaps of your experience, but you may also be ready to

dive into Parts III and IV for some more advanced fun. You can also feel free to check out the Table of Contents or Index to find a topic that piques your interest.

The bottom line: Have fun. Laugh at the awkward drawings you do, practice and experiment, and relish your successes, regardless of how small they are.