

Albright Art Supply

Soft Pastel Supplies—What You Should Know

Adapted from our Facebook Live Presentation

Pastel Surfaces

Artists need the right surface when using soft pastels. Soft pastels are pure pigment with only enough binder in them to keep a shape. There is not enough binder to hold them to a surface, which explains why artists use textured surfaces for their pastel paintings.

A common type of paper is Pastel Paper. The surface of pastel paper has peaks and valleys allowing the pigment grab onto the surface. Canson Mi-Teintes pastel paper comes in individual sheets in a wide variety of colors. Strathmore has their pastel paper in a pad format. The pad comes in various sizes (9x12, 11x14 as an example) with a variety of colors in that one pad.

Sanded Paper is another type of paper used by artists. The surface is gritty like the sandpaper one would get from a hardware store. Each sheet is specially coated with a grit of varying particle size. Some papers are smoother while others are very rough. Sanded paper is typically heavier than pastel papers because they accept both dry and wet applications for underpainting techniques. The lower the grit number means more of your pastel will be used up during application. The higher the grit number is typically used when an artist wants super fine detail.

Here's a list of just a few of the Sanded Paper, which can be found at Albright Art Supply.

- Canson's Mi-Teintes Touch Paper: 22x30" sheets in White, Grey, and Black.
- UArt Premier Pastel Paper: A favorite among many professional artists. The paper offers a variety of surface textures from 280 to 800 Grit. Albright Art Supply usually has 400 Grit on hand as it's a popular grit and many local classes use this specific paper.
- Art Spectrum Colourfix paper: This paper is an acid-free, hot-pressed paper with Art Spectrum's Colourfix primer screen printed onto the surface.

Soft Pastels

Pastels are pure pigments with only enough binder to keep them in a shape for the artist to use. Soft pastels have a variety of physical characteristics making some very soft to semi-hard to very hard. Many artists will use a variety of pastels in one work.

- Sennelier is a soft pastel. It has a large selection of colors to choose. They have no fillers or clays used in them. Sennelier uses the purest pigment mixed with minimal amounts of natural binders to yield a lightfast, water-soluble pastel. Lightfastness describes how resistant a pigment or dye is to fading when exposed to light. At Albright Art, we have an open stock of Sennelier pastel sticks.
- Prismacolor Nu Pastels and Caran d'Ache are considered harder soft pastels. They are stronger than regular soft pastels so there is less breakage. Nu Pastels are great for blending colors together and fine details. Caran d'Ache pastels are harder of the two. They have a velvety feel and highly lightfast.

Albright Art Supply

- Diane Townsend Artists' Pastels is another brand we carry at Albright Art Supply. We are a variety of the Soft Form and Terrages Sets. These pastels are intended for professional artists who work in a studio or paint outside.
- Faber Castell Studio Soft Pastel Sets are a great set for beginners. The softness of these sticks is between a Nu Pastel and a Sennelier pastel—a nice medium soft pastel. It is great for beginners because of its price.

Supplies to Blend and Erase

Artists will use Tortillons, Blending Stumps to blend colors together. Chamois are also used for blending. Sometimes artists will use Pipe Insulation to blend colors. Many artists try not to use their finger for blend because the oils on your hand may affect the coloring of the pigment crystals. Plus, the crystals may get crushed and lose their luminosity or vibrancy when you use your finger to blend.

To erase a mark, there are a few things an artist can use. First a foam brush will remove large areas of pigment from the surface. Inexpensive brushes in a variety of size can easily remove smaller marks.

Classes:

Interested in instructional or online classes? Remember to check out Concord Art and The Umbrella Arts Center.

References for Extra Reading

How to Draw with Soft Pastels – Art Tutorial

<https://www.fabercastell.com/blogs/creativity-for-life/how-to-draw-with-soft-pastels-art-tutorial>

Painting Mini-Lessons with Marla Baggetta

<https://paintinglessonswithmarla.com/minilessons/>

Pastels

<https://www.art-is-fun.com/pastels>

Video Reference

Albright Art Facebook Live Presentation: Pastel Supplies

<https://www.facebook.com/141264825912953/videos/1477812195591536>