

Pastel Artists.Ca

PASTEL ARTISTS.CA

A COMMUNITY OF PASTEL ARTISTS

“Purely Pastel”

www.pastelartists.ca

November, December, 2016/January, 2017



Tiger Gaze by Catherine Sheppard



Vineyard Gold by Paul Vincent



Pastel Artists.Ca

was founded in 1989. First known as Pastel Artists of Ontario, Canada, the name was changed in May of 2003 to Pastel Artists Canada. In August, 2007 it was incorporated under its present name, Pastel Artists.Ca., still expressed as Pastel Artists Canada.

Pastel Artists.Ca (PAC) is a mentoring organization and as such we encourage artists at any level to participate in our activities.

Learning and Fellowship Opportunities

If you are looking to improve your skills or knowledge of the pastel medium, PAC offers:

- workshops with well-known instructors
- local one or two-day member paint-ins/outs

Public Appreciation

PAC sponsors three shows a year:

- Members' Show - open to members at any level
- Annual Juried Show - entries are selected by a judge
- Online Members' Juried Exhibition

Recognition

PAC offers two levels of accomplishment:

- Signature status (PAC)
- Master status (MPAC)

Newsletter and Website

Our quarterly newsletter and our website offer:

Marketing Opportunities

- posting of your teaching workshops
- advertising solo shows
- noting acceptance into various exhibitions

Information Resources

- upcoming national and local events
- tips on painting and framing
- new products or marketing information

Affiliations

- Pastel Society of Eastern Canada (PSEC)
- International Association of Pastel Societies (IAPS)

Membership is based on the calendar year and renewal is due on January 1st. New members joining after September 1st will have the following calendar year included with the initial membership fee.

Annual Membership: Basic \$50 CAD/Premium \$80 CAD
Outside Canada: Basic \$60 US/Premium \$90 US

Annual membership fees can now be paid using PayPal.

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We need your help! To make your organization run as smoothly as it is several of the above members are having to wear two hats. We would appreciate your participation. Come join **The PAC Team**. Contact Ruth Rodgers at: rodgers.ruth@gmail.com



From the President's Easel

By Ruth Rodgers, PAC, MPAC

Now that the activity of summer has passed, it's time to get back into the studio. Elsewhere in this issue I have written about the experience of participating in a studio tour, which I did in mid-October again this year. Sales were good, and I enjoyed the experience, but it also caused me to muse about the role of art in my life.

If I never sold another painting, would I still paint? The answer is an immediate "yes!" so I thought I might write about why I paint. Perhaps this reflection will cause you to review your own reasons for painting.

I paint because...

It helps me to see the beauty in the world, and in my fellow human beings;

It allows me to spend happy time alone, without the need for external entertainment or stimulation;

It helps me explore and develop myself—my own unique vision, capabilities, preferences, and judgments;

It pushes me to rise to challenges, to develop solutions to visual problems, to achieve my inner vision;

It keeps my brain active—both my intuitive right brain and my analytical left brain—it keeps me learning;

It develops my visual acuity, my ability to notice things;

It brings me into contact with like-minded others (my fellow artists, my students, my collectors, my art society members);

It keeps me humble and striving—I see the progression in my work, but no matter how satisfied I am with it, so many others are so much better;

It gives me satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment and deserved pride;

I enjoy the results! I love looking at a successful painting!

To fully benefit from all of the above, I need to keep pushing myself, keep trying new things, and keep challenging myself to paint things I'm not already "good at." My latest interest? Here on the west coast, I see a lot of boats out on the ocean, and I find myself especially enjoying the shapes, colours, and light effects of sailboats—yesterday, I had an unexpected opportunity to snap photos of a sailing regatta we passed as we made our way on the ferry to the coast. I've never been very good at drawing manmade objects (too lazy to learn proper drafting and perspective, I think) but perhaps I'll give them a go this winter. I'll let you know how it goes!

We'd love to hear about why YOU paint, and how you keep yourself learning and growing...email your responses to June at june.gauthier@gmail.com and we'll publish some of the responses in our next newsletter.

Also - welcome to Anne Fraser, who with the help of Cathy Cullis, has taken over the web editor position. We also say "thank you and farewell" to Fred Fielding, who has served for some years as the workshop coordinator, eastern region. Fred's enthusiasm and willingness to handle the details of running workshops in Ontario (from his Buffalo location) have been much appreciated. We are currently seeking a replacement for this position - those who might be interested, please email me (rodgers.ruth@gmail.com) to inquire.

Usually, enclosed in the November 'Purely Pastel' Newsletter you would receive a PAC Membership Renewal Card for the next year, however, if you are reading this November's newsletter you are a paid member of Pastel Artists.Ca until December 31, 2017.

The PAC has, through a combination of good management and member enthusiasm, accrued a surplus in excess of our operating requirements over the past eight years. This is not appropriate for a not-for-profit organization such as ours, and also makes us a too-attractive target for online shysters trying to access our funds. Your executive members have debated a number of options to use the surplus to the benefit of our members and our organizational goals--and a one year fee holiday for all existing members seems the best and most inclusive solution.

Gloria Burgoin has relied on your renewal cards to update her membership lists. Without the cards she will have to rely on you to send new contact information to her at: gburgoin@sourcecable.net

We do not want to lose you, so keep in touch.

This past Summer **Christine Camilleri**, PAC, MPAC learned that she had been accepted as an Associate Member of the Pastel Society of America.

While at the ICAN Conference in Aurora, Christine attended Roberta Coombs workshop and painted this portrait in the class.



"I gave the painting to my friend Erika who had posed for me. She was thrilled. Now she says she needs a castle to go with it."

Valerie Wilson was in France earlier this year and would like to pass along the following information to other PAC members, who might be travelling there.

"A few years ago when, I was in Paris, I discovered the Sennelier store. It's on the Left Bank, at 3 Quai Voltaire. It's been around since 1887. Cezanne, Picasso, Van Gogh and Gauguin were apparently all customers.

For those who don't already know about this store it's a wonderful place to visit."



Patia Schacht, PAC

I had a very busy summer doing Art in the park in Stratford, Ontario and commission work. I travelled in different areas in Northern Ontario, I love nature especially swamp areas and we had a great family time in Grand Bend, Ontario.

The most precious painting I did this summer was of my twin sister and her first baby granddaughter. I still love pastels but I am presently working on four new large canvasses with the clients.

Jessica Masters, took part in Guelph's Art on the Street Exhibition this summer, it is a downtown outdoor art exhibition. About 100 artists and crafts people participate in the show. Jessica received this year's "People's Choice" award.

"The honour was huge and I felt it was a definite thumbs up for pastellists."

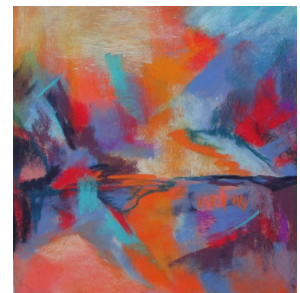


Jenny Angold

I know I am not the most active PAC member but I still love my pastels but I also love other media as well! I would just like to say I think the idea of giving members a free year is a great one. Thank you everyone who came up with and agreed to this idea. I have attached a couple of my most recent pastels just to prove I do still do them! They are very small, only five and a half inches and already earmarked for an exhibition.



Sunrise



Sunset

Catherine Sheppard, PAC

I am happy to tell you that I visit a lot of zoos and wildlife parks to obtain my subject matter of animals and birds. I love the big cats but do fight with wires and bars on cages. But, the odd time I do get a great photo to work with. (See *Tiger Gaze* on front cover.)

I go to places like Pt. Defiance Zoo, Ladner Wild Bird Sanctuary, Cougar Zoo, Woodland Zoo, Winnipeg Zoo and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park for my subject matter.

I enjoy going outdoors to view wildlife and am sometimes lucky enough to capture them doing their thing. It is my pleasure to recreate what I see to share with the viewing public my pastel works of art.

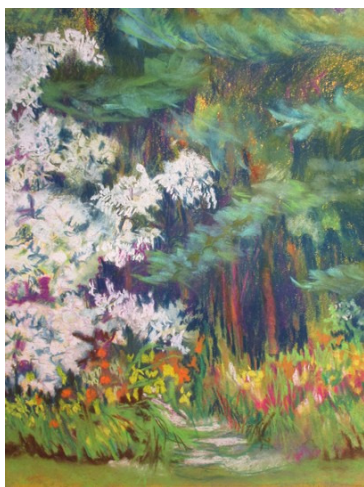
I've been painting a picture a day for the month of October, a challenge put out by Gail Sibley. It's been fun and so far I am up to date, this is one of them! Also, a couple of weeks ago I went plein-air painting in the wilderness area of Halifax, sponsored by CARP and they will be putting up an exhibition in the spring, so people can see what they are missing by not visiting the trails into the reserved lands of the city of Halifax. Cheers, **Rae Smith, PAC**



Susan E. Moore

I live in London ON and am a member of a plein-air painting group, The Gallery Painting Group. We start going outside in early May and go to areas around London. We are on private property in backyards, farmyards, city streets, just country side, and in the woods. It's so stimulating to be outside and with nature for a few hours in the day sitting on a little stool or standing at my portable easel creating my own image with my boxes of pastels. I am one of the few who paint in pastel in my group, as a matter of fact I think out of the 15 who might be painting around me I am the only one. In October we have a juried show of our work.

This year I sold one of my works, *On The Edge of The Woods*. I don't usually do an under painting I just take out my darks first, I love purple and navy blues especially in trees popping the highlighting soft lights on top!



I just purchased a box of Jack Richeson hand-made soft pastels, its like opening a box of candy!!! I am now working on snow paintings for another show "Chill" in London next month. Painting with pastels is like controlling nature with your hands!

Cliff Riviere, PAC

Fresh from a workshop on painting with a limited palette at ICAN in June, I was eager to get started on my backyard garden plein-air sketch/painting. Unfortunately, the kind of summer temperatures this year did not facilitate a lot of outdoor painting. However, I did manage to do a few sketches and some pastels.

A favourite subject of mine is a perennial hibiscus which produces dinner-plate size flowers. It was a somewhat windy day which made painting challenging, since the flowers kept dancing in the breeze (so to speak). However, by focusing on three flowers I was able to complete what I think was a reasonable 40 minute plein-air painting.



Later on, I made an arrangement with a flower pot (chrysanthemum) on a metallic furniture outdoor set. The intention was to capture the strong cast shadow made by the pot on the table top. Cast shadows do change relatively quickly in the late summer sun, which makes plein air painting a challenge and also fun!

This out door sketch of the clay pots on the deck will have to be the subject of a future studio painting.



New PAC Members Mini-bios

Paul Vincent, Ottawa, Ontario

Throughout my career as a mathematician, I have maintained an interest in art and its relationship to mathematics. I always loved drawing and painting and towards the end of my first career, I began studies with Ottawa portrait artist Christan Nicholson. Over the following years I have shown and sold my work in the Thousand Islands area (Kingston to Brockville) where I lived, though I recently moved to Ottawa. Over the years I have continued to take courses from professional artists of various styles and mediums to learn as much as I can.

My interest is to develop and explore my own vision of reality supported by mathematical constructs and atmospheric colour theory techniques built on good drawing foundations. I began painting with oil and acrylics but more recently I have been exploring pastels. I found that pastel painting gives me the spontaneity of drawing without compromising the colour expression of oils or acrylics. In particular I liked the interesting influence that various supports might have. So I have experimented with pastel painting over various ground/support and under painting combinations. No matter what subject matter, from landscape to figure work, I find pastel gives me a more natural way to push my work towards a realistic expressionism. I recently joined PAC in order to further my experience and knowledge of pastels. See Paul's painting *Vineyard Gold* on front cover.)

Having grown up in Montreal, Quebec, and now living in Brisbane, Australia (for the past 20 years), **Joanne Power Cotton** is forever pining for the Canadian landscape - for its grandeur, colours, scents and fresh temperatures. Pastel painting is one way she is able to relive, and return to Canada without enduring the long flights overseas! However, now that her children are grown up and independent she returns to her homeland more frequently with her box of pastels and relishes time in the forests, by the lakes, in the snow.... Joanne enjoys painting her travels, her environment, and she is forever grateful for the incredible beauty this world offers as inspiration.

Joanne has been a textile designer and garment stylist for the last 30 years and now works in Women Empowerment for ethnic minorities in South East Asia, often engaging with ethnic traditional textiles. You can visit her website/blog at www.thepastelpencilandthreadbox.weebly.com to see her pastel paintings and her work with the incredible ethnic weavers in Thailand and Myanmar.



Thinking Australia in 2018 Anyone?

Joanne Power Cotton is PAC's first member from Australian. With her Mini-Bio she has sent information on the Australian Pastel Exposition (EXPO) to be held at The Events Centre, Caloundra (Sunshine Coast), September 12 to 16, 2018.

The EXPO will be the first ever pastel convention in Australia acting as a platform to demonstrate the validity and quality of pastel fine art in Australia. The credibility of the luminous, velvety and versatile medium of pastel has gained traction with Australian artists over the last few decades and the Convention aims to showcase the growing artistic talent in Australia empowered through soft pastels.

The EXPO will also provide a space over a 5-day period to unite all the pastel societies in Australia and internationally so they may network, share and expand their knowledge and appreciation of this medium. It also offers an opportunity to promote pastels to other artists and new artists. This is with the intention to facilitate collaborations, and national and international exchanges and to broaden the scope of pastels as a versatile medium in Australia.

Unfortunately, we do not have space to put all the details in this newsletter, however, if you are interested please contact me at: jgautpac@gmail.com and I will email the full information page to you.

The Summer of 2016

By Tony Vander Voet, PAC, MPAC

I've had a busy summer and early fall painting, print making and exhibiting in a number of juried and group exhibitions. I was accepted into the Headwaters Arts Festival juried competition (oil paintings), the Beaux-Arts Brampton "Walk on the Wild Side" juried exhibition (photographs) and the Colour and Form Society Open Juried Show (water colour woodblock prints). I also exhibited in the Ontario Society of Artists Members' Exhibition. My wife, Susan McCrae, and I celebrated our 50th Wedding Anniversary this year with a combined cruise and land tour of Alaska. This has inspired me to work on a series of paintings and wood block prints inspired by the magnificent scenery we experienced on the trip. I had a lot of fun painting a landscape panorama on a 1' x 6' canvas - certainly a challenge in my small studio.



Although I have focussed in the past few years on painting landscapes in oils or using wood blocks, I have taken a few 'pastel breaks'. Last year I had a solo show, "The Lotus Position" at the Alton Mill Arts Centre. I showed a series of pastels done on paper over oil along with some oil paintings and photographs. I really like the way in which I could create a sense of depth by working the flowers and leaves in pastel while leaving the water and reflections largely in oil.



Recently, I have gone back to using pastel batik to create more abstract works. I find that by working in a batik fashion, I give up some control of the final product - and am more open to surprises. As piece I recently completed is a diptych "Sun and Ice" (total dimension (22" x 30").



What is Pastel Batik? In traditional batik on fabric, bees wax is used as a resist to protect the underlying colour of the fabric during successive dyeing. After the final dye, the wax is removed to reveal all the colours. In pastel batik, the resist is gum Arabic.

Participating in a Studio Tour

By Ruth Rodgers, PAC, MPAC

What's that saying, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times"? Participating in a studio tour can seem like both but, having done so six times in the past ten years, I can say that, stress and tedium taken into account, it's all worth it.

Why participate in a studio tour? It's an opportunity to

- Sell your work;
- Meet potential buyers, students, admirers, and those who might commission future work;
- Paint more, frame more, hang more work (a significant motivation!);
- Talk about your process, subjects, goals, joys, and struggles (not too much about that last one, please), thus becoming more articulate and confident when doing this;
- Explain the medium of pastels to a typically uninformed public (and thus create new collectors);
- Clean up your studio (admit it, it probably could use a really good clean-up!)

What to create/frame/hang for a studio tour?

- A small number of large, showy, and expensive pieces; hang these in a prominent location and light them well - oh, and frame them with museum glass if you can afford it - they will show much better and be far more likely to sell (add the cost of it to the price, but be prepared to explain why it is worth this added expense). These are for the serious collectors;
- A larger number of smaller, medium priced and less-expensively framed works (in the \$100-\$300 range) - these will be impulse buys;
- A bunch of really inexpensive items such as reproductions, matted and in clear-bags, cards, calendars etc. - these are the things people buy because they feel obligated to buy "something" but a whole lot of \$5 items can add up by the end of the day!
- Add supplemental lighting to your studio so your pieces are shown to advantage (Is now the time to add track lighting? A hanging system?)
- Print extras of your business cards—folks who don't buy NOW might come back later; make sure your website is current and fresh.

Also...

- Display signage that (concisely) explains what pastels are (I also have signs that explain what museum glass is and why it's worth the cost) - having these posted around the room will reduce (not eliminate) the necessity of explaining those two things over, and over, and over... also, signpost private areas of your home clearly, and shut pets away safely;
- Have snacks! It's an old marketing trick - offer something for nothing and visitors will tend to feel obliged to reciprocate by buying something; I buy a huge can of President's Choice Lemon Iced Tea mix, and make it up with HOT water in a standard coffee urn - everyone loves it, it doesn't get strong over time, and it eliminates the need for milk/cream/sugar - a cup of that and a yummy (store-bought but like homemade) cookie is just the ticket to keep your visitors in the space for a few more minutes;
- Paint during the tour, if you can—people LOVE to watch an artist at work, and small pieces often sell right off the easel (I have a sign on the easel that says "Fresh off the easel, \$200" - which is what I would normally sell it for, unframed, anyway, but it FEELS like a bargain this way! Offer advice on framing to buyers;
- Don't put your work "on sale" but offer discounts for more than one purchase, or throw in a card with every purchase; my only exception to this rule is that I offer 20% off all unframed works (in a bin, sealed in clear bags) during the tour only - people love rifling through this bin looking for bargains;
- Have a sign-in sheet that invites people to leave their email address (for your future marketing messages, or to be contacted about future lessons) - perhaps offer a draw for a discount on a future purchase to motivate them to fill out the contact info on the draw slips;
- Have quiet, pleasant music playing in the studio - it fills silences, and makes the space feel welcoming;
- Greet everyone at some point during his or her visit - don't get stuck with one monopolizer.

Practical Tips

- Make sure your location is clearly identified with easily visible signs - add balloons to mark the way if the route is complex;
- Mark parking areas with signs so visitors don't block neighbours' drives;
- Notify your neighbours well ahead of the tour, and invite them in for a sneak peek the evening before the tour (they are dying of curiosity, believe me!);
- Get a good night's sleep each night of the tour, and don't plan any evening activities - you'll be very tired and not want to talk to anyone after six-eight hours of smiling and talking!
- Get a "Square" account so you'll be able to take credit cards via your phone, ipad or laptop - they charge only 2.75% of each sale, and it sure boosts your sales if you can process credit cards (especially the big purchases);
- Stash your cash securely - I keep mine in my painting apron pocket, which I wear throughout the tour - don't leave it anywhere loose in the studio!

Finally, smile and enjoy yourself. Try not to focus on sales—focus on making contacts and showcasing your work. Good luck!

Congratulations Trish Acres and Christine Camilleri

Earlier this year Ruth Rodgers was approached by Anne Hevener, Editor of the *Pastel Journal*, who asked her to submit a short list of Canadian pastel artists who might be among those featured in an upcoming article, titled "Ones to Watch."

The criteria for inclusion were recent accomplishments in the field of pastel, and a unique and notable style that set them apart from other gifted artists. Ruth drew heavily upon our 2016 ICAN Pastel exhibition and conference for her submission list, and she is delighted to announce that both Trish Acres, MPAC and Christine Camilleri, MPAC were selected by the *PJ* staff to be featured.

The current edition of the magazine includes images of both Trish and Christine, their work, excerpts of interviews with them, and brief quotes from Ruth's submission.

Ruth said "I am so proud to have had a chance to be part of the success of these TWO Canadian pastel masters. It was an honour and a recognition of the influence of the PAC to have been asked to contribute to this article."

Anne has told Ruth that *PJ* hopes to make this an annual feature, so perhaps we will see more of our accomplished artists there in future!

Using this photo of a Sandhill Crane she had taken at the Bird Sanctuary in Ladner, BC, as a reference, Catherine Sheppard painted her pastel *Sandhill* below.



Michael Chesley Johnson, AIS, PSA, MPAC is writing a series of "Master Class" blog posts. He has given PAC permission to print this the first in the series. <http://mchesleyjohnson.blogspot.com/2016/10/master-class-dominance.html>



Nestled in Dawn's Early Light
9x12 pastel by Michael Chesley Johnson
What color qualities are dominant in this scene?

Master Class Dominance

I've decided to start a new series of blog posts, one that will address topics of interest to more advanced painters. With this post, I'd like to talk about dominance.

Climb to a hill top on a summer's morning, overlooking a forested valley. It's a breath-taking view, and you can see for miles. You'd love to paint it. But stop for a moment to consider what visual ingredients go into making this scene. The sun begins to rise before you, casting a golden light over the valley, and the very air seems incandescent. Summer has nearly reached its end, and the vibrant greens of spring are now tempered with muted reds and yellows, giving a hint of fall.

You set up your easel and prepare your colours. Now, after you've used your viewfinder to crop your scene but before pick up your pastel to paint, ask yourself three questions:

- Is the scene mostly light or dark?
- Is it mostly warm or cool?
- Is it mostly filled with rich color or dull?

I usually think in terms of square inches. For example, do the warm colours occupy more real estate in the scene than the cool ones?

You determine that yours is a low-key scene, filled with cool, mostly dull colour. Yes, there are little spots of warm light and a hint of richer reds and yellows, but these only serve to increase the sense of luminosity.

This analysis to determine what is dominant in a scene will help you to "capture the moment" successfully. Although there are many different contrast pairs, I've found that these three -- value (light/dark), temperature (warm/cool) and chroma (rich/dull) -- are the most important ones for landscape painting.

In my next Master Class post, I'll write about what I call contrast pairs.

If you're an advanced painter, do you have a Master Class topic you'd like to see discussed? Let me know!

Fall Clean Up

By Christine Camilleri, MPAC, AFCA, PSA (Assoc)

Every Fall I have a studio clean up (because in the Spring I really just want to enjoy the sunshine and fresh air!)

If you're not sure if you need a clean up ask yourself these questions:

Is your studio cluttered? Are you feeling creative and excited when you walk in and then are you feeling overwhelmed with chaos? Are there all kinds of clippings, photos and ideas laying around and is the space getting smaller and smaller? Do you have paintings that are left unfinished? Do you know where your coffee cup is? In other words can you find things easily? Is there a floor or are you contorting your body trying to get around things? Are you storing unrelated things in your studio? Could you have an open house and show off your studio tomorrow or is there so much clutter you would need six months notice?

Chaos creates distraction. I am a firm believer in cleaning out the old and starting fresh. There is nothing that detracts creatively for me than a studio that is beginning to close in on me.

Most importantly I throw out old ideas, even sketches and half finished paintings. "Face it", I say to myself "if you haven't done anything with it when you first started it how on earth will you keep it fresh now when it's been so long ago?" I find I have to be ruthless. I still have my first acrylic, my first watercolour and some early pastels that are hung. These remind me where I started from. This way I see progress. The rest goes. Discarding sketches and paintings that didn't work out can be the hardest thing to do. It clears my mind and prevents me from seeing where I was rather than where I am going. I don't want to have my visual space filled with things that are half done or forgotten pulling me back.

Once again, I have a space that is inviting. This is my space; it needs to welcome me with open arms! A word of caution: we all know the trap of doing unrelated activities to avoid getting into our creative mode – it's much easier to clean up something than do the harder work of planning and painting. That is why I have to reorganize and clean my studio annually because it will get cluttered again – that's the cycle of my creativity.

In fact, the messier it gets the happier I am because I know that I have been focusing on producing paintings – and isn't that really what having this space is all about?

I recently stumbled upon a YouTube site "A History of Pastels" which I thought would be of interest to other PAC members.

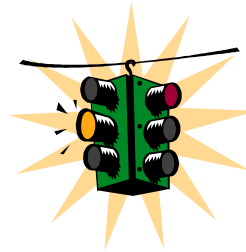
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AIKrS5ARFI>

A short version of historic works in pastel showing the development of pastel from cave art through to the twentieth century. I believe that the full version of this video with over 500 slides was shown at the 2013 IAPS Convention.

It is very interesting and well worth watching, even if you have seen it before. This site also has many links to pastel videos, demos, lessons and classes.

Enjoy,

Jennifer Ross, PAC, MPAC
DVD Librarian



**Next Newsletter
Deadline
January 15, 2017**

The February Newsletter will only have colour on the front and back cover. The inside pages will be in black and white. The cost of printing doubles to print in colour. We usually print only one colour newsletter each year but 2016 was a special year with our 25th Annual Open Juried Exhibition and the ICAN Pastel Conference so three were printed in colour.

To enjoy the PAC Newsletters in full colour ask to be put on the Newsletter email list. You can still receive your printed and mailed copy as well but the email copy allows you to see the images on the inside pages in colour.

Contact me at: jgautpac@gmail.com.

Or by mail at: June Gauthier
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Flesherton, ON. N0C 1E0

Past "**Purely Pastel**" newsletters can be viewed on our website: www.pastelartists.ca

The Ugly Stage

By Trish Acres, PAC, MPAC

If you've been to a workshop with me, or read my little eBook, *Pastel Painting Made Easy*, you'll know that I paint systematically. I work dark to light, and cool to warm. As a creative person who can easily become distracted with colour, painting in steps keeps me focused and reduces the chances of muddying the colours.

Even though I follow a series of colour applications, I still run into that point in my painting that I like to call *The Ugly Stage*. It's that moment when I look at the pastel on my paper and feel a little overwhelmed. I can't completely see where the colours are taking me. I start to wonder if maybe I've made a mistake and doubt the process.

I don't think I'm the only artist that experiences this. I've heard the same doubts expressed in workshops that I've led. Learning artists who follow the cool-to-warm application system start to worry. They're ready to give up, or say things like "I'm not good at this". It's difficult to imagine the big picture and so easy to get caught up in the strangeness of what's in front of them.



Recently I spent time in the studio after not painting for a number of months. I wanted something fun to work on as a warm-up piece. I had been out taking photos of cows a couple days before and chose one as reference material.

The picture to the left is an example of when I thought "I've arrived at the ugly stage". I recognized that my painting was a little off technically. I doubted my reference choice. I wondered if I could get the results I was hoping for because I had lost sight of the bigger picture.

It could be so easy at this point to walk away from a painting, or even question the process and start dropping in the lightest colours or highlights to make the cow more believable.

But with years of painting experience, I knew that giving up or abandoning my process wouldn't produce the result that I was looking for. It's important to push through the frustrating stage and remind myself that the painting will come together eventually. One of the nice features of pastel applied to sanded paper is that it is very forgiving. The ability to layer allows me to edit along the way. The eyes and nose placement was adjusted until the cow became more accurate.

If you encounter the same feelings of doubt halfway through a painting you might find comfort in knowing that many artists encounter *The Ugly Stage* in their painting process. However, it's how you move through that conflict that will determine your growth as an artist.

To the right is the finished piece. The introduction of warm colours is often what reassures me that I'm on the right track, and with a slow layering of colour and value, it eventually comes together.

Happy Painting!



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