

Pastel Artists.Ca

PASTEL ARTISTS.CA

A COMMUNITY OF PASTEL ARTISTS

“Purely Pastel”

www.pastelartists.ca

May, June, July, 2017

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TO WORK IN PASTEL SHARED BY MPAC AND PAC MEMBERS



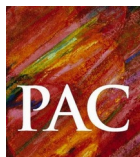
A Walk in Cootes Paradise, IV
Clarence Porter, PAC, MPAC



A Study with Marla Baggetta
Fred Fielding, PAC, MPAC



Quebec City View
Karin Richter, PAC, MPAC



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**.

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From the President's Easel

By Ruth Rodgers, PAC, MPAC

The slogan used by Royal Roads University is “**Life. Changing.**” Clever, isn’t it? The one thing we cannot escape in our lives is change but, as the slogan implies, we can determine to seek out ‘life-changing’ experiences along the way. In this issue, we showcase the life-changing experiences that a number of our PAC and MPAC signature artists have had along their journeys: ones that have caught their interest, prompted new directions, or honed their craft.

While I can readily see the increased sensitivity and skill evident in their ‘later’ paintings, I was struck by the vigour, freshness, and obvious joy evident in all their ‘early’ paintings as well. I also remember wryly an offhand remark made by my mother, who said to me, ‘You know, sometimes I think I like the paintings you did before you learned anything the best!’ Quite a blow to my hard-won confidence in my growing skills! Yet I understood her comment, too. I have observed myself, and my students, go through a number of stages in our learning, as enumerated in this ‘stages of learning’ model, attributed to Noel Burch of Gordon Training International in the 1970s:

1. **Unconscious incompetence** (*you don’t know that you don’t know*)

The individual does not understand or know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize the deficit. They may deny the usefulness of the skill. The individual must recognize their own incompetence, and the value of the new skill, before moving on to the next stage. The length of time an individual spends in this stage depends on the strength of the stimulus to learn.

2. **Conscious incompetence** (*you know that you don’t know—ouch!*)

Though the individual does not understand or know how to do something, he or she does recognize the deficit, as well as the value of a new skill in addressing the deficit. The making of mistakes can be integral to the learning process at this stage.

3. **Conscious competence** (*you know that you know*)

The individual understands or knows how to do something. However, demonstrating the skill or knowledge requires concentration. It may be broken down into steps, and there is heavy conscious involvement in executing the new skill.

4. **Unconscious competence** (*you stop worrying about knowing—and just do*)

The individual has had so much practice with a skill that it has become “second nature” and can be performed easily. As a result, the skill can be performed while executing another task. The individual may be able to teach it to others, depending upon how and when it was learned.

Many of our earliest paintings, I think, reveal that we were in stage one, blithely unaware of the goofs we were making, but expressing both our joy in the act of painting and our determination to express our artistic vision through this marvellous medium of pastel. In this stage, many artists are defiantly ‘self-taught’ and refuse to learn any theory or structured technique on the grounds that it may constrain their free expression. Some never leave this stage!

Somewhere along the line, we become painfully aware that our work is not achieving the goals we have for it - and we become a little more humble, seeking out help from those more accomplished whether that be via workshops, courses, books, videos, social media, or mentoring. Slowly, we become more skilled, and enter stage three, where every mark is made consciously and deliberately, but the end results are closer to our vision for them. Works created in this stage are typically technically Excellent—but they may lack life and boldness, too.

Finally, however, as Picasso observed, we have ‘learned the rules well enough to be able to break them,’ but with a much—expanded toolbox and skill set. It is then that we truly begin to be able to achieve our own unique visions, and our work can leap into another level altogether. Interestingly, it can begin to show similarity to our early work, expressing the freshness and passion we may have set aside as we carefully mastered our tools.

For me, a critical realization was one that Burch captured in his stage 4 description above—that it takes ‘much practice’ to get to the stage where the skill is ‘second nature.’ Malcolm Gladwell has written about the ‘10,000 hours’ required to become a master at anything (though I am happy to report that recent studies have challenged that rather daunting target), and others have suggested painting 100 paintings before expecting to achieve anything at all. Whatever, the number, it’s clear that we only get better at

painting...by painting. It's also so important to realize, as one of the artists states in this newsletter, that most paintings go through an 'ugly stage' and that we must patiently and persistently work through that stage to the next, better, layer. If we always discard the work when it gets to that stage, we will never develop the tools and skills necessary to correct (and, later, prevent) those errors.

So...how do you get to Carnegie Hall (as the old joke goes)? Practice, practice, practice!



Morning Tracks
An early work and the one my mother always liked best.



Snow Swept - 2016

What a wonderful find again!

Clarence Porter, PAC, MPAC

I spent a large chunk of my life as a freelance commercial illustrator working in a multitude of mediums but I rarely used pastels for work projects. I would use pastels in those impromptu life-drawing classes my friends would set up after work hours.

In 1983 I went on my first "doing my own art" bender and pastels were the medium of choice. I remember having all of these ideas and images that kept coming and it being

the first time that I had to put my own images down on paper. I went for weeks painting and the more I did, the more I had to do. And then it stopped, I stopped. I don't know why: life, work, family. I went back to my commercial life of scratch board and coloured pencils and gouache and It's funny, until I started searching for the earliest pastel painting for this article, I had forgotten all about that episode in my life. It had been stored away in a big 30" x 40" flat corrugated box in the back storage room of so many moves without me thinking about those paintings or looking for them ... until now. What a wonderful find again.



Girl in A Sun Hat - 1983
20" x 25 1/2"

In 2005 I met Tim Daniels and ever since, I've been doing my own art in pastels (when I'm not showing other people how to paint with pastels or teaching my Sheridan College kids:-)

On the front cover is my painting *A Walk in Cootes Paradise IV* (12" x 12") it was painted in 2017.

Years of Struggle and Experience

Robin Sheard Nyikos, PAC, MPAC

Italian Girl was painted 38 years ago while I was a student at the OCAD Studio in Florence Italy. At the time I knew next to nothing about pastel painting and was using pastel over a watercolour underpainting. Later when I was painting *Italian Girl*, from a life model I switched to using mineral spirits and nupastel as a wash,

which had a shorter drying time and gave me more time to finish and paint the pose with my Rembrandt pastels. I did not own a camera, so reference photos weren't an option.



Italian Girl - 1979
(signed 1980)
14" x 21"

At the time my ambition was to be able to do more sustained work with a higher degree of finish, but lacked the materials, experience and guidance to take my paintings further. It was a frustrating journey as I tried to figure things out.

When I came back to Canada for a few months in 1980, I got a copy of Daniel Greene's book, *Pastel A comprehensive Guide to Pastel Painting*, (Watson Guptill, 1974) In the book, Greene sets out his painting methods with demonstrations, materials, surfaces, etc. That book became my pastel teacher, as did my experience that summer painting over one hundred pastel portraits at Ontario Place. I returned to Europe that fall and put what I had learned into practice painting over three hundred pastel portraits while there.



My 'recent' painting, *Meeting the Past*, (27" x 40") was painted in 2016 using most of my pastels going from hard pastels to my softest Schminke on illustration board primed with Golden acrylic ground for pastel and some marble dust. It was painted from life and from my photos over a period of about two months.

Although I still can get that feeling of 'losing to bad chaos' at some point during a painting, years of struggle and experience have taught me to push through it.

Study and Practice

Fred Fielding, PAC, MPAC



This painting is pretty typical of what I would do before I decided to really study and practice, as you can see it has awkward shapes and looks unfinished, I just didn't know how to manipulate the pastel and didn't have a good knowledge of composition.



This painting and the one on the front cover were done while studying with Marla Baggetta in her online program. Participating in this program really has helped me a great deal.

Books, Magazines and Workshops

Evalynne McDougall, PAC, MPAC

My interest in pastels began quite accidentally during a Federation of Canadian Artists Foundation drawing course in the late 1990s. Photos were handed out randomly, and I received the dog in the sketch below.



Border Collie - 10" x 15"
Conte on butcher's paper
1998

We were told to use pastels, chalk or charcoal. All I had were three Conte sticks and brown butcher's paper. I discovered magic in the few minutes it took to execute the drawing. The directness of application and ease of blending instantly hooked me and I began to look for more information on how to use pastels - books, the *Pastel Journal*, workshops and so on.

By the way, this sketch of the border collie is tacked to the wall in my studio, and I still get the same frisson of delight when I see it, as I did when I painted it in that class twenty years ago.



Basil - 18" x 24"
2015
Soft pastel on *Pastelmat*

What I had learned in other media about composition, value and colour paid off and I found that the transition to pastels was quite easy - and I really liked the results! Through participation in exhibitions, I've acquired Master status with Pastel Artists Canada, Signature status with the Northwest Pastel Society, and Distinguished status with the Pastel Society of the West Coast.

My favourite subjects are still life (the challenge of painting glass and ceramics), animals (nothing does fur better than pastels), and figures (one can get perfect skin tones with pastels). I do not use under paintings, nor do I use fixatives. However, I've enrolled in the Richard McKinley workshop sponsored by PAC and I am looking forward to trying pastel techniques and subjects that are completely foreign to those I currently use.

Developing Skill in using Pastels

Catherine Sheppard, PAC

I started to work with pastel only a few short years ago. 2010 was when I took my first class and have been producing works in pastel ever since.

My first portrait was done in 2010 of my grandson, Keiran, who was six months old at the time.



I can see how I struggled to make the skin look realistic back six years earlier in that piece. I have learned to utilize my pastels to make a more believable skin tone. I am very glad to see a progression in my work.

This is a portrait I painted in 2016 of Keiran, who is now six years old with his younger brother, Coen, who is four years old.



Six short years has taught me how to better utilize my pastels to a more realistic look and feel of my subject matter.



Hanging Out

This is a very recent painting completed last month.

The 3-D Theory of Creativity

Joan Larson, PAC, MPAC

What a great idea to help build morale . . . It is all too easy to beat oneself up about our abilities. I am firm believer in practice, practice, practice. Many years ago I wrote a piece for a website in the U.S., about learning to become an artist . . . I called it the 3-D Theory of Creativity. With Desire, Dedication and Discipline, one can accomplish just about anything (and we all sabotage ourselves at some level).



First Touch
Painted 1990/91

I Love the Artist Life

Karin Richter, PAC, MPAC

My obsession with pastel painting came relatively late in my art career, having painted in watercolour for most of my life and taking up acrylics and oils somewhere along the way. A fellow teacher was doing a demo in pastels next door and watching it, I got excited to try it. I guess the rest is history.

First I painted on sanded paper and Canson Mi-teintes and did not mind the results. After painting all those other mediums, this was easy! So direct, so much fun!



Late Spring - (11" x 14")
2006

The same teacher eventually introduced me to suede board. It changed my life. I just loved the look of the luscious application with the soft pastels my family gave me at that time and I have been addicted to this combination ever since!



Evening Stroll - 18" x 24"
2007

Looking back at my earlier efforts, I was very slap-happy, going at it with broader strokes. Over the years, I have tightened up, not because this was my intention, it just so happened. Trying different subject matter and seeing what working with a stick can do compared to a brush, seemed to have had that effect on me.

I have not changed all that much in the last few years. Actually I am longing to be more impressionistic. Having registered for Casey Klahn at IAPS 2017 will hopefully get me back to a slightly looser version of myself!

I love the artist life, one never knows what one will do tomorrow or be capable of! It is one big adventure!

On the front cover is Karin's painting *Quebec City View*, (24" x 12") 2014.

Finding your own Voice

Tony Vander Voet, PAC, MPAC

I took a class in soft pastels with Ursula Reese at the Haliburton School of the Arts in 2001. I had only started to paint seriously the year before, and it was my first encounter with this medium. I was very cautious at first. Many of the other students were far more experienced in the use of pastels and were comfortable in their choices of subject matter and style - which for the most part was fairly traditional. Ursula saw that I was not comfortable and encouraged me to find my own voice and use the medium to express what I wanted to say. She also encouraged me to join PAC and enter juried shows.

In 2002 I painted a series of pastels inspired by a trip to France. *Abbey at Senanque*, is part of that series which was done in an impressionist manner and which was very successful with several pieces being accepted into juried shows and sold. But I was still not satisfied.



I realized that I was letting the medium, and the way it is traditionally used, limit me. I needed to stop worrying about pleasing friends, family, jurors. I needed to break some "rules". I needed to experiment with the medium and see where it could lead me.

So I batiked with pastels and gum arabic; I coated pastel paintings with resin; I painted with pastels one hand and a spray bottle of water in the other; and I applied pastels over layers of oil paint. Some pieces worked and were successful: others ended up in the discard pile. But, most importantly, I had a great deal of fun doing these things. I painted *Sun and Ice* (a diptych) using pastel batik in 2016.



I feel I have matured as an artist over the past 15 years and continue to have fun experimenting with different media, techniques and styles. I have learned to focus on the process of creating art, and on finding joy in that process.

Experimenting on Your Own

Kathy Dolan, PAC, MPAC

My first pastel painting (drawing) was self taught using a box of 12 hard pastel sticks, black mi-teintes paper and a reference photo taken in my flower garden. I clearly remember the frustration of not seeing the colours I wanted when I glanced into the small box; but was then totally fascinated how the colours changed on the paper depending on what colour was placed next to it. I felt very keen on learning all I could about this medium.



Morning Light - (8.5" x 6") - 2001

I have taken a couple of pastel workshops over the years, but mostly learn by experimenting on my own. Social media is a great resource for finding out about new products. I like doing under paintings and building layers. Fine grit sandpaper works well for this technique. (Uart800 and Pastelmat).



Early One Morning - (11" x 15") - 2016
Hard and soft pastels on Uart 800

I've built up quite an inventory of pastels over the years (both hard and soft), but in practice and when teaching I try to minimize my colour selection as I'm often reminded of that first painting.

Then and Now

Francis Obie, PAC, MPAC

When I first started painting in pastel, working large seemed better to me. Also, I felt that, in order to be true to the scene I was trying to paint, I had to include as much as possible. So, I would choose a format similar to my first example below.



Before the Fire - (24"x 30")

As you can see, many details were included. I probably could have painted several smaller pictures about different aspects of this scene without putting all the information in one. It goes without saying that this picture took a very long time to complete.



Here Comes the Sun - (12" x 24")

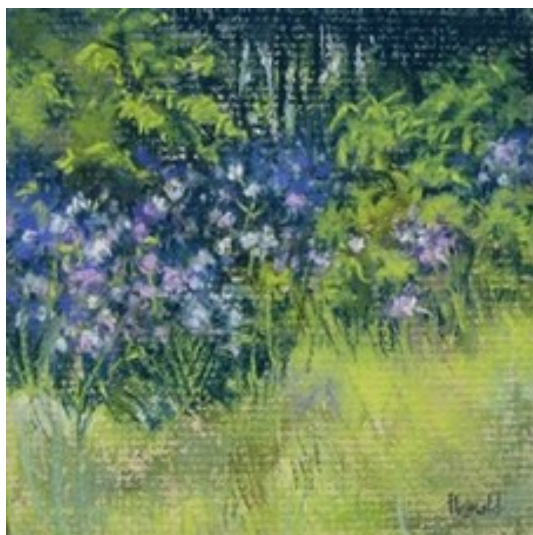
This is my second example, was completed, working part time, in just under a week and represents the simplicity I now try to achieve in my compositions. I now have less patience for detail than I used to but also feel that the essence of a scene can be communicated more effectively by including less.

Also, I have come to realize that bigger does not necessarily mean better.

Using Quality Materials

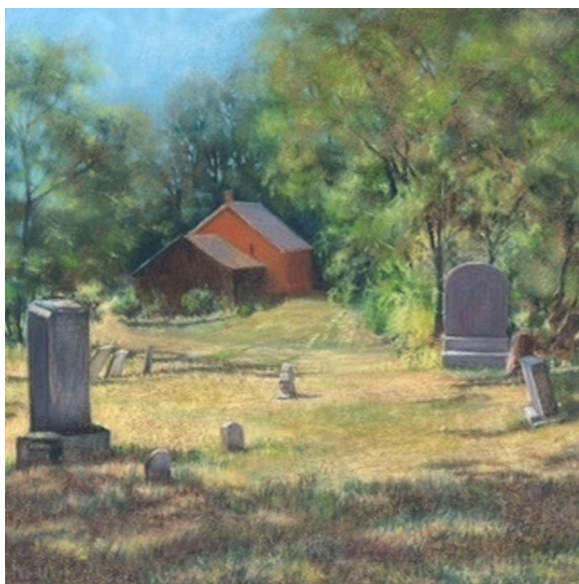
Marie Harold, PAC

While visiting the Paint Ontario Exhibition in 2012, I was impressed by some amazing pastel work, and after doing some on line investigating decided to jump in with both feet! I purchased a 35 piece set of Rembrandt soft pastels and some Canson paper. It wasn't long until I decided I needed some sanded paper and more pastels!



An Early Pastel

This decision definitely encouraged me in my pursuit of this wonderful medium. I have not had the opportunity to attend a workshop, but have benefited greatly from books and DVDs.



A Recent Pastel

Happy with Uart 400

Kim Martin, PAC, MPAC



I painted this beagle in 2001 on velour paper. I painted the chocolate lab that is on the back cover in 2016 on Uart 400 sanded paper.

I have learned a lot in those 15 years. I experimented with many different surfaces and pastels and I am quite happy with the Uart 400 and all the layers I can now achieve.

I did a workshop in 2009 with Lesley Harrison, animal artist and I learned a great deal. I learned how to layer the pastel by using a very fine touch and to use sharpened hard pastels to create the final touches. I have studied canine and feline anatomy on my own and I feel that has certainly helped along with drawing, drawing and more drawing.

I really take my time now to learn a bit about the pet I am painting in order that I portray not only their likeness but their personality as well.

Honing Skills of Observation

Christine Obers, PAC, MPAC

I'm actually quite new to pastels. I began using them only about 7 years ago. I love them! I think working with other mediums made it not too difficult to transition. Most of the things I learned along the way are the same things that are important when working with the pastel medium.



West Hawk Lake, MB - (12" x 16")

The date on this artwork is 1969. I had just started doing oil paintings. I can see now the things I had already learned up to this point. Lots of things I didn't know yet.

The things I got right:

I'm glad to see I didn't have the tree dead center. The composition is not too bad. There's a nice highlight on the trunk of the tree and the shading is pretty good. The shadow behind the tree is sort of ok. It should have been more distorted and uneven as it passed over the rocks. There's some nice mottling of color on the rocks to indicate lichens. The reflection of the trees in the background is slightly lighter which is good. I like how I've suggested that the water is clear by having the colour of the sand showing through at the shore. I also like that I was suggesting transparency by indicating the shadow of the tree and the rocks through the water.

Things I hadn't figured out yet:

It's bothersome seeing the clouds lining up like they're stacked. They could use some shading. I do like that they have some soft edges. The tree and rocks look like they're floating. The shrubs in the lower right should've been clumped together in a more random fashion with some openings so it would look natural. I completely missed putting a shadow on the back part of the rocks behind the tree. Some highlights on the rocks would've added a lot to make them look less flat. The pine needles on the tree should've had more values. They're also way too flat. Would've been good to have softer edges too. I clearly didn't know about the atmospheric effect on the landscape in the distance. The trees in the background should've been lighter.

I could probably find a lot more things and I'm sure you'll see some things too.

It really is interesting to look back on artwork that was done a long time ago. So much is learned one step at a time. One of the most wonderful things about being an artist is developing and honing your skills of observation. Truly a blessing I'm grateful for every day of my life.

A more recent painting done in pastel is on the back cover.

Learning From Your Past Experience

Cliff Riviere, PAC

One of the exercises that I did in a pastel course at VAM (Visual Arts Mississauga) several years ago, was a still life consisting of a group of objects with varied shapes and surface textures. Included in that group was a label-less tin can with a reflective surface. Depicting that with pastels was not as difficult as I first thought.



Fast forward several years later, I came across a steel pan youth orchestra playing at a park in Port Credit in Mississauga one summer afternoon. The sunlight reflections on the pan surfaces reminded me of the skills that I learned in that lesson.

We would like to thank all our PAC and MPAC artists who took the time to share their memories of learning to work in pastel. The theme that seems to echo throughout these pages is that if you want to succeed you must "practice, practice, practice".

Happy pastel painting!

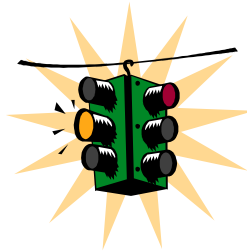


Fog Lifting in the Redwoods - (25.5" x 18") - 2010
 Pastel on grey Art Spectrum paper
 Christine Obers, PAC, MPAC



Pan in the Park
 Cliff Riviere, PAC

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Next Newsletter
Deadline
July 15, 2017

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Chocolate Lab - 2016
 On Uart 400 sanded paper
 Kim Martin, PAC, MPAC