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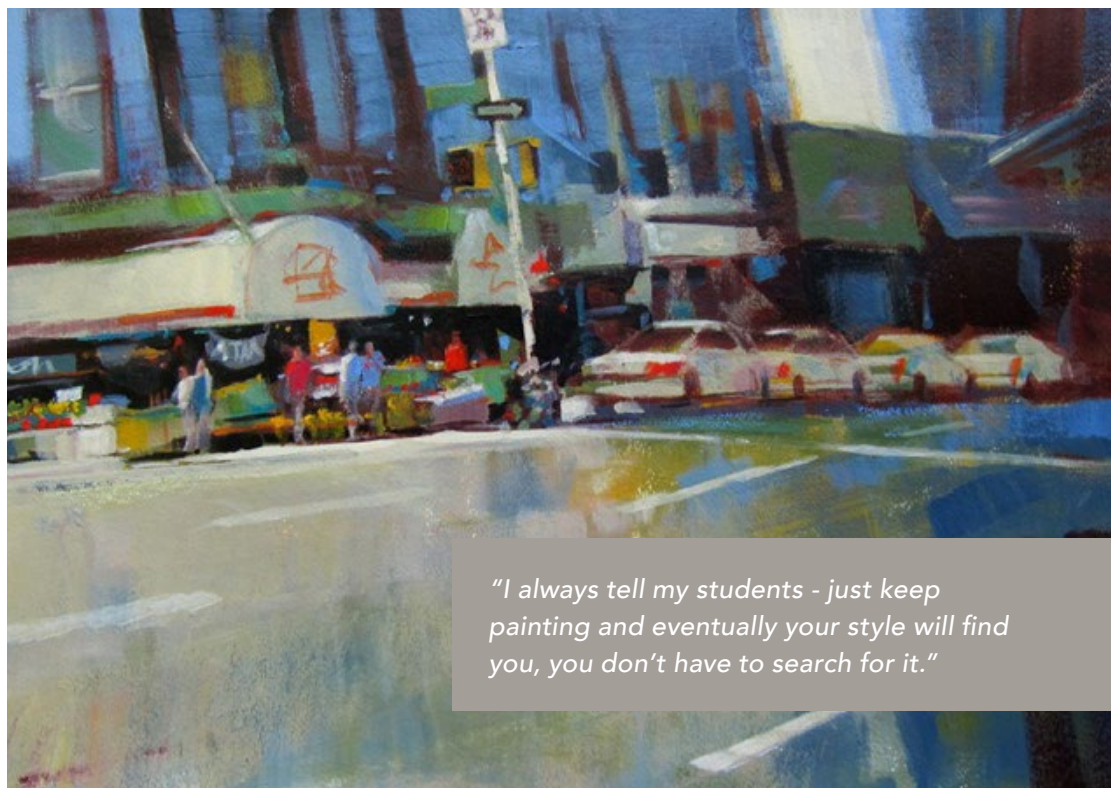


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MAIN FEATURE

Developing My Expressive Style

by Patti Mollica



"I always tell my students - just keep painting and eventually your style will find you, you don't have to search for it."

I became interested in art at a very young age. My babysitter, Sheila, was an artist and would come over for an evening - or whenever my parents needed to escape 6 young children - with a large sketchbook and oil pastels. I have many fond memories of the two of us sitting at the kitchen table while I watched on, mesmerized, as she drew all sorts of subjects - portraits, landscapes, animals, etc. She drew for hours on end, often working from her imagination. As a young impressionable girl, this was the most fascinating thing I had ever seen, and naturally I wanted to be just like her! I started drawing at this young age, and for my 6th birthday my parents bought me a large sketchbook and a set of oil pastels. Believe it or not, I still have that original sketchbook as well as many of my baby sitter's beautiful drawings, which I treasure.

I eventually translated my love of art into a career in commercial illustration, graphic design, and art direction. This multi-faceted direction allowed me to use my drawing skills while at the same time work with color, shape, design, composition, concepts, and a broad range of art related elements. For many years I was happily immersed in creating beautiful designs for many different types of clients. My projects always revealed an "artistic" touch, which became my style. As the technical computer age took hold, I found myself in an environment that seemed to favor generic push-button solutions over unique creative problem solving. Learning left brain computer skills became burdensome and while I stayed relevant in creating via technology, I was aware that something important and fundamental was slipping away. I took classes in advanced

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coding programs only to decide that this was never my interest, and it was time for me to get back to what I love.

I was able to merge my artistic skills with clients' needs through a steady stream of illustration assignments including CD and book covers, wine labels, posters, magazine ads, etc. My style of painting has always had a gestural, painterly look, with energetic brushwork. This has served me well in that it contrasts starkly from the computer generated, slick style commonly seen in the advertising world of today. Rather than bend my preferences to simulate the current trends, clients hire me to "do my thing" and I've been able to develop and hone my artistic style "on the job" so to speak.

I've always enjoyed working in many different types of media. I started with oil pastels and soft pastels, then moved to oil paints which I still use, but have found myself gravitating most often to acrylics. I love the fact that I can layer them endlessly without disturbing the passages underneath.

"I like to create small simplified value sketches of my subject to create the same strong design and composition before moving into color."

Mostly I work with the tube/heavy body colors, because I enjoy the "yogurt" type of consistency. I find it easy to pick up a lot of paint in one swipe with my brush, and that results in a thick, juicy look. I work very fast, so the quick dry time does not bother me at all. In fact within 15 minutes of completion my painting is dry to the touch and ready to put in a frame.

Over the years I have discovered by trial and error, techniques and materials that work for me to achieve the bold look that I am after. Being a graphic designer, I have always understood and practiced the principle of having a strong design as the basis for a good composition. Whenever I worked on logo design projects, I would always create them in black and white as a start. If the design was compelling and held together well in black and white, then I would next work with color which I considered icing on the cake. I approach my paintings the same way. I like to create small simplified value sketches of my subject to create the same strong design and composition before moving into color. It helps me to know that I'm working on a strong foundation, and that gives me the confidence to work in a bolder, more direct manner.

I also enjoy working with large brushes - 2" or more. I find that large brushes gives me a look that is more painterly and energetic than small brushes. I use very inexpensive

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NYPL Lion



Two Blondes



craft brushes for most of my work. They suit my needs quite well and even hold up nicely over time. I always use flat or bright brushes because I like knowing where my "edge" of the brush is. I use that for smaller detail rather than using a small brush.

I work with Golden Heavy Body paints. They have a very buttery consistency and the colors are bright and very vibrant. When I first started working with acrylics I bought student grade paint and found that the colors dried chalky and the colors

I often use a polymer medium (gloss) instead of water as my medium. It helps to slow down the dry time a bit and also keeps my colors bright. I pour a little puddle of the medium on my palette, mix up my color, then dip that mixture into the medium. Because the medium is thicker and more slippery than water, the paint glides off my brush in a more uniform manner and it facilitates softer edges and smoother blending. When I need my paints to stay wet longer, or I am painting a subject that needs blended, softer passages, sometimes I will use Golden OPEN acrylic paints which stay wet 10x longer than the traditional fast-drying acrylics. They stay wet on my palette for days so I don't have to rush to finish my painting before the paints dry.

"A new painter should continually experiment with various media, colors, techniques, and approaches to find the painting style that suits their personality and temperament."



looked anemic! I learned later that student grade paint has much less pigment in it, hence the low cost. With paint, you get what you pay for. The colors that I use are:

- Ultramarine Blue
- Cerulean Blue
- Phthalo Blue (Green shade)
- Teal
- Green Gold
- Cadmium Primrose Yellow
- Cadmium Yellow Medium
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Orange
- Cadmium Red Light
- Alizarin Crimson
- Quinacridone Magenta
- Burnt Sienna
- Carbon Black
- Titanium White
- A few extra colors

Many people ask about the way I store my acrylic paints. Because I came from working with pastels before I started painting, I was used to opening up the box and having all the colors right in front of me. I decided that rather than have to go through the exercise of putting a small blob of each paint color on my palette for each painting session and then having to replenish it each time it was used up, I came up with the idea of putting all the colors in a plastic bead box organizer sold at craft stores. The one I use is divided into 18 compartments. It is a type of plastic that has a bit of flexibility to it. I don't buy the type made from hard plastic which is as rigid as glass and snaps if you try to bend it. The reason I mention this is because acrylic paint adheres to that rigid type of plastic and does not peel off when dry, which means I have to throw it away when it's time to clean out the compartments. My bead box is not air tight. The reason my paints don't dry out quickly is that there is a LOT of paint in each compartment. Acrylics dry when the water in the paint evaporates. Due to the thickness and amount of paint in each compartment, it takes a lot of time for the water to work its way out. I also

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spritz all the paints with an atomizer filled with water while I am working. When I am done painting, I put the whole container in a 2 gallon Ziplock freezer bag with a moist paper towel included loosely within the bag. My paints last for months and months without drying out. The trick to this is putting at least one tube of paint (2 fl. oz) in each compartment. If you put tiny little dabs in the paint compartments, I can

guarantee they will dry out quickly. It's not a perfect solution as eventually the paints seem to get a bit tacky and dry out, but overall it works for me. This method allows me to flip the lid and start

painting immediately whenever I have the inspiration. No set up time!

My favorite supports to use are gessoed panels and Strathmore 500 Series Mixed Media Boards. The panels have a smooth finish and the paint glides on easily. The Strathmore Mixed Media boards are wonderful because they also have a vellum texture, allowing for a uniform application of paint. They do not warp and are very lightweight, making them perfect for traveling and easy storage.

I hope you have found some of these tips useful in your artistic journey. Each artist needs experiment to find the tools and methods that feel comfortable to them. A new painter should continually experiment with various media, colors, techniques, and approaches to find the painting style that suits their personality and temperament. As a result of that experimentation their style, or artistic voice, will naturally emerge.

I always tell my students - just keep painting and eventually your style will find you - you don't have to search for it. Don't try to paint like someone else. Instead let your own unique and personal style emerge through lots of experimentation. Be kind to yourself and patient with the process. It is a journey of personal expression and self-discovery. Although I have been painting for many years, I still feel like that small child who continues to be mesmerized and excited by new artistic discoveries and interesting new materials and methods for creative expression. It is an endless, intriguing journey that makes me feel lucky to be an artist.



Patti at work painting NYPL Lion

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Patti Mollica has been a fine artist and professional illustrator for over 30 years. Her artwork is known for its fearless use of color and uninhibited brushwork. She delights in painting the world around her in a bold, decisive style, with hues that are intense, brilliant, and contemporary.

Patti's work is included in the private collections of American Express, Sheraton Hotels, CBS & RCA Records, Penguin Press, and many others. She is a Certified Teacher for Golden Paints and conducts workshops throughout the U.S.

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Patti's original artwork is represented in several galleries throughout the U.S. Published prints and posters can be found in retail chains worldwide. Patti is the author of 3 books: *Modern Acrylics*, *Color Theory*, and *Acrylics – Getting Started*, published by Walter Foster Inc. She has also authored 3 instructional painting DVDs: *Acrylic Painting Value Techniques*, *Brushwork Techniques*, and *Color Techniques*, published by

FW Media. As an active member of the "daily painter" movement, Patti posts her latest paintings and commentaries at her blog, www.newyorkpainter.blogspot.com

For more information on Patti's work or workshops, she can be contacted at patti@pattimollica.com. To see more work visit: www.pattimollica.com.



Strathmore® 2015 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

Workshop 2: Expressive Acrylic Painting

Instructor: Patti Mollica

Start Date: May 4, 2015

Do you wish you could take one of Patti's amazing workshops? Now you can for FREE without leaving home! Strathmore Artist Papers is very excited to include Patti as part of our 2015 Online Workshop Series.

Strathmore's Online Workshops feature free video lessons and downloadable instructions created by experienced artists. Follow along as instructors guide you through various topics and demonstrate useful tips, techniques,

ideas, and inspirations to get you creating and learning even more about art.

In Patti's workshop, *Expressive Acrylic Painting*, you'll discover your creative voice as we explore an approach to art-making using acrylic paints, combined with other mark-making techniques, to produce pieces that are colorful, unique, and expressive. We will explore various techniques, both traditional and non-traditional, to paint in a style that is loose, free, and playful. All levels are welcome!

[Register here](#) and see supply list here.

Did you miss previous workshops?

All 2015 videos will be on the Online Workshop website through December 31, 2015. All workshops from previous years are available on our [YouTube Channel](#) along with tons of other helpful videos!



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To celebrate thoughtful communication, the timeless art of calligraphy, and the act of putting tangible ink to beautiful paper, we introduce a full line of high-quality writing products featuring classic 25% cotton Strathmore Writing® paper.*

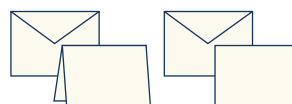
- natural white, wove finish
- acid free
- made in the USA



pads
non-photo blue lined
or blank options



envelopes
sized to complement
Writing pads



cards
foldover or flat with
matching envelopes



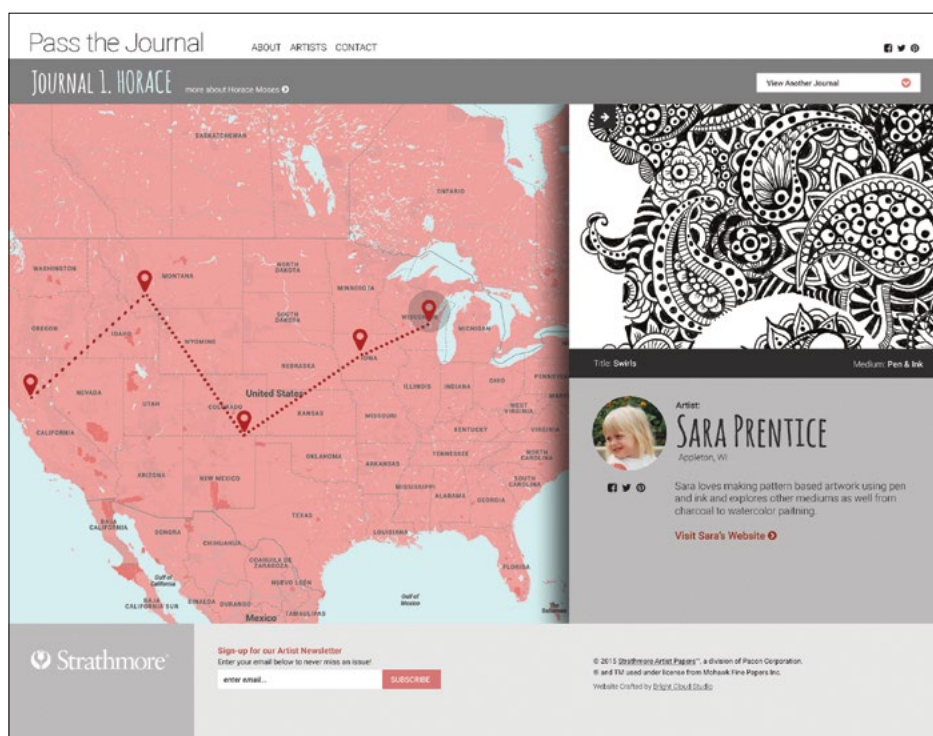
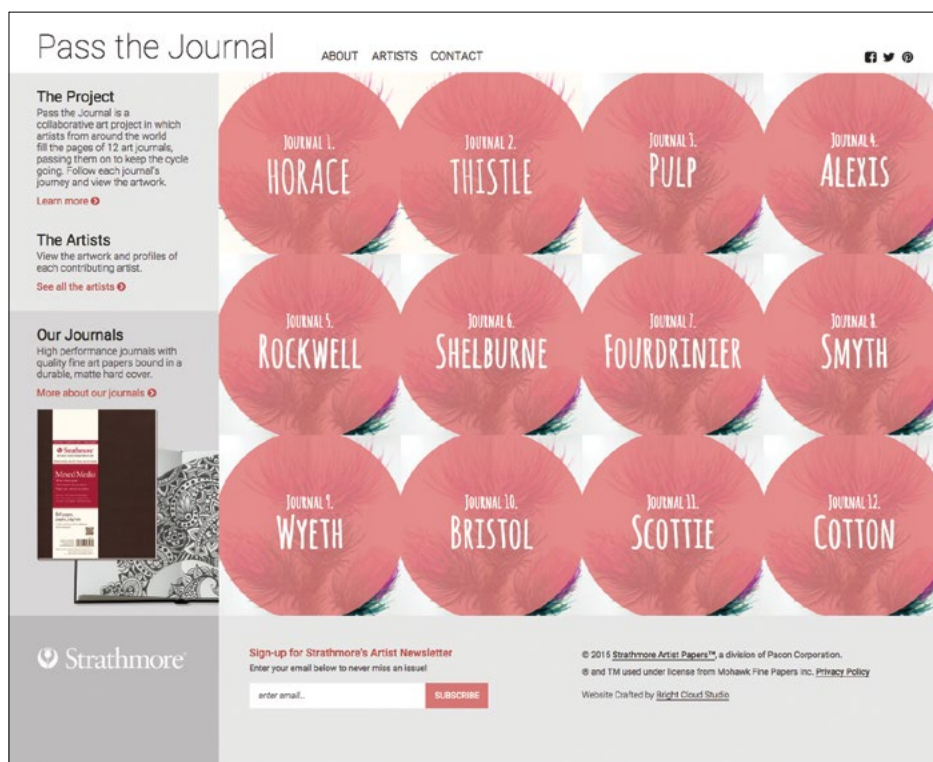
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Pass the Journal

Pass the Journal is a collaborative art project in which artists from around the world fill the pages of 12 art journals, passing them on to keep the cycle going. Follow each book's journey and view the artwork at:

passthejournal.com



original art by Alisa Burke

make
something
real



QUESTIONS FROM OUR WEBSITE:

Which of your papers are best for colored pencil? What are some colored pencil blending techniques?

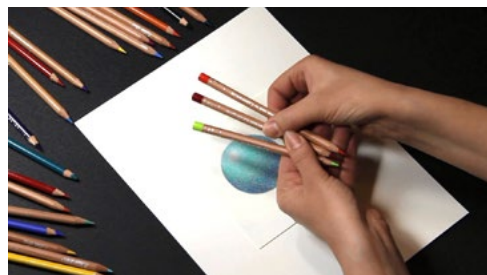
You may already know that we recently launched a new line of 400 Series Colored Pencil pads. They come in a range of wire bound pad sizes that contain heavyweight, 100 lb. (163 g/m²) clean, white paper with a toothy surface that is ideal for a variety of colored pencil techniques.

Our 400 Heavyweight Drawing and Toned Papers are also excellent choices for colored pencil. We now have 5 new videos created by Strathmore's Art Educator and colored pencil guru Sarah Becktel. In these short 2-4 minute videos, Sarah shares her expert tips and techniques for creating artwork using this versatile medium. Click the links below to watch each video:

VIDEO 1:
How to Choose paper for Colored Pencil



VIDEO 2:
Getting Started with Colored Pencil



VIDEO 3:
Dry Methods for Blending Colored Pencil



VIDEO 4:
Using Solvents for Blending Colored Pencil



VIDEO 5:
Using Water Soluble Colored Pencil



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