make something real

Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 2 | SPRING 2016

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-NEW-
Marker Paper
For fine artists who work in marker.
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Pass the Journal
Follow each book's journey and view the artwork.
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2016 Online Workshop 2
Steve Mitchell's *The Mind of Watercolor* coming soon!
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Questions from our Website
How to fix buckled paintings.
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MAIN FEATURE

Confessions of a Color Addict

By Carrie Alderfer

I guess you could say I've been an artist forever. My mom likes to tell people how I got in trouble for coloring with crayons down the hallway, so I just moved to the windowsills behind the curtains where it took her longer to find my artwork. I took as much art as I could through school, and I studied to be a graphic designer in college. It was a nice fit for my sense of color and design style.

For many years I didn't feel the need to "make art." Design was enough. My college painting professor once told me, "You'll be back," and he was right. I wanted to make things with my hands. About 10 years ago I started painting again with acrylics since that's what I had done in college. But I kept thinking about the big box of Prismacolor® colored pencils that I had purchased right out of high school. My high school art teacher had introduced me to colored pencils and I loved them, but they weren't something we really used in college. I remembered how slow they were to work with. With work and two small children, did I have time for drawing?

In January of 2013, I decided to follow my heart and get out the Prismacolors. I had a photo I had taken the past summer on a family vacation of an old rusty train part with a little wildflower that just kept calling to me. I went big, 16" x 20", and fell in love with pencils all over again. I spent the next few years trying to really learn the medium, and I'm getting there. But my acrylic paintings were very expressive and my colored pencil drawings are very tight and restrained, so my goal now is to slowly loosen my style. Yes, I can make my drawing look like a photo, but I want there to be more expression and that seems a little daunting in the "world of colored pencils" where so much value seems to be placed on works that are hyper-realistic. I believe you make your best art when you are true to yourself, so that is where I am trying to work from now.

Derailed - 20" x 16" Prismacolor Premier colored pencils on Strathmore Bristol vellum. This is the piece that got me back into colored pencils.

> *"I believe you make your best art when you are true to yourself, so that is where I am trying to work from now."*

My art focuses on color and humanity's relationship with nature. From exquisite details found in fur and flowers to how nature overcomes the man-made, I use color to draw attention to aspects of the natural world that people often overlook in today's crazy rat race. By focusing so closely on the subject, sometimes to the point that it is almost abstract, the viewer becomes engaged with the piece as they try to figure out what they are looking at. They know the subject is comfortable and familiar, yet the viewpoint offers them something unexpected. I want them to see, to really look and experience the natural world that is often missed.

continued

THE SETUP

I work from photos as my inspiration. Each piece requires extensive planning to achieve simplicity of form and the strong positive and negative spaces. Most of the time I work from my own reference photos and experiment with cropping the photos in Photoshop before I even begin the initial drawing. I start every drawing with a grid. Mainly, the grid makes it quicker for me to get things into proper proportions and it takes away that "scary blank canvas" feel.

blue painters tape to adhere my paper to the board. I have really liked it. It makes me get up and get back from the piece and really see what needs adjustment as I work. It also makes me feel freer with my "strokes," more like painting. Working with wax pencils on a heated board is amazing! The heat makes it a lot easier to blend the colors. It can also be more difficult to get a hard line, however; so I move my paper around to cooler areas of the board if I need to.

Bursting

Warm Breeze

Pretty in Pink

"...the grid makes it quicker for me to get things into proper proportions and it takes away that 'scary blank canvas' feel."

For my photo, I make a grid in Adobe Illustrator and then place my grid onto the photo in Adobe Photoshop. I create a fairly detailed line drawing, and then the fun begins – color! I go through my pencils and pull out all the colors I think I might use. I may not use all that I pull, and sometimes I add in ones that I didn't pull initially; but this helps me narrow down the selection and focus on what I want to convey through color. I store the pencils I'm working with on old baking sheets. It makes them easy to move around and even stack for storage if I need to. Until recently, I had always worked on a drawing table set flat or just slightly slanted. I recently purchased an easel. I put my homemade heated board on it and use

My go-to paper is Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Vellum. I also use the 500 Series Bristol Vellum. I have tried the Bristol Smooth, but it is too smooth for me (though I know many other colored pencil artists that love it). I find that the vellum allows me to build up more layers. I also like the thickness of it. I have recently started experimenting with papers, especially pastel papers. I received PanPastels® as a gift for Christmas so I could start layering those with my colored pencils and decided I needed a pastel paper. The pencils behave so differently on pastel paper, that I haven't even tried the pastels yet! Now, I'm trying whatever papers I can get my hands on. On the vellum, the pencils are translucent enough that it can be hard to work light into dark. Adding something like whiskers on

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a cat requires me to scrape with an Xacto knife to remove pencil and then go back over with white. The pastel papers make the pencils more opaque and it's easier to work light into dark, but you can still layer and blend. It doesn't mean I don't have to bring out the X-acto®, but it lessens the likelihood. I've taken one workshop where we worked on suede mat and the pencils were very opaque on it. It seemed much harder to layer and blend the colors, which is the best thing about colored pencils, so it wasn't my favorite to work with. Although it was nice to be able to just draw the whiskers on top. If you haven't tried colored pencils on different surfaces, go for it!

PROCESS

When I started using colored pencils, I would often work in little sections at a time and pretty much finish that section before

Catbird Seat - 14" x 11" Prismacolor Premier colored pencils on Strathmore Bristol Vellum.

moving onto the next. The problem I would run into with that approach was that as I added new colors in other areas, it was really hard to go back and repeat those colors in completed sections. So I started working in light layers over the piece in general. I'll often go through and put an initial color layer down over most of the piece just to establish base colors. I tend to work from dark to light, so I bring up the darker values next. Then I usually focus on what my focal point of the drawing is and work from there. I find this to be a slower process than working in sections, and it took some getting used to. Colored pencil works require lots of layering to make them "come to life." The pencil's translucent nature is what makes layering so much fun. For example, I try not to use too much black. I prefer to mix darker areas with colors because a mix of colors has more richness than just black.

Those Eyes - 10" x 8" Prismacolor Premier colored pencils on Strathmore Bristol Vellum.

continued

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Since I focus on color, I am often adding colors that aren't really there. Sometimes it's simply bringing out colors that could be there. Sometimes I'm adding colors purely to add emotional impact. Color is so complicated, and I adore all its complications. People have an emotional reaction to it and that reaction is a mix of influences from culture, society, gender, personal experience, and just flat out personal preference. I want the color in my art to be bold and beautiful and to reach out and bring you into my world.

Fire Inside

Determined

Sunny

"I want the color in my art to be bold and beautiful and to reach out and bring you into my world."

One of the best things I've done is to start teaching classes. I teach colored pencils for teens and adults as well as "painting parties" for ages 6+. It has really forced me to analyze what I do, since I have to try and explain it to other people. It has made me more aware of my creative process and how I draw and use color. And now I really see how amazing the act of making art is. I love that I can sit down with several people – all of us with the same materials, the same photo, and I even demonstrate "how I do this," – and yet, every piece is unique. Creativity is magical!

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Originally from Rock Hill, SC, Carrie Alderfer has been a "color addict" for as long as she can remember. She graduated with honors from the University of Alabama in Huntsville with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art in 1997. Following college she was employed by various companies as a graphic designer, web programmer, and art director. In 2002, she launched her freelance business, ChromAddict, from her home.

Carrie Alderfer has worked as a graphic and web designer for over twenty years and a fine artist for close to ten. She is best known for her striking use of color and strong sense of design. She loves to share details of nature in bold and expressive colors.

Currently, ChromAddict operates out of a studio in Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment, the largest privately owned Arts Center in the United States, located in Huntsville, AL. Carrie offers graphic design and web services focusing primarily on small businesses, classes for children and adults in art basics, acrylics, and colored pencils, and is always happy to create pet portraits or other commissioned art pieces for patrons. Her work has been included in various publications including Strokes of Genius 6, Colored Pencil Cats & Dogs, "Colored Pencil Magazine," and "Ann Kullberg's Color! A Colored Pencil Magazine." She lives just to the east of Huntsville, AL with her husband, two boys, and six cats. You can follow her creative adventures at *chromaddict.com* and *facebook.com/chromaddictstudio.*

Carrie in her studio

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Introducing

Marker Paper

Super smooth, heavyweight marker paper for fine artists.

Strathmore proudly introduces our new 400 Series Marker paper, developed for fine artists who create finished art using a variety of marker types. Markers glide easily over the silky smooth surface aiding blending and supporting vibrant color and subtle hues. The acid free, heavyweight sheet is bleed and feather resistant so artists can apply layer after layer of color. Convenient, flip over covers allow pages to tear out cleanly. Available in 4 popular sizes and proudly made in the USA.

18" x 24"

11" x 14"

9" x 12"

6" x 8"

Available in 4 popular sizes

www.strathmoreartist.com

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Pass the Journal 1 Year Anniversary!

We're celebrating 1 year of *Pass the Journal!* Last April we sent 12 Strathmore Art Journals to artists throughout the US, the UK and Spain to be filled by different artists around the globe. Since then, the 12 books have traveled to 20 states within the US and 9 different countries.

added to a tracking map with a pin mark. When a pin mark is clicked, the artwork and artist profile for that location is displayed on the site. The artist then passes the book to another artist of their choosing to continue the cycle.

Once the books are completed, they are to be sent back to Strathmore Artist Papers. A few will be kept in the Strathmore archives and the rest will be donated to the Trout Museum of Art in Appleton, Wisconsin and the Paine Art Center in Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Graham Smith - Wyeth Journal

Gay Kraeger - Rockwell Journal

Xulia Pisón - Shelburne Journal

In one year the 12 books have traveled to 20 states within the US and 9 different countries!

Each book is named after something significant to the Strathmore brand and has its own unique story. Every book also has its own virtual tracking map on the Pass the Journal website. When an artist receives one of the books, they create original artwork across a page spread. They upload their work and artist profile to the Pass the Journal website where it gets so community members can enjoy and be inspired by them.

This project has provided an opportunity for artists to share their work on a global scale and has inspired others to start similar projects in their own communities. We've loved the unpredictable aspect of not knowing where each book will end up next with another unique and one-of-a-kind piece inside.

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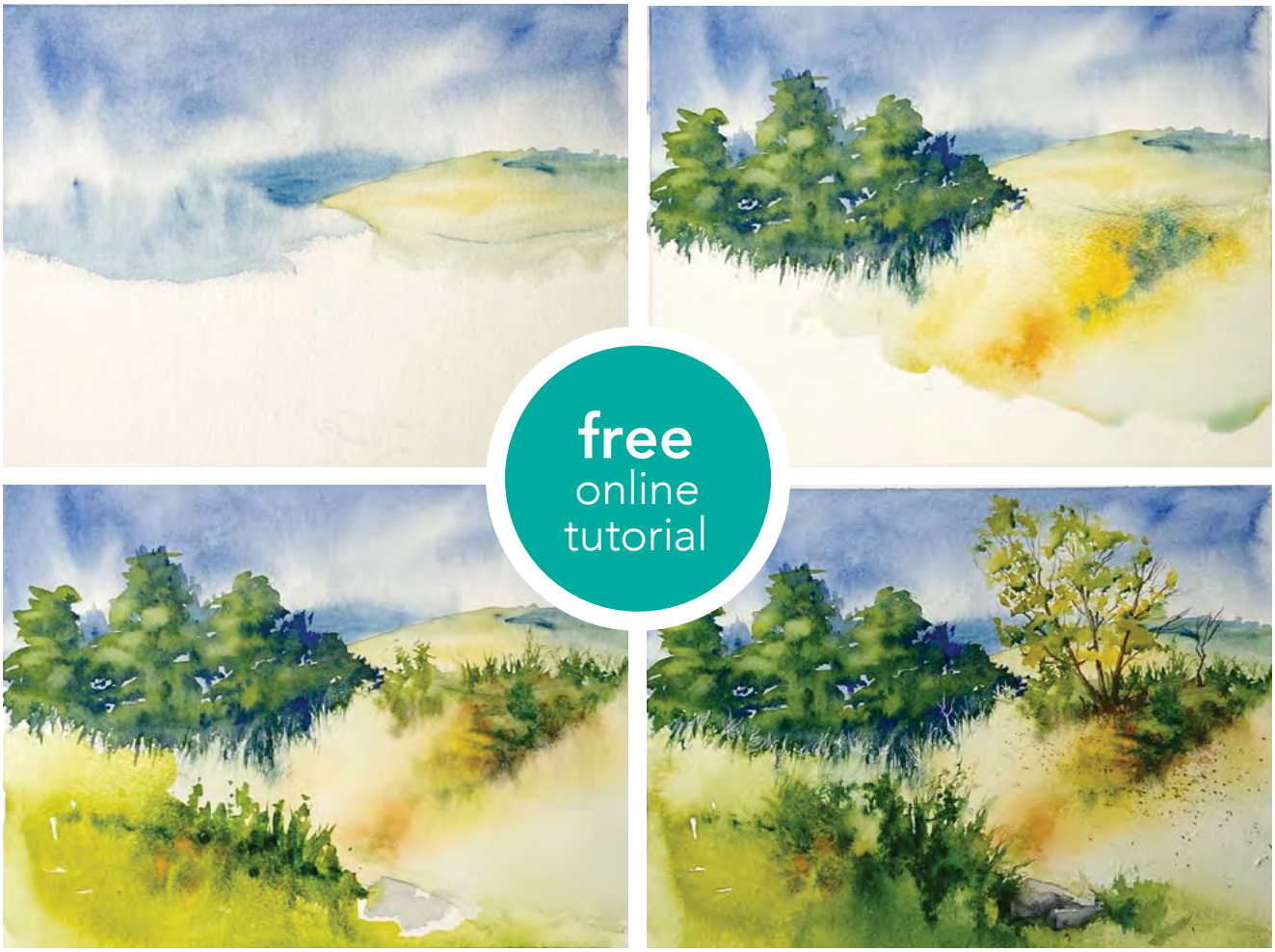
Strathmore® 2016 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES



Get your watercolor on.

Join us in our free Online Workshops and follow along with Steve Mitchell's video lessons in *The Mind of Watercolor* beginning May 2. In a series of four videos, he'll give you his best watercolor practices and techniques while walking you through the steps for painting a botanical rose and the landscape above.

Watch the videos and follow along for **FREE** at *strathmoreartist.com/artist-studio*

Our workshops are self-paced, and will be available through December 31, 2016.

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QUESTIONS FROM OUR WEBSITE:

How do I prevent your 140 lb. Mixed Media paper from buckling? How do I flatten it out after I've already created a painting?

If you're experiencing buckling with our Mixed Media paper (or our Watercolor paper), it likely occurred for one of two reasons:

1. If you've created a painting where there is a border of non-painted areas, the center areas of the paper has fibers that have gotten wet, then expanded. The border areas conversely have not gotten wet. Thus you have areas of the paper where fibers have expanded and contracted, and other areas where this has not occurred.

2. If there is no border, buckling may have occurred because the paper fibers have gotten wet with different amounts of water, causing the sheet to dry at varying rates.

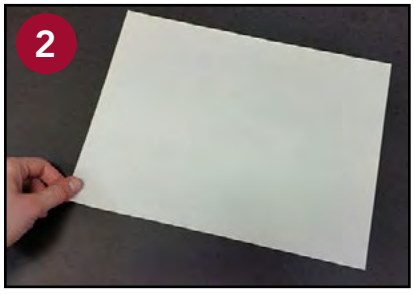
To prevent buckling from occurring prior to starting a piece, we recommend soaking the entire sheet before you begin to put your actual paint/wet media down. *Click here* to see methods for soaking a sheet prior to painting.

If you've already created your painting and the sheet is wavy after it has dried, there are a couple methods you can try to reduce the buckling. With both methods you'll want to get the entire back of the sheet damp, and then let it dry at a uniform rate. Both methods use an approach that will not affect the front painted image.

For each of the approaches below, if water soluble paint was used, extreme care must be taken to make sure the water used to soften the back of the paper doesn't travel through the paper and dissolve the paint on the front side.

APPROACH A:

Mist the back of the paper with water using a fine mist. You can also use a damp sponge. ***Do not over wet.***



Place newsprint paper down on a clean surface. The newsprint should be larger than the painted paper.

Place the painting image-side down on the newsprint paper.

Cover with another sheet of newsprint or a towel. Place a board over the newsprint paper that is larger than the paper.

Put weights on top (you can use books if you don't have weights).

6 Remove the board and weight every 2 hours and replace damp newsprint with dry newsprint. Repeat this until the newsprint is not wrinkling or does not feel damp, usually around 4-6 cycles. Then put another new dry sheet of newsprint down and cover with the board and weight. Leave 24-72 hours until paper is completely dry.

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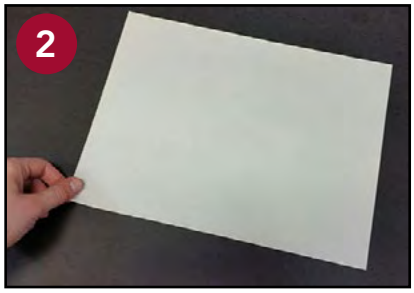
APPROACH B

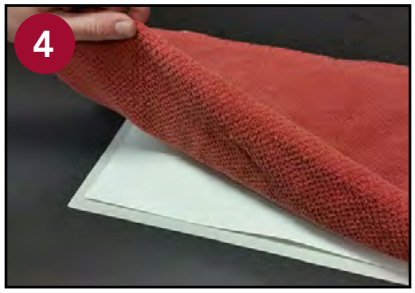
This approach is a more drastic solution that uses heat (an iron) with water to help relax the paper fibers. ***If you have never used an iron to relax the paper fibers before, a test should be done as this approach can ruin the paper if the iron is too hot or if it sits on the paper too long.***

Mist the back of the paper with water using a fine mist. You can also use a damp sponge. ***Do not over wet.***



Place newsprint paper down on a clean surface. The newsprint should be larger than the painted paper.

Place the painting image-side down on the newsprint paper.



Cover paper with a sheet of newsprint or a towel.

Using an iron set on medium low, gently rub over the entire surface. Adjust heat up as needed to allow the dampness on the back of the paper to relax the paper fibers.

CAUTION:

This method if not done correctly can burn or scorch the paper. ***Do not leave the iron resting on paper. Always have it moving.***

Remove the towel or damp newsprint and replace with a fresh piece of newsprint over the paper.

Put weights on top (you can use books if you don't have weights).

8 Remove the board and weight every 2 hours and replace damp newsprint with dry newsprint. Repeat this until the newsprint is not wrinkling or does not feel damp, usually around 4-6 cycles. Then put another new dry sheet of newsprint down and cover with the board and weight. Leave 24-72 hours until paper is completely dry.

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