make something real

Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2016

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Convenient new size!

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### 2016 Online Workshops Announced

FREE video lessons from experienced artists

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### Questions from our Website

Watercolor paper finishes and how to select the right watercolor paper for you

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MAIN FEATURE

# In My Father's Eyes

By Brent Anderson

*Livvy (5 years old) the day she received her portrait*

*Livvy showing off her framed portrait*

*"I knew Olivia (Livvy) loved it by her excited face when we pulled it out of the box, but it wasn't until a few days later that I realized how much of an impact it had made. We were working on a school assignment and she was asked to draw what she wanted to be when she grew up. I asked her what she had chosen to draw, and she told me she wanted to be an artist. A few minutes into her drawing she asked me if I knew why she had chosen that. I asked her why, and she told me it's because she wants to draw pictures for children to make them so happy like Brent had done for her."*

This was an excerpt taken from a letter written to me by Olivia's mom, Emily. Olivia is a 5 year old cancer patient and portrait recipient.

In July 2014, I started a 501(c)3 non-profit organization called *In My Father's Eyes*, to work with families of children who are battling cancer, or who have lost a child to cancer. We provide portraits of these children along with framing, at no cost to the family.

I'd like to share with you a little of the story behind how *In My Father's Eyes* came to be. Growing up, I never really thought much about drawing, it was just a God-given talent. I always enjoyed art, but it wasn't anything I did consistently. As I got older, sometimes it would be years between drawings. It was very sporadic to

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*continued*

say the least. This pattern went on for most of my adult life. It became very frustrating. During my quiet times, I would often ask this question: is this what I'm meant to do with this talent I've been given? Draw a picture here and there, pack everything up, then repeat the process every couple of years?

*Titus (2 years old)*

I fantasized the answer to my question would be fame and fortune. My name in lights... world renowned artist "Brent Anderson" here for limited time! When the real answer came, it wasn't what I expected! DO WHAT? Draw portraits for children with cancer...nope, not me! Yes, I wanted to use this gift, but NOT this! So I avoided what I knew in my heart I was supposed to do... avoided it for 3 years, but no matter what I did it was always there. Children. Cancer. Portraits.

*"To date, we have been honored to work with the families of 17 children in 11 states coast to coast and the Island of Guam and we currently have several families waiting for portraits."*

*Lybia (5 years old)*

I finally told my wife that I have to at least knock on that door. I have to at least try. History doesn't remember those who were afraid. It remembers those who were afraid and did it anyway. Those who took a giant leap of faith. I was terrified! What will they say? Who would ever want something like this? They're going to laugh and hang up the phone! I'm not qualified. I don't even draw people! That's where it almost ended before it started. I was so scared to pick up the phone and make a call, but I couldn't go back. I dialed a local hospital, asked for the Child Life Department, and praise the Lord, I got voicemail!

I don't even want to know what that message sounded like. I had visions of everyone standing around the answering machine laughing, then someone pushing the "delete" button. I really expected this was the end, but I did what I set out to do. I knocked!

When the hospital called back, I was shocked. I explained what I wanted to do. Within a couple of days the hospital called back to tell me they had visited with a family and they would love to talk to me. Well, I would like to say I was cool and collected... nope, I lost it! I was barely able to get " thank you" out before I had to hang up. It was in that moment this dream in my heart exploded.

Doors began to open I could never imagine. It's funny; I went from someone who wanted nothing to do with this, to someone who can't imagine my life without being able to bless these children and their families. To date, we have been honored to work with the families of 17 children in 11 states coast to coast and the Island of Guam and we currently have several families waiting for portraits.

This dream has continued to grow. Although we are just beginning, I believe by partnering with other gifted artists, we will touch children and their families all over the world.

*continued*


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## HERE IS A LITTLE ABOUT MY TECHNIQUE

I've never taken formal drawing classes, so my technique may be somewhat different. I've also picked up some ideas from other artists I follow, so here goes:

**The Photo:** Because of my subject, this is key. Photos that are clear, crisp, and have clean edges work best. My portraits are very detailed, and if I can't see the detail in the photo, I can't draw it. The last thing I want to do with the portrait of a child is guess! I always print the photo out in black and white, and color. If you just use B&W, you'll miss some details. (Note: I print on regular paper so I can draw on it)

*"The eyes make everything real, and remind me this is not JUST a portrait. This is a mother's baby; someone's precious child."*

*Danielle (14 years old)*

*Ellie (2 years old)*

*Bernice (9 years old)*

*Teiya (4 years old)*

*"...take extra time to make sure the line drawing is right. It's easier to fix now than when the portrait is almost finished."*

**Laying out the paper:** There are some artists out there, like the amazing Casey Baugh, who can simply look at a photo or live model and draw it exactly. I'm not at that level, so I use a grid. I lay out a ½ inch grid on my B&W photo printout. Now I lay out a ¾ inch grid on my drawing paper. I use Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Smooth, 100 lb. paper. 14" x 17" inch works best for me. I've always used Strathmore because I love the texture and consistency. I tape my drawing paper to a 22" x 25" drawing board so I can rotate my work and see it from different angles. (Note: I always wash my hands with soap & water before I draw. Oil on paper is just not a good thing! Also, cover your drawing with thick paper even if you're gone for just a minute). Take extra time and make sure the grid is square. If your grid is off, your drawing will be as well.

**Line Drawing:** This is the tedious part for me. The grid is mainly to make sure the features are correct. You can free hand a little more on hair and clothing. Hair and clothing change, features generally don't. I'm drawing portraits for moms and dads of a precious child, sometimes a child that has passed. I can have hair or a shirt out of place, but I don't want the eyes wrong, or mouth out of place. As with the grid, take extra time to make sure the line drawing is right. It's easier to fix now than when the portrait is almost finished.

**Let the fun begin:** This is my favorite part. Once I feel good about the line drawing, I generally start with the eyes. You've heard it said the the eyes are the window to the soul, and for me, there is nothing more important than the eyes! The eyes make everything real, and remind me this is not JUST a

*continued*


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portrait. This is a mother's baby; someone's precious child. This is for parents who are hurting and need some comfort. That's what the eyes remind me of.

**Tips & Tools:** I use Pentel mechanical pencils and leads for the most part, especially when working on the eyes. As with the paper, I like the consistency. I also use powdered graphite applied with varying sizes of smaller paint brushes for larger areas. I find it makes that process much quicker.

Once I feel good about the eyes, I start working my way out. I've had to learn the hard way as well that it's easier to create darker tones gradually. To accomplish that, I like to lay down several layers of lighter tone, building up slowly. Once you go really dark, depending on how you do it, it can be almost impossible to remove all the graphite if you need to.

*"Last, but not the least important...be patient! ...If it's worth doing, it's worth the investment of your time."*

*Ashton (5 years old)*

For blending, I like tortillions instead of stumps. I actually insert a thin pencil or something like it into the end of the tortillion to make it longer. That way I can use it where I need a lighter touch. I also use plain tissue wrapped around my finger or folded up to smooth and blend. Don't use tissue with lotion added.

Most of the time, I try to stay away from having a hard edge on my portraits. Sometimes they are needed, but rarely. Soft edges are more natural. I use a kneaded eraser to pull out detail, and I have started using a Mono Zero eraser to pull out very fine hairs.

Last, but not the least important...be patient! If you rush, you will be the recipient of the "Guaranteed Unhappy Artist" award. If it's worth doing, it's worth the investment of your time.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Brent Anderson was born in Lubbock, TX in 1964. Although not formally trained as an artist, he has been an artist all his life. From an early age, he was drawn to art and could always be found creating, building, or drawing something as a child. Brent's creative side comes out in the kitchen as well, where he loves to create and experiment with new dishes. He expressed his passion for art through intricate and detailed drawings of wildlife or outdoor settings. Brent created several drawings on consignment for both individuals and for commercial applications as well. His work can be found hanging in homes across the West Texas area. Brent has been married to his beautiful wife Susan for 26 years, and has three wonderful children. Susan is a cancer survivor and will celebrate 12 years cancer free in February. He founded the 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization: *In My Father's Eyes, Inc.* in 2014 to bless families of children diagnosed with cancer, or families who have lost children to this horrible disease with framed portraits of these beautiful fighters. *In My Father's Eyes* provides all of this at no cost to the families. If you would like to contact Brent, you can email him at: *andersonbrent02@gmail.com*

You can also find him on the web: *inmyfatherseyesportraits.com* Instagram: *@in_my_fathers_eyes* or *Facebook*.


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# Ready when you are.

Inspiration can strike anywhere, so artists like to be ready everywhere. Last year we proudly introduced our new 400 Series Colored Pencil Paper. Now, due to popular demand, we are excited to offer a ***NEW*** 6"x 8" pad. The compact size travels well and is convenient for artists on the go. The fresh white, toothy surface allows for smooth, even coverage. The heavy weight stands up to applications of multiple layers, repeated reworking, solvents, and colorless blenders. Great with graphite, charcoal, and sketching sticks too! All Strathmore Colored Pencil pads are proudly made in the USA.

400 Series
## Colored Pencil Pads
100 lb. (163 g/m²)

Available in 4 wire bound pad sizes:

**NEW SIZE!** 6" x 8" | 9" x 12" | 11" x 14" | 18" x 24"

www.strathmoreartist.com

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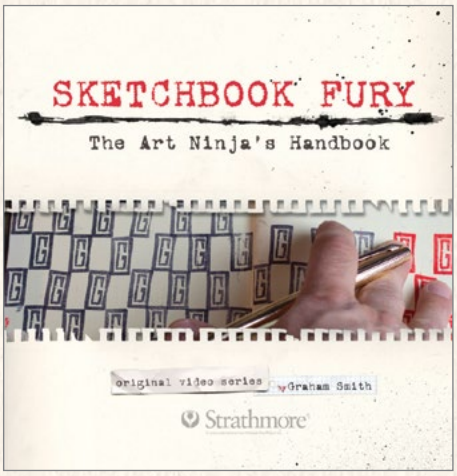
Strathmore® 2016 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

# Join us for Strathmore's FREE 2016 Online Workshops!

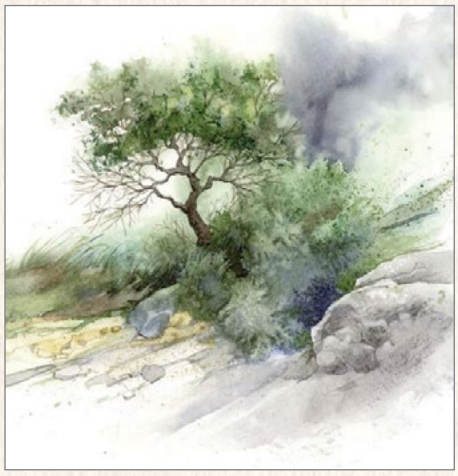
Strathmore's Online Workshops feature free video lessons and downloadable instructions created by experienced artists. Follow along as instructors guide you through various topics and demonstrate useful tips, techniques, ideas, and inspirations to get you creating and learning even more about art.

## Workshops start March 7 and continue through December 31, 2016




### Workshop 1: Sketchbook Fury
### Instructor: Graham Smith
### Start Date: March 7, 2016

Illustrator Graham Smith (the Paper Junkie) takes you on an in depth tour around the use of an artist's sketchbook with drawings and step by step demonstrations. First, bling your sketchbook out with pen holders, dividers, and envelopes, moving in and making it your own. Second, overcome your fear of the blank white page with creative paper preparation, washes, dry brushing, and layering ideas throughout your sketchbook. Third, learn how to (finally) fill a sketchbook with purpose by exploring a theme. Last, but not least, Graham will show you advanced techniques: how to get a super sharp line, gradation with color pencils, the importance of your drawing surface, the secret pros use to ink freely while not messing up the sketch, and how to develop a sketch in your sketchbook then transfer it to larger paper for a super big finish. March is shaping up to be sketchbook month, so pick up a new one and let's get started!



### Workshop 2: The Mind of Watercolor
### Instructor: Steve Mitchell
### Start Date: May 2, 2016

Watercolor is one of the simplest mediums to use, but it seems to have a mind of its own at times, giving it the reputation of being fussy and unforgiving to work with. In this workshop we get into the mind of watercolor and see what makes it tick. Success with watercolor depends greatly on discovering and anticipating how it reacts in real painting situations. We will cover the basics of getting started and choosing proper materials then applying those basics as we go through the process of producing a landscape painting and a botanical painting from start to finish. We'll learn how to get better results by setting the ideal conditions for working in watercolor and even letting watercolor do some of the painting for us. Watercolor is such an expressive, fresh and rewarding medium to use. Follow along as we discover how to partner with this excellent medium and let it take us on an exciting painting adventure.

### Workshop 3: Colorful Creation with Marker
### Instructor: Will Terrell
### Start Date: September 5, 2016

Will Terrell leads you through an introduction to techniques for using markers on different types of paper. In this workshop we'll learn how to lay down color, build up layers and blend with markers. We'll also cover what to look for in a paper when using markers and try out a few different options. We'll focus on a variety of subject matter and look at how to achieve these results with cartoons, people and animals. All levels are welcome to join and follow along as we make colorful creations with marker!

## Join us for our free workshops today at:

strathmoreartist.com/artist-studio

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## QUESTIONS FROM OUR WEBSITE:
Watercolor Finishes & Weights

***How do I pick out the right watercolor paper for me? What is the difference between hot press, cold press, and rough finishes?***

Steve Mitchell

With so many different types of watercolor papers to choose from, it can be difficult figuring out which is best for you. It comes down to personal preference but there are factors such as the finish and weight that can help determine which watercolor paper to choose.

Watercolor paper typically comes in three different finishes; Cold Press, Hot Press and Rough.

**Cold Press** is the most popular finish because it has a moderate texture. A Cold Press surface can work with everything from dry brush to wet on wet wash techniques. For dry brush work, the surface will provide the effect of spreading the pigment evenly allowing for clean uniform color distribution. It also has enough texture to hold color to build layers for wet on wet.

**Hot press** fibers have been compressed on the paper machine to create a relatively smooth surface. It is good choice when trying to achieve fine details and for combining watercolor with other media. It is the best finish to select when combining pen & ink work with watercolor or when using watercolor as a base with colored pencil.

**Rough** watercolor paper is highly textured and is a great surface to use with paintings that include subjects with texture in it such as landscapes. A wash on this paper allows the paint to puddle more in the valleys, leaving less pigment on the peaks, revealing the texture of the paper to a great degree. The heavy texture is also a good choice for dry-brush technique. Because the peaks are large with a Rough finish, the paint settles on the tops of the peaks, allowing the white of the sheet to show through in the valleys. Mixing the two techniques can create some interesting textures in a final painting.

**Weight** is another factor to take into consideration when choosing a watercolor paper. Generally the heavier the weight, the less the sheet buckles when water is applied to the paper. Because paper is made with water and fiber, the fibers shrink after the paper has been dried on the machine. It can be compared to a cotton sweater that gets dried too much and shrinks. However, unlike a sweater, when you add water again the fibers will expand. This is why watercolor paper buckles. To prevent buckling, lighter weight sheets should be stretched. *See our blog on how to stretch watercolor paper.*

Generally, 140 lb (300 gsm) or lighter paper should be stretched. 300 lb. (638 gsm) is heavy enough that it shouldn't need to be stretched. When using single sheets or pads of paper, your best bet is to stretch the sheet by soaking it in water and then taping it down to a sturdy board. As the paper dries, it becomes taut between the taped edges.

*Strathmore offers several grades of watercolor paper in various finishes, weights and formats.* You can read about our on our website. We suggest experimenting with different papers and surfaces. Each painting may require a different surface, and trying them out is the best way to tell which paper you might like for that particular subject. Have some fun with your experimentations!


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