make something real

Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 3 | SUMMER 2019

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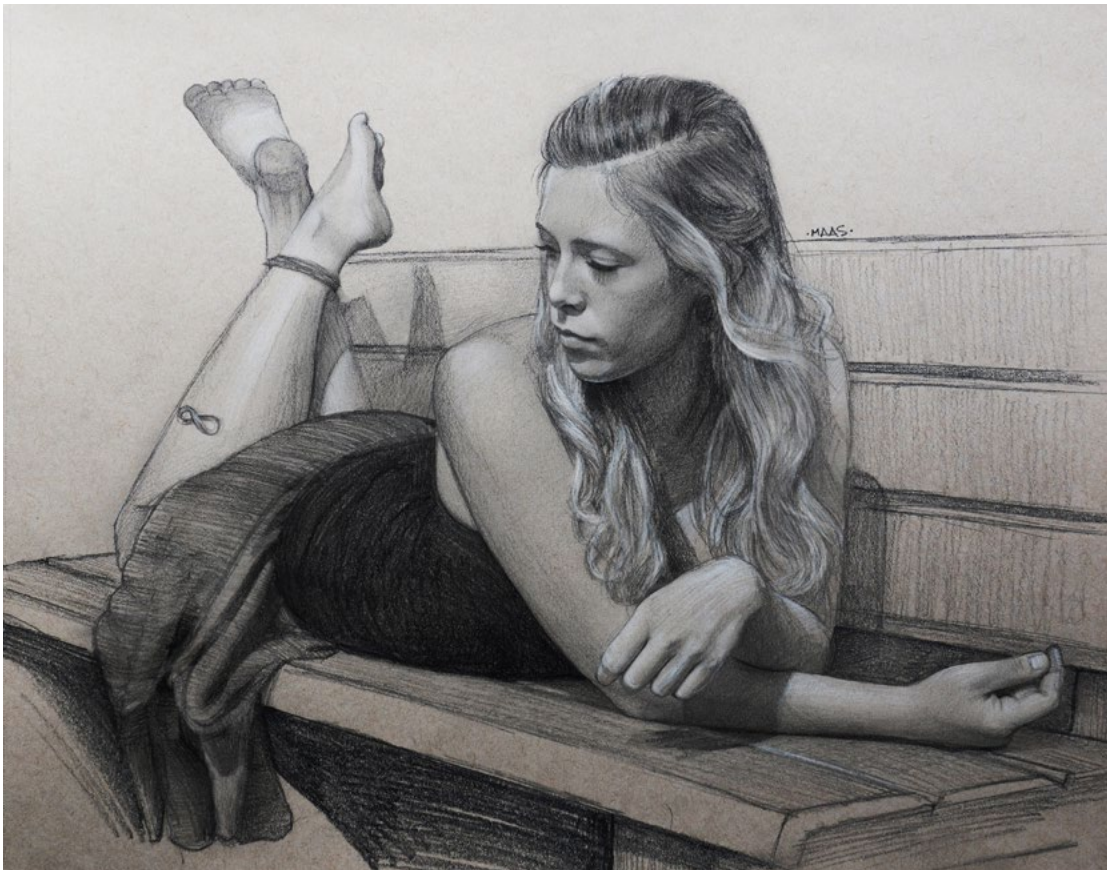
MAIN FEATURE

Drawing the Full Body Portrait

By Justin Maas



"Tovah" Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

When I tell people I am a portrait artist, they tend to think of works like these:

…which is totally understandable. Historically, this is the most common way we have looked at portraiture. Indeed, a great many of my commissioned portraits have the same basic composition and portion of the figure - the head and the shoulders - as these do.

continued

However, one of my favorite types of portraiture is what I call the "full body portrait." Other artists may refer to it as a "head to toe portrait" (the traditional is often called head & shoulders) or perhaps "full length" portrait. In essence though, all of these terms refer to a portrait that captures the whole (or close to whole) of the sitter's body.

"Heidi" – Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

The obvious downside of the full body portrait is that the face (inarguably the most important part of nearly any portrait) occupies only a small part of the page – which makes it more difficult to draw and harder to add details. So, why the "full body portrait?"

The face has over 43 muscles that twist and move to form expressions than can convey any emotion an artist wishes to capture. Meanwhile, the human body as a whole has 650 muscles. Sure, the slight nuances in a hand or an arm or a leg may not be quite as emotive as the eyes or the mouth, but do not underestimate the power of body language.

"...slight nuances in a hand or an arm or a leg may not be quite as emotive as the eyes or the mouth, but do not underestimate the power of body language."

In my portrait "Rhiannon" we see how the subject's position and body language infers something more than just what her face says. Imagine this piece was simply cropped to the face. We still see Rhiannon's thoughtful gaze but by including her whole body in the piece we see a much larger, clearer picture. She's not just looking out the window, she's relaxed, looking like she's sitting comfortably, naturally – a pose she may hold for ages as she thinks about the future or whatever may be on her mind.

"Rhiannon" Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

continued

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In "Chelie" the main focus for me was sunlight – how it hits her arm, the tip of her collar and neck – and of course how it reacts to and around her hat. Could I have drawn this with a closeup on her face & shoulders? Yes. But is it more effective by showing the rest of her body, how her hands hold each other and how the light shines through her shirt under her arm? I think so.

"Chelie" Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

One of the more difficult technical aspects of the full body portrait is understanding how to compose your image on the page. I thought I would share a step-by-step demonstration of a recent full body drawing – in fact, a two person drawing, which has even more technical considerations, of two of my favorite models, Arlena and her mother Cheryl.

DEMO:

Materials:

- *Strathmore 400 Series Toned Tan Sketch Paper 11" x 14"*
- White charcoal
- Graphite – a mix of grades: Hb, 2b, 4b, 8b
- Mechanical pencil
- Mono Zero click eraser
- Kneaded Eraser
- Tortillion

I began the process of creating this portrait by doing a photoshoot with Arlena and Cheryl. While I enjoy drawing from life, it is often difficult to get a model to sit for you for the hours required. I try to work from life at least a couple of times per week but when I do portraits, either full body or head and shoulders, I tend to work from photos.

continued

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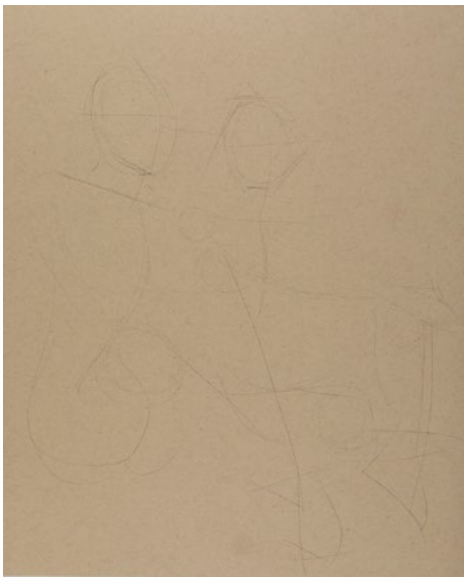
One of the big drawbacks of photo reference is the tendency to "tighten up" – this is countered by working with more than one reference shot. Here are the photos I used to create this piece:

I decide to use elements from several of the photos of Arlena and Cheryl rather than picking just one. This helps give some life to my drawing and hopefully stops it from "tightening up" too much.



STEP 1: I begin by laying in the most basic of shapes. This helps me establish proportions and also make sure I don't end up with part of the image falling off the page!

STEP 2: Here I start to establish more concrete shapes. I begin to take note of areas I want to make more prominent.

STEP 3: I finish the basic contour block in. I can now begin establishing values and focal points.

continued

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

STEP 4: Adding white charcoal in varying levels of pressure, I start to establish my lightest values. By taking a 4b graphite stick and blending with a tortillon I can establish mid-ground in the background, allowing some areas to be softer with lost and found edges. We want the drawing to pop from the page but not be too tight or too stark. Details remain minimal at this stage because I don't want my values to go too dark or too light too early.

STEP 5: I continue to add values, working the whole image at once so as not to go too dark or too light in any one area. I continue to make decisions about focal points. I note that I want areas of the pants to fall back into one another (lost edges) while key secondary focal points (like hands or feet) have added detail with sharper edges.

STEP 6: I finish most of the value work and I am satisfied with how the drawing feels as a whole. At this stage, I might look at it upside down for a while, so that my eyes don't focus on shapes but rather look at the values.

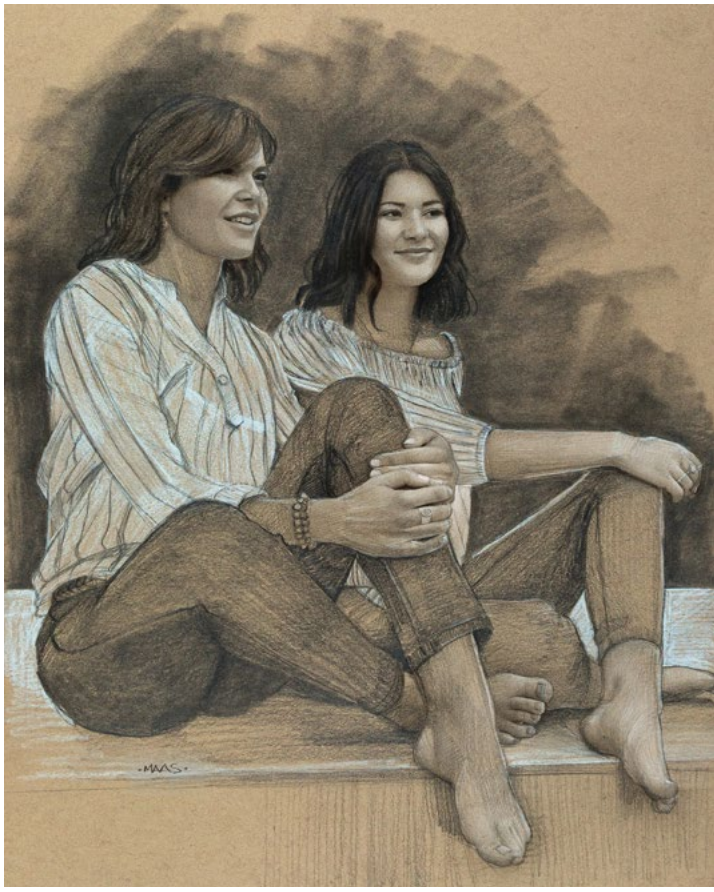
STEP 7: Now the details begin. I often will use a mechanical pencil loaded with either 2b or 4b graphite and a very small tortillion. I keep my blending to a minimum because I want this to still feel like a sketch. I use the click-erase to help pull out highlights, especially in the hair.

continued

Here is the finished piece. What makes this more interesting than a simple head and shoulders portrait? One of the things that drew me to this pose, and the usage of parts of several reference photos, were the two model's arms. Arlena, who has posed for me several times, was comfortable, her arm/hand resting lightly on her leg, while Cheryl is obviously just a little less at ease, her arms just a little under tension. I loved this duality and thought it made for an interesting composition.

I hope this little insight into the full body portrait was interesting! Here are a few more that I have done on toned paper over the last few years.

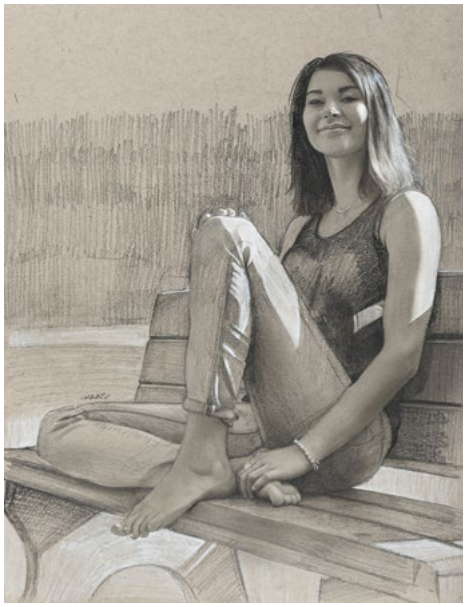
Please feel free to visit my website at www.justinmaas.com or stop by for my daily updates at www.instagram.com/maas.art



"Mother & Daughter" – Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

"Chelsea Dance 4" – Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

"Lynnsey" – Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"



"Arlena" – Graphite and white charcoal on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch paper – 11" x 14"

continued

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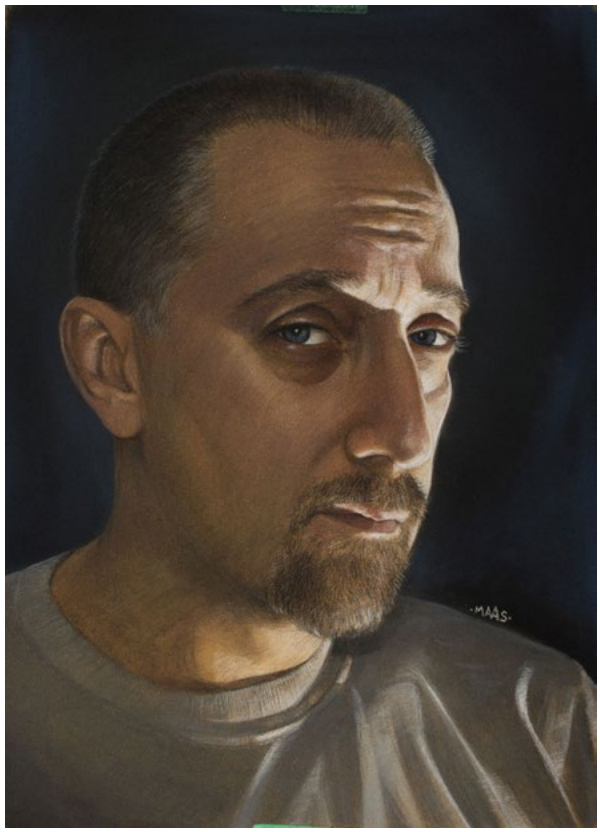

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Justin Maas has worked full time as a professional illustrator, fine artist, and graphic designer for nearly 20 years. He works primarily in pastel, acrylic and watercolor. His work is on display at various galleries and locations in Canada and he has sold work to private collections all over the world.

Justin is a Senior Signature Member of the Federation of Canadian Artists (SFCA) and an Elected Member of the Society of Canadian Artists (SCA) He was born in the 1970s in Hartford Connecticut. His parents moved to Canada before his 3rd birthday and it is the country he has called "home" ever since, becoming a Canadian Citizen roughly 10 years later.

Justin studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of British Columbia and received a degree in Visual Communications from the Alberta College of Art & Design.

"Great paintings and drawings speak to us in a way that words cannot. Because of this, my goal has always been to communicate visually, at an emotional level. Form, line, and light are the main tools I work with. Regardless of the subject, style, or media, the one constant, tying all of my work together, is an attempt to translate what we see as lights into a 2 dimensional piece."
-Justin Maas

Justin's new book *Drawing Realistic Pencil Portraits Step by Step: Basic Techniques for the Head and Face* is now available.

See more from Justin Online:
Website
Instagram
YouTube

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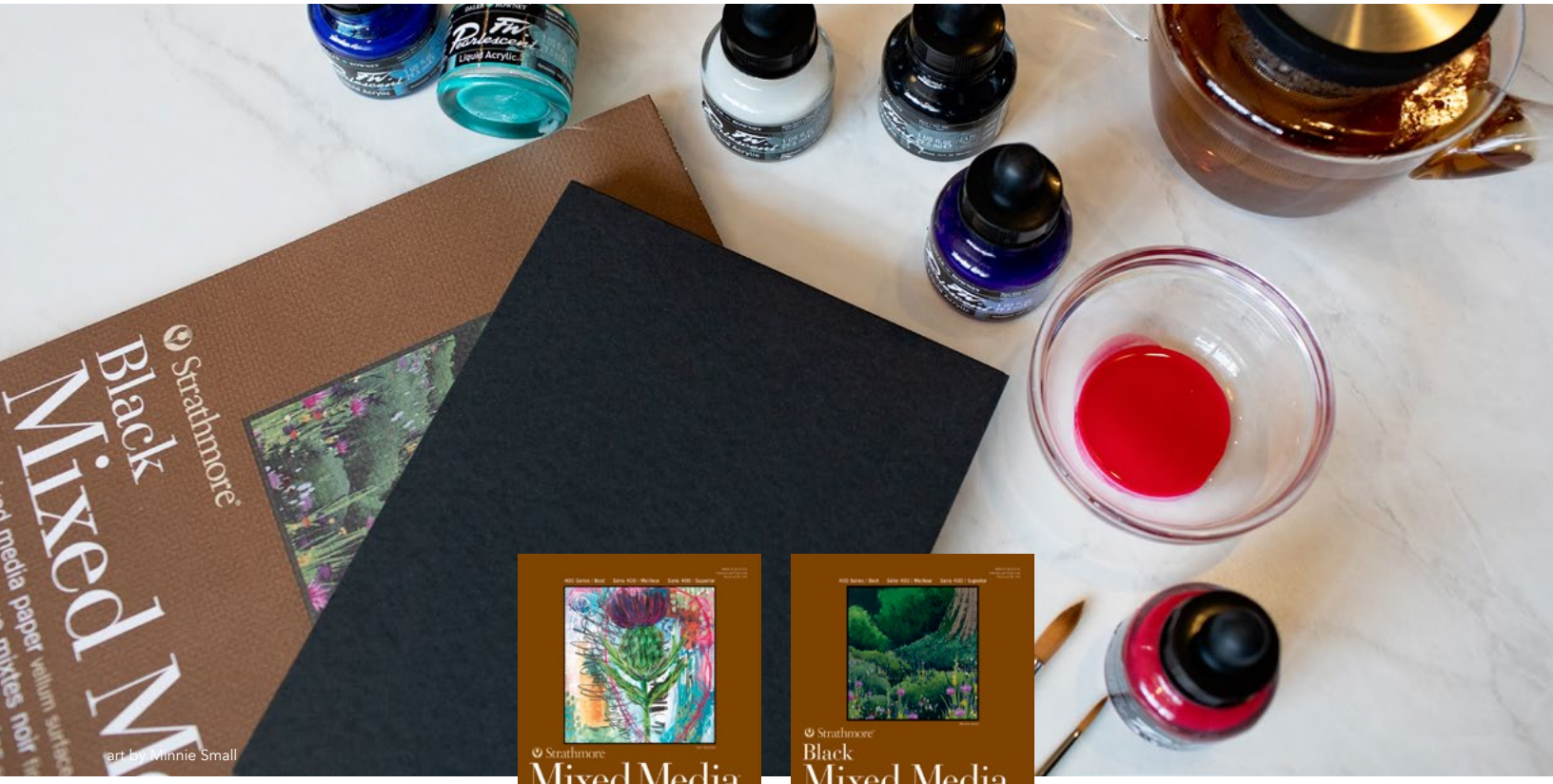
Introducing
400 Series

BLACK MIXED MEDIA



Original Mixed Media®

NEW Black Mixed Media®

Mixed Media Paper is Now Available in **BLACK!**

Introducing **NEW Black Mixed Media** paper. A wide range of mediums including gel pens, white charcoal, pastel, colored pencil, gouache, metallic inks, and other light media can be used on black paper to achieve a unique, bold effect. With its vellum drawing surface, heavy weight, and sizing additives, Black Mixed Media performs for both wet and dry media. Glue binding with flip over covers allow sheets to stay in the pad yet tear out cleanly.

• 184 lb./300 gsm • 4 pad sizes • acid free • made in the U.S.A.

Strathmore®

make something **bold.**

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Strathmore® 2019 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

FREE Online Workshop: Urban Sketching Essentials

Join artist Alphonso Dunn as he guides you through free video lessons in this four-part Urban Sketching course. Learn about watercolor basics, compositional elements, simplifying scenes, and using pen & ink.

Lesson 1: Introduction and Basics

Lesson 2: Simplifying the Scene

VIEW THE VIDEOS

Lesson 3: Creating Emphasis

Lesson 4: Demo and Practice

About our Online Workshops

Strathmore's Online Workshops feature free video lessons and downloadable instructions created by experienced artists. Follow along in the online classroom 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.
Share all the fun on **Instagram** and **Facebook** using ***#StrathmoreWorkshops***

About Instructor Alphonso Dunn

Alphonso Dunn is the author of the bestsellers *Pen & Ink Drawing: A Simple Guide* and *Pen & Ink Drawing Workbook*, popular among art-lovers seeking to learn the essentials of pen and ink drawing. He is a graduate of the New York Academy of Art and an award-winning artist, with work found in private collections in the US and worldwide. Currently, he is working on his latest book project, creating new art, and sharing art instruction with his over 480,000 followers on YouTube.

Share all the fun on Instagram and Facebook using **#StrathmoreWorkshops**

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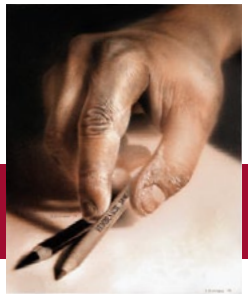
The New Standard for Monochrome Drawing

Lyra Rembrandt Art Design pencils set the new standard in drawing. Premium graphite and natural binders meet the high demands of artists creating graphics, fine art, and architechtural drawings. Perfect milling of the graphite allows for fast, smooth, and defined strokes. Available in 17 gradations to obtain delicate grays and blacks with exceptional depth. The softer gradations help to highlight the natural brightness of the graphite. Compact cores are break-resistant and assist in the creation of perfectly defined points. Ideal for use with a wide variety of paper textures, from fine tooth to rough. Pure white paper will enhance and define chiaroscuro effect in sketches and drawings.

- 17 gradations for exceptional depth and detailed work
- 2.8mm lead diameter encased in natural Cedarwood
- Made in Germany

LYRA Germany

COMING THIS FALL:



the full range of Rembrandt Monochrome products from Lyra!

What is the Difference Between Feather and Bleed?

QUESTION:

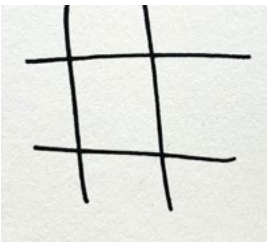
I've heard artists talk about both feather and bleed on paper - what is the difference between the two? Can I prevent them from happening?

ANSWER:

Feather and bleed are two different things:

Feather refers to 'spreading' from where the ink was laid down.

Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Smooth



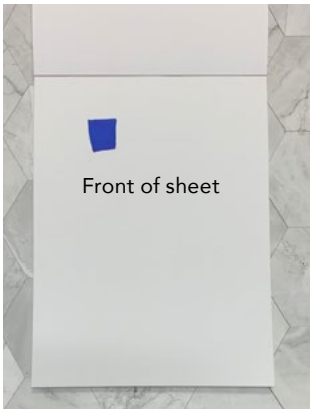
No Feathering - GOOD!

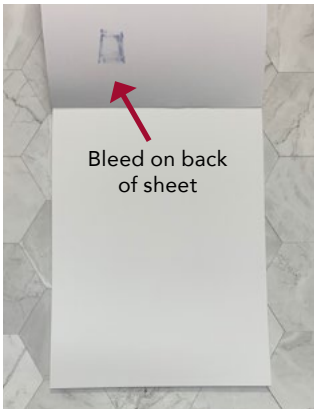
Brand X Sketch Paper

Feathering - BAD!

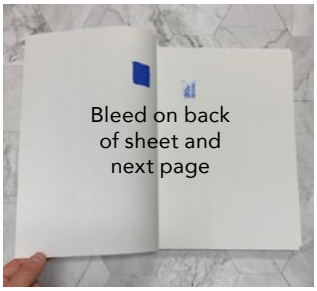
Bleed refers to ink or marker seeping through the paper.

Marker on Strathmore 300 Series Bristol Paper (270gsm)





Marker on Strathmore 200 Series Sketch Paper (74gsm)



Let's talk about both and how you can take measures to prevent either from ruining your art.

FEATHER:

The best way to avoid feather and get the crisp, clean lines you're looking for is to start with quality materials and use the proper surface for your mediums. Bristol, Marker, Drawing and Mixed Media papers are specifically made to accept pen and ink. At Strathmore, we test feather results in the manufacturing process to ensure it doesn't happen on these grades. Other types of papers that are not specifically made for pen and ink applications (Newsprint paper for example) do not undergo the same testing and therefore may or may not produce crisp, clean lines.

A special additive called 'surface sizing' is applied to Bristol, Marker, Drawing and Mixed Media papers to ensure the surface has the right qualities to allow ink to 'sit' on the surface rather than soak in. Non-art papers such as toilet paper and paper towel have no surface sizing and would quickly absorb ink rather than allow it to sit on top.

BLEED:

Most marker artists have realistic expectations when it comes to bleed. Unless the paper is laminated with a special barrier in the middle, the majority of papers will eventually bleed (seep through to the backside or to the next sheet). A few measures can be taken to help manage bleed:

Use a marker paper: Most papers manufactured specifically for use with markers are made with the right properties that will enable the sheet to act as a barrier and allow for more layers before bleed starts (or at least before the marker seeps to the sheet underneath).

Use thicker paper: If you aren't using a Marker paper, a thicker/heavier paper will be more likely to stand up to more layers of marker without bleed. Bristol, Heavyweight Drawing, and Mixed Media are substantial enough for markers. Papers that are lighter weight and not made for markers like Sketch (less than 100gsm) are more prone to bleed.

Use a 'barrier' paper: Many experienced marker artists understand that with many layers, eventually the pigment has to go somewhere (through the paper). This is why they use a barrier paper, which is simply a sheet of scratch paper that goes underneath the sheet being worked on to protect the next sheet. Marker artists will keep the same barrier paper right in their pad to continue using it for all their pages. Barrier papers can take on a fun life of their own, exhibiting the journey the artist has been on with their markers.

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