make something real

Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 18 | ISSUE 4 | FALL 2020

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MAIN FEATURE

# A Strong Foundation

By Philece Roberts

***Endangered*** **- study done on Strathmore 400 Series Mixed Media paper.**

I have always been taught the importance of a strong foundation is essential in everything you pursue. When it comes to art, for me that foundation is drawing, no matter the medium of the final piece. Being that I am a portraiture and figurative artist, a strong understanding of proportion, perspective, light and shadow is important in accurately achieving someone's likeness. Even if absolute realism isn't the goal. It's really easy to change the entire look of a person by nudging a shadow too far one way, or placing a highlight in the wrong position. With drawing you're able to simplify these aspects without the distraction of colors and truly focus on the shapes that are essentially the foundation of a drawing. The light and shadows that play together like building blocks, to create the features of a person's face.

Sketching and graphite studies give me the space to work out my ideas and familiarize myself with my subject. My concept sketches tend to go beyond a light sketch, almost fully rendering them sans a few details. Pushing those sketches further sets the stage for a stronger final piece. I do this especially with commissions, as I put myself in the place of someone who may not see the world as visually as others do. That way they have a great idea of what the final piece will look like with no surprises. It's also a great time saver, cutting down on the back and forth between artist and client during the conceptual phase. This also gives me the opportunity to get some extra drawing practice and I often return to my studies using them as inspiration for a painting.

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A solid foundation also requires proper materials. Materials that are as versatile as the art that I create are hugely important to my practice. When I want a soft, smooth finish to my drawings, I work on Strathmore Media Paper. I create my graphite work with a 2b mechanical pencil for sketching and tiny details along with 6b to 9b soft graphite pencils. I paint primarily with acrylics and watercolors, and love mixing mediums.

*Aquarius* - study on 400 Series Smooth Bristol/final piece on Strathmore 400 Series Watercolor paper.

*400 Series Smooth Bristol*. For heavy contrast, I use Strathmore *400 Series Mixed Media Paper.* It has bit more tooth grabbing the graphite, creating beautiful darks that I love, while maintaining a smooth finish. All of my studies and concept drawings are done on those two. For my tea stains and paintings on paper, depending on the amount of texture I want for the final piece, I use Strathmore *400 Series cold press Watercolor Paper* and 400 Series Mixed

Though formally trained in graphic design, I am self-taught as a fine artist, so there's been lots of trial and error along the way. In design school I had a professor that would say "you must learn the rules before you can break the rules". Almost 15 years later, I still carry those words with me and though this gem of advice was given in a design class, I have applied to so many parts of my work. Study, practice, start strong and then... explore! The result of this advice and my

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practice is a body of work that is a fusion of realism and imagination, immersed in my love of numbers and geometrics, my love of nature and all things organic. My background in graphic design undoubtedly inspires my use of line work, the organic flow of my tea stains is a nod to nature, the natural flow of life and the parallels that I continue to explore between nature and femininity. All of these elements come together in my work to tell the stories of the faces that you see emerge from each piece.

*Sarita:* in progress - 400 Series Smooth Bristol

*Sarita:* final

I adore the intimacy of portraiture and figurative art, especially the eyes. When you spend hours, days and sometimes years up close with every dip and rise of a person's face, you become so familiar with them, even if it's someone you have never actually met. Every stage of the process reveals another detail about the muse. The way one corner of a mouth is delicately turned upward, the way someone's shoulders sit slightly uneven, the love, peace, and pain that flows from their eyes. Eyes are like a beacon to the soul of a person, to the heart of their story, with every inflection unique to them. It's the main reason why eyes are always my starting point with every piece. Anchoring the piece with the eyes which is yet another way I like to create a strong foundation, to blocking out shadows as the image begins to emerge. Watching that person come to life right before you, when you lock eyes with the subject and their energy comes through, is a beautiful, powerful and humbling feeling.

My earliest memories of art always brings me to laughter when I think of how I visually differentiated gender by drawing men with square heads and women with circle heads. But my favorite things to draw and paint were landscapes, seascapes, and animals. As a teenager I fell in love with fashion and at this point I rarely bothered to draw more than what was needed to showcase the clothing. Who needs a head, hands, or feet when it's about the fashion?! As a teenager people would ask why I didn't draw/paint people more. My response every time was, "who wants to sit and stare at a face for

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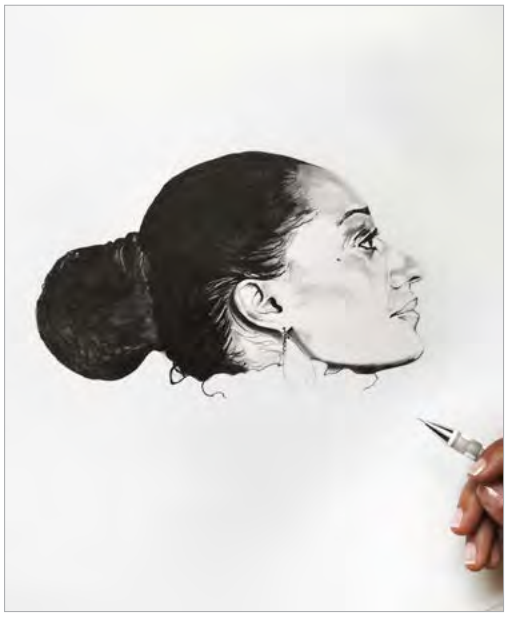
hours? That's boring!" Now here I am, with a body of work that is predominantly portrait work and with an abundance of respect and admiration for it and the faces I have had the honor of creating. I'm really glad that even though I thought it was boring way back then, I never stopped drawing and never stopped practicing faces. Now in my 13th year as a full-time artist, I couldn't imagine anything else being the foundation of my art!



*Tracee:* in progress - 400 Series Mixed Media Paper

*Tracee:* final

## ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Philece Roberts is a painter, illustrator, and graphic designer, whose work is most recognized for her strong and graceful representation of black women. With a unique fusion of traditional art with contemporary style, she explores the depths of inner beauty, firmly rooted in experiences and empowerment of women of color. With a body of work that is a celebration of beauty and culture through realism fused with the textures of wood grain, tea stains, and line work and inspired by the multifaceted stories of women, she takes you on a journey through portraiture that is grounded in clean aesthetics and immersed in emotion. Roberts has a B.A. in Film and Video Studies from the University of Oklahoma and a B.F.A. in Graphic Design from the Art Institute of Atlanta. She currently lives and works in her hometown of Nassau, Bahamas.

See more of Philece's work on Instagram: *@thatartista* or on her website: *www.thatartista.com*

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# Strathmore® 2020 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

## Join us for Strathmore's **FREE** 2020 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, Facebook, and Twitter using #StrathmoreWorkshops**

**Workshops continue through December 31, 2020**

## Creative Watercoloring
### with Leslie Tieu

Explore some of the fun you can have with watercolor in this workshop that plays with different techniques to create vibrant, colorful pieces. This watercolor workshop will demonstrate how to use simple painted floral shapes and incorporate them into four distinct projects from watercolor journaling to geometric pattern making. Leslie will also show you some of the creative ways you can combine different media with watercolor.

**Lesson 1: HOME Wall Art**

Learn how to use a combination of painted watercolor leaves to fill in the outline of the word "Home". You'll come away with a beautiful wall art piece to hang in your home.

**Lesson 2: Be the Light**

Follow along as Leslie shows you how to use a combination of faux calligraphy and watercolor to create an inspirational journal page. A lesson on faux calligraphy technique is included.

**Lesson 3: Fall is in the Air**

Leslie will demonstrate her method for painting loose watercolor florals with metallic leaf elements. Lettering will be incorporated on top to complete this beautiful journal page.

**Lesson 4: Geometric Painting**

Follow along as Leslie uses 1/4" painters tape and watercolor to create a vibrant geometric watercolor pattern. Another beautiful piece for your wall!

**SEE THE VIDEOS & DOWNLOAD THE INSTRUCTION SHEETS**

Join us for our free workshops today at: **www.strathmoreartiststudio.com**

# Fresh look outside, same great Bristol inside.

Our **400 Series Smooth Bristol** has a fresh, new look showcasing the art of our Fall Newsletter featured artist *Philece Roberts*. Inside, you'll find the same great 400 Series Smooth Bristol you love with easy-to-use flipover pad covers and heavy duty chipboard backing.

- High quality 2-ply Bristol • acid free
- Excellent for graphite pencil, colored pencil, pen & ink, marker, mixed media, and collage
- Available in 9"x 12", 11"x 14", 14"x 17", and 18"x 24" sizes

**400 Series Bristol**
also available in
*vellum* finish

# Endless Possibilities for the Mixed Media Artist

System3 acrylic paints are suitable for both indoor and outdoor use. They can be applied to traditional fine art surfaces, non-traditional surfaces, and in combination with other media for mixed media art. They can also be used as an undercoat-painting prior to using other mediums. Work pencils, charcoal, pastels, and crayons over the surface...the possibilities are endless!

- 54 highly versatile water-based acrylic colors
- Also available in a range of inks, heavy body, and premixed screen printing colors
- 59ml, 150ml & 500ml sizes
- Traditionally manufactured in England

DALER ROWNEY

Alison Philpott

Brice Miller

Dorrie Rifkin

# 5 Reasons Why Looking at Art Makes Your Brain Happy

As artists, we all know the mental benefits of creating art, but did you know that simply viewing art can be beneficial? Here are five reasons why your brain likes it when you look at art.

**1. Chill Out**
The next time you feel overwhelmed, stressed, or anxious, try taking a step back and looking at a piece of art. It can be a piece you have in your home, in a book, or even one that you pull up on your phone or computer. Take five minutes and really look at the piece, considering the colors, the perspective, the setting, the subject, and anything else you notice, and really think about it. Chances are, at the end of your five minutes, you'll feel better than you did before.

**2. Love, Love, Love**
Do you need a little love? A University of London study showed that when a person looks at a piece of art that they see as beautiful, there is an instantaneous release of dopamine, a chemical that is linked to feelings of love, into the brain.

**3. Put That Brain to Work**
When you look at a new piece of art, your brain starts looking for patterns, shapes, and anything else that is familiar to make you feel more connected to the piece. Even if you don't "get" it, your brain is still going to work, trying to find meaning in what you're looking at.

**4. Time to Escape**
Art has been made for nearly as long as humans have existed. By looking at art from a different time, you're transported to the time and place that the artist has depicted & that helps your brain make you feel as if you're doing a little bit of escaping. The next time you step into a museum, think of it as time-traveling instead!

**5. Think!**
One study found that a single hour in a museum changed the way people thought and felt. The subjects of the study exhibited improved critical thinking skills, increased empathy for how people lived in the past, and improved tolerance for people different from themselves. The next time you've got a brain-block, looking at art just might help to clear it up!

**Ready for Some Art?**
Ready to look at some art but can't get to a museum or gallery right now? Check out these two websites (also available as smartphone apps) for instant art gratification.

*WikiArt*
*Google Arts & Culture*

## Looking for More?

Check out our **Strathmore Blog** on our website to read articles on all sorts of art topics. Artist interviews, tutorials, product information, answers to frequently asked questions, and so much more can be found.

**READ OUR BLOG**

# Relaxing Watercoloring Designs Anybody Can Do!

Strathmore **Designs for Watercoloring** pads feature heavyweight, cold press **watercolor paper** with **preprinted patterns** by Zenspirations artist **Joanne Fink.** Choose from three collections: Nature Designs, Flower Designs, or Abstract Designs. They're perfect for artists of any skill level to experience this relaxing artform. Each **Design for Watercoloring** pad has 8 unique patterns on 5" x 7" sheets making them easy to frame or add to greeting cards. Also great with markers, colored pencils and gouache.

acid free • 140 lb. 300 g/m² • made in the USA

**LEARN MORE AND SEE ALL THE PATTERNS**


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