make something real

Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

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MAIN FEATURE

Practice and Persist

By Heather Rooney

"I fell in love with drawing and had a feeling inside of me that resembled a spark of lighting or a flame that had just been lit, eager to grow bigger."

As a child I always enjoyed drawing. I loved doodling and making birthday cards for my family and friends. I would get excited when the waiter at a restaurant handed me a box of crayons to draw on the children's menu when I went out to dinner with my family. However, I had no thoughts of becoming an artist one day. In middle school when I was asked what career path I was interested in pursuing, I would say a teacher. It seemed like a good answer but deep inside I didn't feel any connection or excitement about it. I was very shy and every time I had to stand in front of a class I would be filled with anxiety. Even the thought of an upcoming presentation would overwhelm me as I envisioned standing in front of a group of people staring at me. Yet as middle school was coming to an end, I still felt pressure of needing to know what I wanted to pursue.

The time came during the summer before high school to choose classes for the upcoming school year. I saw a career path course that was related to teaching and figured I would try it. It seemed like a reasonable thing to do. I walked into the first day of high school feeling anxious in a new environment surrounded by unfamiliar people. I looked down my schedule, seeing all the classes I signed up for, except for one. A drawing course was listed instead of the teaching course I signed up for. I found out the class I signed up for was cancelled and I was placed in a drawing course instead. I felt a bit unsettled at first but I knew drawing was a hobby that I enjoyed, so the feeling of uncertainty did not last long.

One of the first assignments was to draw a face, referencing a photograph of a person and focusing on light, shadow, and detail to create a realistic likeness. It wasn't long after this that I fell in love. I fell in love with drawing and had a feeling inside of me that

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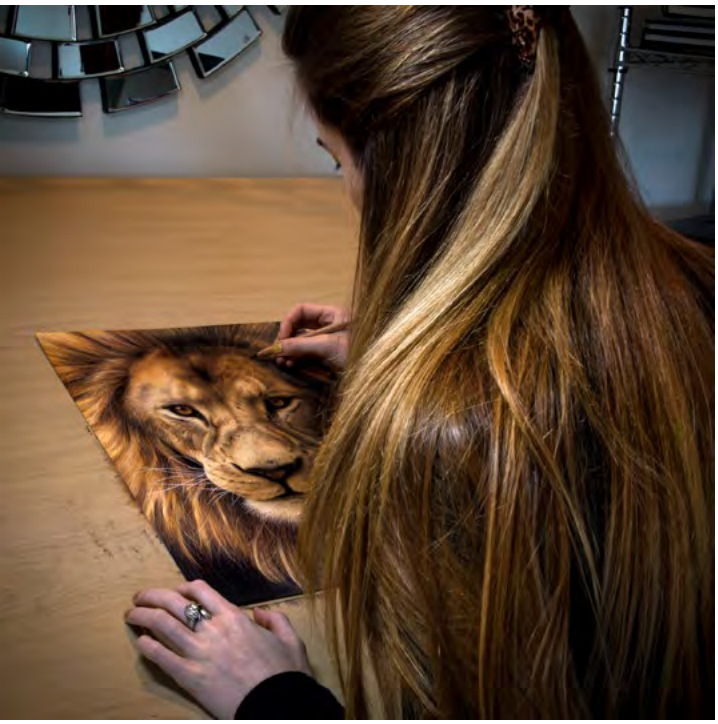

"The best advice I have for anyone who wants to become great at something they are passionate about is to be a progressionist, not a perfectionist. "

resembled a spark of lighting or a flame that had just been lit, eager to grow bigger. I never knew what a "life calling" felt like before, but this must be it. My once childhood hobby was now becoming a path that I never wanted to stop following. I loved the process of creating a face that evolves on a blank sheet of paper. I found the challenge of focusing intently to create meticulous details with only a pencil in my hand to be captivating. As time continued on and I repeatedly put my best effort into each drawing, I could see my skill improving. I continued to develop new techniques that resulted from practice and I was eager to keep progressing as an artist. From start to finish, each drawing is a journey full of opportunities to learn and become better.

The best advice I have for anyone who wants to become great at something they are passionate about is to be a progressionist, not a perfectionist. Put your focus only on making progress on your endeavor, not on creating something perfect. This is something I have at times struggled with in the past, but over time I have learned that the greatest reward comes from the process, not from the outcome. Putting an expectation on yourself to create something flawless with only the end result in mind will hinder your process and cause the joy for your craft to expire. Do not let mistakes or a less than ideal outcome result in quitting. These occurrences are valuable learning experiences and they are necessary for growth. Perfection does not exist and no matter how talented a person may be at something, a mindset that there is always room to grow with new challenges to undertake is essential.

There are many people who assume a strong talent is something a person is born with, but I know from experience that this is not true. I was not born with a natural ability to create realistic drawings that people often mistake for a photograph. If I showed my 12-year-old self my recent drawings and told her this is

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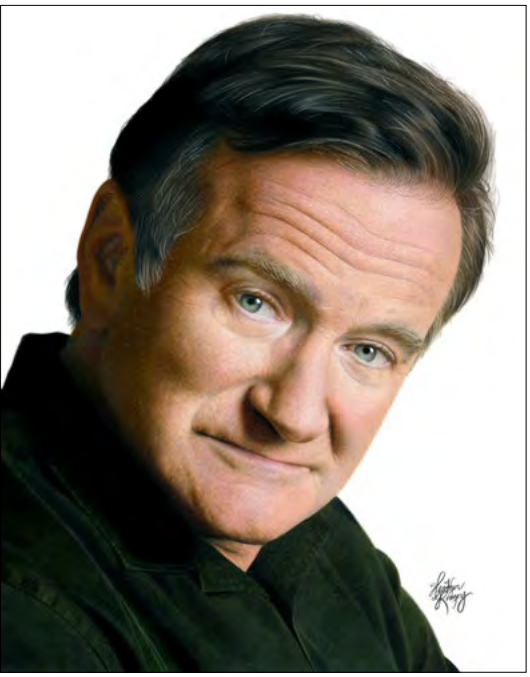
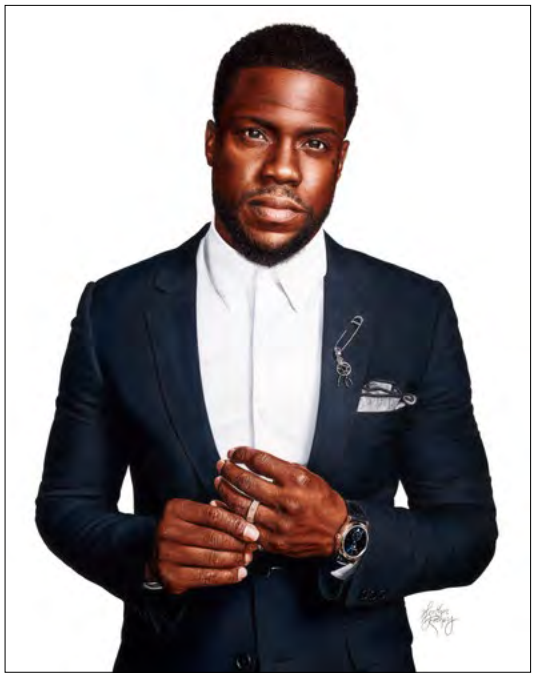
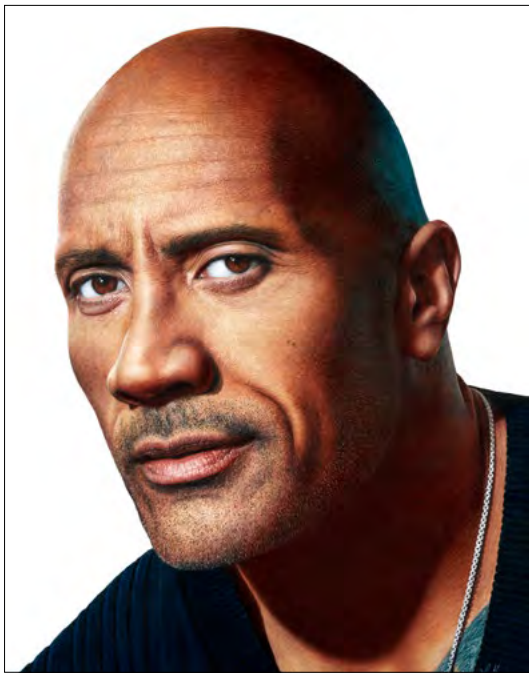
what you will draw in the future, she would be in disbelief. My drawings did not result from luck or natural talent. They are the result of practicing, always giving my best effort, and putting in the hours necessary to master a skill.

of time passes behind the lens as I sit at my drafting table with intense focus.
While working on a drawing I remind myself to stay present with the task before me. The only thing I can control is doing my best in the moment I have right now. I try not to think







One of the most common questions I receive is "how long did that drawing take you?" My drawings require many hours of work, which results from my growing desire to draw my subjects as detailed as possible and to create the illusion of reality on paper. I use Strathmore 500 Series Bristol paper with plate surface and 4-ply thickness. I have found it's smooth surface and durability to be the perfect companion for my process of layering colors and blending. It is not uncommon for me to spend 100 hours or more on a single drawing. I share my process online through time-lapse videos that are usually about 3 to 5 minutes long. In reality a far greater amount

"My drawings did not result from luck or natural talent. They are the result of practicing, always giving my best effort, and putting in the hours necessary to master a skill."

"I probably have 80 hours left before I complete this drawing." I focus on one step at time - such as creating a fine strand of hair, the unique freckles on a person's skin, or the spark of light in an individual's eye. It is important to have patience and to control the desire to get the end result. Learn to enjoy the process at whatever stage you are at. Any time you show up with discipline and full effort, you will be on the path to creating something great and becoming better in the process. A favorite saying of mine is "little by little, a little becomes a lot."

I have come a long way since being that

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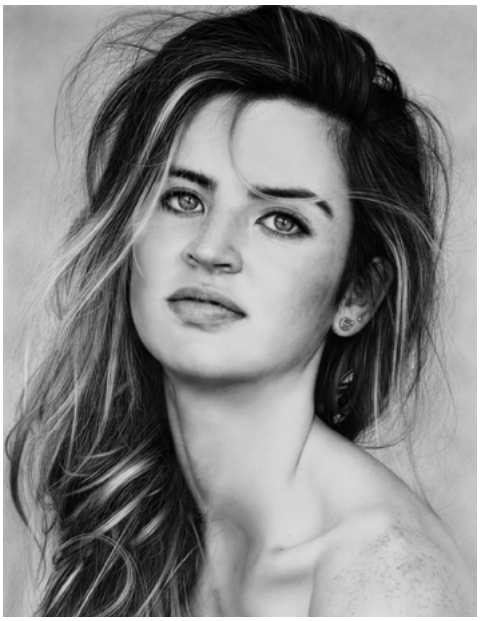
uncertain high school student in an unexpected drawing class. I am grateful I found my passion for drawing and feel blessed to be able to do what I love everyday. No matter where you are at in life, it is never too late to start following your passion. We all have the capability of becoming great at anything we are truly passionate about.

There is a reason for the spark inside of us that brings us happiness and joy and it should not be ignored. With passion, discipline, and the desire to always become better, you will look back one day and feel proud of how far you have come. Don't listen to those who say you aren't good enough, even if it's yourself telling you that. Start where you are and do the best you can. With practice and persistence you will surprise yourself with what you are capable of.

"With practice and persistence you will surprise yourself with what you are capable of. "



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Heather Rooney is an artist specializing in photorealistic drawings. As a teenager she became captivated with the challenge of realistic drawing and the meticulous attention to detail that it required. She became intrigued with the medium of pencil, using graphite and colored pencil to create the softness of shadows or the intricate details of facial features. Heather continued to feel driven to improve her technique with every drawing.

She began sharing her time-intensive process online through time-lapse videos. While the sped up process might appear effortless to viewers, it is often the result of up to 100 hours or more of work at her drafting table with a great amount of focus. She has a fascination for drawing faces, as every individual has their own unique story. She loves sharing her process with the world and is compelled to follow her passion for drawing, bringing vitality to her subjects on paper with the precision of every pencil stroke.

Heather is currently a working artist in the vibrant city of Boston, Massachusetts. To see more of Heather's art, visit her *Instagram page* or her website: *heather-rooney.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 start May 4 and continue through December 31, 2020

Workshop 1: How to Draw Portraits

Instructor: Justin Maas
Start Date: May 4, 2020

Justin Maas will show you how he creates his stunning, dimensional portraits. You will get an introduction to materials used, then he will delve into how to start a portrait: choosing your subject and your reference, the difference between the block in vs. rendering stage, and the 'Maas method' for blocking in. Then you'll get the chance to put everything into practice as Justin walks you through two portrait demos: one on Toned paper with white charcoal and graphite, and the other on white paper with colored pencils.

Workshop 2: Creative Watercoloring

Instructor: Leslie Tieu
Start Date: September 8, 2020

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.

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

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Introducing

300 Series

COLORED ART

Introducing **NEW** *Colored Art pads,* an assortment of quality papers in rich and brilliant colors. Ideal for use in general craft projects or with any dry media. Assortments contain a random selection of colors and textured surfaces.

9" x 12" glue bound pads contain 40 sheets of paper in assorted colors and textures.

• 92 lb./150 gsm • made in the U.S.A. • acid free

GEORGIAN WATER MIXABLE OIL

Georgian Premium Water Mixable Oil colors offer artists the experience of oil painting without the need for solvent-based mediums. An alternative to traditional oils, this balanced range of 40 vibrant colors can be thinned, mixed, and washed using water, making it ideal for studio use as well as classroom environments. All Georgian Water Mixable Oil colors offer high levels of lightfastness, pigment load, and durability. The viscosity and smooth texture mirror traditional oil colors. They can be used for impasto techniques or when thinned down with water, can create wash effects like watercolors.

- Premium Water Mixable Oil paints made in England
- Available in 40 colors
- High concentration of pigment
- Smooth buttery consistency
- Surface-dry between 5-7 days with no color shift from wet to dry

DALER ROWNEY

Watercolor Wreath Tutorial

With Shelly Kim

Follow along with artist Shelly Kim as she demonstrates how to paint a beautiful watercolor wreath. First Shelly breaks down all the components of the wreath so you can practice each part and approach the actual wreath with confidence. Then she demonstrates how it all comes together.

WATCH THE TUTORIAL HERE

MATERIALS:

- Strathmore *500 Series Ready Cut Watercolor Paper,* cold press, 140lb / 300gsm
- Daler-Rowney *Aquafine Watercolor Paints* - Shades of green, yellow and some pinks and reds for pops of color
- Princeton *Velvetouch Brush,* Round 4 or 6
- Paper Towel
- Scratch paper for practice
- Graphite pencil
- Eraser
- Water containers
- Palette

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FAQ:

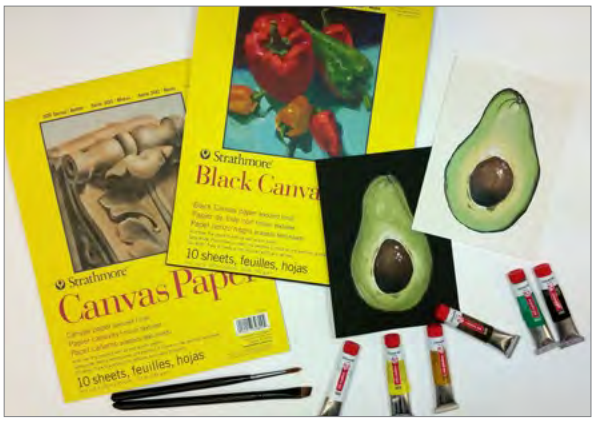
Can water mixable oil paints be used on your Canvas Paper and Oil Painting Papers?

Yes! You can use both traditional oil paints and water mixable oil paints on our Canvas Paper and Oil Painting Paper. The paper has been manufactured to withstand applications of all oil paints without the need for gesso.

Chemically, water mixable oil paints are very similar to traditional oil paints. Water mixable oil paints allow you to paint just like you would with traditional oils. The paint is thick and buttery, stays wet longer to allow for blending, and dries true to the color you see while wet versus acrylics, which dry darker. Watercolor, and Acrylic paints dry by evaporation, whereas oil paints and water mixable oil paints dry by oxidation.

The biggest advantage of using water mixable oil paints is the clean-up process. Soap and water can be used instead of thinners and solvents.

Though you can paint directly on our Canvas Paper and Oil Painting Paper with water mixable oil, it wouldn't hurt to put a layer of gesso down first if that is how you prefer to work with oils.



300 Series Canvas Paper
- 115 lb / 187 g/m^2
- Linen canvas texture
- Available in black and white

400 Series Oil Painting Paper
- 215 lb / 350 g/m^2
- Linen canvas texture