make something real

Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 19 | ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2021

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Paper, binders, and blending...oh my!
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MAIN FEATURE

The Mundane is Beautiful

By Joey Zeledón

Like many artists and designers, one of the first things I learned to draw was a "still life" in grade school art class. You might know the exercise I'm talking about. The one where the teacher placed bruised fruit and whatever other objects they had lying around in a random composition on a paint-stained table in a musty classroom, so the class could practice basic skills of perspective, highlights, shadows, and textures. Did that make you nostalgic?

At the time, these kinds of skill-building projects bored me. They felt cliché, void of creativity. They were just a means to an end to learn the foundational skills to be able to draw the kinds of things I wanted to draw like my own shoe designs. But, in hindsight, I now understand the deeper value of drawing a bunch of fruit on a table. This textbook rite-of-passage as an artist, was my first experience in finding inspiration from the mundane, something that is now part of my regular design practice. The everyday is filled with opportunity. You just have to pay attention.

These days, I pay close attention to all the unique and beautiful textures that can be found in everyday things like fruit. It's a subject matter that I continue to find inspirational in my design projects because when I draw fruit, it is less about recreating something on paper as realistic as possible and more about practicing the way I see the world around me.

I started to become fascinated by fruits and vegetables from a young age, even if I didn't initially love drawing them. My dad and I travelled to Costa Rica during many summers growing up to visit my grandfather and his fruit farm and connect with our heritage. During those trips, I remember

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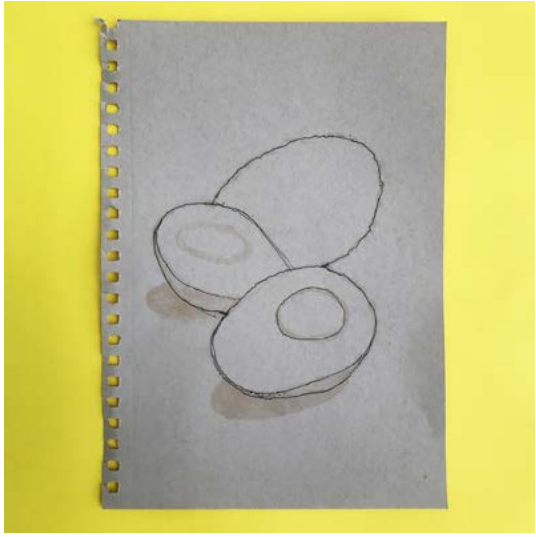
exploring the farm and finding all types of tropical fruit hanging from trees and on the ground fermenting. It was here where I started to really pay attention and see the fruit and the world around me in new ways. One of the fruits that first stood out to me was the mighty avocado. Its bumpy skin reminded me of my grandfather's elbows, contrasting so nicely with its smooth pit and subtle gradation of color found in the edible part.



Capturing the nuances of an avocado in a sketch takes patience and detailed observation, both of which promote seeing it in new ways with each passing minute of sketching. The same can be said for other fruits and vegetables. Sketching gives you permission to really study them, notice patterns, juxtapositions, commonalities, and nuances. Here are a few of my observations.

To me, the Kiwi is a study in contrasts between textures and colors inside and outside. Obviously, the furry exterior of the kiwi is nice for rubbing up against your cheek, so you can cuddle before you eat it. But, it's super misleading. The severe color and texture contrast between the outside, going from brown to bright green from dry furry brown to a juicy burst of green, never seems ordinary, never stops surprising me no matter the number of kiwis I've seen. That's what I love about them. And then, the seeds radiate from the core in a way that looks like a burst of fireworks. Kiwis feel like a surprise party. Similarly, pineapples and cantaloupes have stark contrasts between the fruit exterior and interior, providing some equally pleasant surprises.

Watermelon is interesting to me for the opposite reason. The airy pink flesh gradually turns into the denser green rind. When does the flesh officially become rind? It all depends on the consumer. Regardless, the color gradation is beautiful, and

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sketching seeds mimics the experience of navigating through different layers of fruit on any summer day—some seeds are prominent on the surface and easy to capture, others are embedded like a bug in a spiderweb texture just below, and others are lodged deep within the fruit, wrapped like a cocoon so that you only guess that a seed might be there because the fruit flesh looks like it has a little shadow.

What I love about the banana is its ripening stages and how it communicates its age through color. Another example of beautiful gradation of color, the gradation in the banana serves the function of a built-in age meter. And, the flesh of the fruit has a soft, chalky, pillowy texture almost as if the inside was lined with some kind of light, soft textile like terrycloth.

The strawberry skin also looks like a delicate textile. The lights and darks look like a tufted mattress or pillow. The texture is both sensual and comforting like a pillow. The tufted pattern also functions to hold onto dips. The chocolate has something to hang onto in these little crevices. You can feel dripping tension as you sketch it.

Celery also has a built-in affordance. The shape is really functional, especially for

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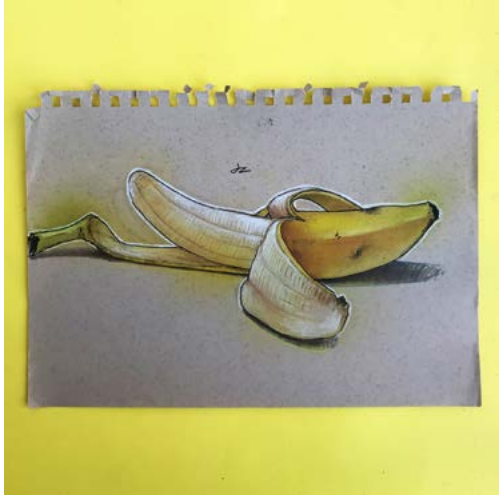
> *When does the flesh officially become rind? It all depends on the consumer.*



> *Kiwis feel like a surprise party.*

> *...the gradation in the banana serves the function of a built-in age meter.*

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dipping. The u-shaped trough begs you to fill it with something like peanut butter or blue cheese dressing. In the consumption of it, you have to be really authoritative in your bites so that you get a clean cut. Otherwise, you get a stringy mess from puncturing the ribbed surface. Unlike the fragile stringiness of a watermelon, the celery's rigid stringiness means more abrupt distinctions where light meets dark in the sketch.

> *"The u-shaped trough begs you to fill it with something like peanut butter or blue cheese dressing."*

> *"The lights and darks look like a tufted mattress or pillow."*

> *"The grapefruit is essentially made of little pockets of juice."*

The grapefruit is essentially made of little pockets of juice. They are vessels waiting to burst and squirt into someone's eye. Each little vessel holds a contained amount of the juice. That's what's unique about citrus and sketching it.

While the details of the fruit are unique, my general sketching process before adding these details is the same. I create drawings with markers, a black pen, and colored pencils. I use the Strathmore toned tan sketch paper because it starts me off with a nice mid-tone. It allows my highlights to pop quicker off the page. The paper also absorbs the marker nicely for a good marker to paper relationship.

I start by creating ghost lines with a light grey marker to rough out a general proportion of the sketch and placing it on the paper without fully committing to black ink on paper. Once I have those general proportions, I go back and lay down the

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darker outlines with a black pen. Then I do my ad hoc masking with strips of post-it notes, sticking them around the edge of the sketch in preparation for the air marker. The air marker tends to splatter when you first use it, so I start the air marker on the post-it note runway. Once it gets going, I bring it to the page where I want the color. I use the air marker as a way to color block, a way to lay down a base of color very smoothly.

Once I have the base layer down, I peel off all the masking and then I begin applying the lights and the darks, the highlights and the shadows for everything, in general and for the textures. I use a soft white colored pencil for the highlights and other colored pencils for the shadows. By using the colored pencils on top of the marker base color, I am able to smudge them with my fingers and get rid of the stroke lines.

Through my sketching practice, I see the mundane as complex and beautiful. As a result, the process of drawing a still-life of fruit, something I once found boring and uncreative, has direct value to my work as a designer and impact on my ability to create. When I sketch fruit, I see their details in new ways—the patterns, commonalities, nuances, and differences. Parts of fruit become abstracted, and I see other things in them, and then I can see these abstractions in the things that I am designing. I am constantly asking myself questions like: What does this remind me of? What does this look like? This practice has allowed me to see complexity and beauty everywhere and to find inspiration in the most unlikely, everyday places.

> *"...pineapples and cantaloupes have stark contrasts between the fruit exterior and interior..."*

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Joey Zeledón is an industrial designer and analog sketching advocate. He strives to design everyday objects that strike emotional chords with people. Joey believes that good design is like good music. It's familiar, engaging and makes you feel. It's something you want to play on repeat. Since graduating from RIT's industrial design program in 2006, he has been creating iconic design for both young and established brands that make food, furniture, housewares, lighting, spaces, shoes and tech.

See more of Joey's work on *Instagram* or on his *website*.

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Strathmore® 2021 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

Join us for Strathmore's **FREE** 2021 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 art topics. After a lesson is released, it remains on the site for viewing the rest of the year.

Share all the fun on Instagram and Facebook using #StrathmoreWorkshops

Workshops continue through December 31, 2021

Workshop 1: Watercolor and Gouache

Instructor: Jordan Rhodes
Start Date: March 1, 2021

Learn the different approaches that can be used when painting with watercolor vs. goauche. You'll learn about the basics of using each medium as well as their respective strengths and weaknesses. Paint along as Jordan demonstrates his approach to painting the same subject with both watercolor and gouache.

LEARN MORE about Workshop 1

Workshop 2: Exploring Mixed Media

Instructor: Shelly Kim
Start Date: May 1, 2021

Let's create together in this fun workshop where we will explore mixed media tools such as watercolor, acrylic inks and markers to create simple and colorful artwork. You'll learn how to paint various illustrations from loose florals to fruits and veggies, which can then be applied when painting colorful wreaths, patterns, journal spreads, card making, and more.

LEARN MORE about Workshop 2

Workshop 3: Drawing 101

Instructor: Kelly Foss
Start Date: August 2, 2021

This is a beginner friendly workshop. You will learn about art materials, how to use them, ways to set up your space, and how to avoid 3 mistakes every student makes. With this knowledge, Kelly will lead you in discovering classical drawing techniques, which will help your drawings look more realistic, and your creative time be more fun.

LEARN MORE about Workshop 3

Workshop 4: Oil Painting

Instructor: Katie Jobling
Start Date: Nov. 1, 2021

Dive into the world of oil painting; a beautiful medium that was the favored amongst the masters. Together we will create some beautiful works, which will help you grow in confidence while deepening your understanding of oil painting. You will learn about mixing colors, building layers and the secret to oil painting success.

LEARN MORE about Workshop 4

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

Artwork by Graham Smith

So Many Ways to GET TONED!

After their introduction in 2012, **Strathmore 400 Series Toned Sketch Papers** became so popular artists demanded more formats. We happily obliged expanding Toned Sketch papers into sheet, roll, artist tile, greeting card, and art journal formats. In 2017 we introduced **Strathmore 400 Series Toned Mixed Media** in Toned Tan and Gray followed by **Toned Blue Mixed Media** in 2018. All Strathmore Toned products are 100% recycled with 30% post-consumer fiber and contain kraft and fiber inclusions for visual interest. No matter what format or media you prefer, there is a Strathmore Toned product perfect for you!

ARTIST TILES

For pattern drawing and meditative art.

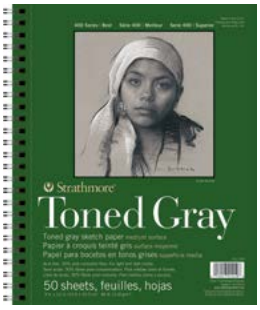
4 x 4", available in Toned Tan & Gray.

CARDS

For creative correspondence.

Made using heavier card-weight paper.

5 x 6.875" available in Toned Tan & Gray.



TONED SKETCH PADS

Lightweight sketch paper in wire bound pads.

Available in 4 pad sizes in both Toned Tan & Gray.

Also available in 42"x 10 yd artist rolls & 19 x 24" sheets.

TONED MIXED MEDIA PADS

Heavyweight mixed media paper in glue bound pads.

Available in 4 pad sizes in Toned Tan, Gray, & Blue.

TONED SKETCH JOURNALS

Toned Sketch paper in luxurious book formats.

Available in Toned Tan & Gray in softcover & hardbound books.

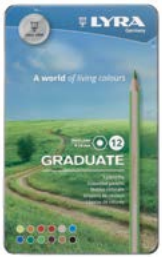
TONED MIXED MEDIA JOURNALS

Toned Mixed Media paper in luxurious book formats.

Available in Toned Tan & Gray in softcover & hardbound books.

Artwork by
Jane Oliver

LYRA Graduate is a high quality, dry media, student range of graphite pencils, colored pencils, watercolor pencils, and fineliner markers. These extraordinarily durable and high performing products combine the passion of design with all the technical characteristics necessary to achieve exceptional results for any artist!

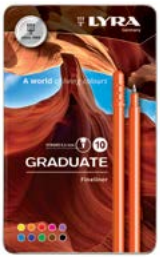


GRADUATE COLORED PENCILS

- Feature a 3.8mm core
- Available in 12, 24, and 36 count sets
- Vivid and intense colors using high quality pigments
- 100% PEFC Certified Wood

GRADUATE WATERCOLOR PENCILS

- Feature a 3.3mm core
- Available in 12, 24, and 36 count sets
- Easily blended, use like watercolor
- Synthetic brush included in every set
- 100% PEFC Certified Wood



GRADUATE FINELINERS

- Feature a 0.5mm, durable tip
- Available in 10 and 20 count sets
- Use water-based inks
- Ideal for drawing and precision

GRADUATE GRAPHITE PENCILS

- Feature a 3.3mm core
- Available in 12, 24, and 36 count sets
- Easily blended, use like watercolor
- Synthetic brush included in every set
- 100% PEFC Certified Wood

LYRA Germany

Jane Oliver

FEATURE ARTICLE

Colored Pencil 101

Using colored pencils can be frustrating for artists who are new to the medium. They seem like they should be easy, after all, everyone knows how to use a pencil! Although the two mimic each other in some respects, there are methods and techniques that are specific to colored pencil. A little knowledge and patience will go a long way if you're a colored pencil newbie.

One of the most important decisions you will make when using colored pencil happens before you make a single stroke, your paper! Select a paper with a "medium" or "vellum" surface which will grab the pigment. Look for heavyweight papers as these will stand up to the application of multiple layers of colored pencil as well as blending techniques.

PAPER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLORED PENCIL

400 SERIES COLORED PENCIL

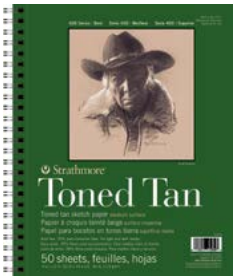
a good level of "tooth"

heavyweight: 100 lb/163 g/m²

400 SERIES VELLUM BRISTOL

Our most popular surface for colored pencil

extra heavyweight: 2-ply



400 SERIES TONED SKETCH

mid-tone background makes colors POP!

medium weight: 80 lb/118 g/m²

400 SERIES TONED MIXED MEDIA

for Toned lovers who want to use wet media or heavy applications

heavyweight: 184 lb/300 g/m²

400 SERIES MIXED MEDIA

for dry & wet media

Also available in 300 & 500 Series

heavyweight: 184 lb/300 g/m²

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A Bit About Binders

Colored pencil brands will perform differently depending on the quality of pigment and the type of binder used in the core. Two types of binders are used to hold pigment together: wax, oil, or a mix of both. Many artists keep both kinds of colored pencils handy as each has type has pros and cons.

Student grade colored pencils will have less pigment to binder ratio whereas professional grade colored pencils will have higher pigment content. If you're just starting out, open stock colored pencils are a great option to try just a few colors before investing in a set.

WAX BINDERS		OIL BINDERS	
PROS	**CONS**	**PROS**	**CONS**
• Blend easily • Fewer layers required for saturated color • Great choice for laying down larger areas of color	• Break easily, especially when dropped on floor • More frequent sharpening required • They sometimes create a "waxy bloom", a whitish layer that rises to the top of your artwork.	• Harder cores, less likely to break • Less sharpening needed • Easier to remove color should you make a mistake • Great choice for detail work	• Tend to lay down color a bit more unevenly • Require more layers to achieve a rich color

Sarah Becktel

Blending Colored Pencils

One of the most important areas to master in colored pencil is blending. There are multiple methods that can be used depending on the level of blending you're looking for and the final effect you wish to achieve.

BURNISHING

This is the simplest method of blending. Apply layers of color over one another allowing the upper layers to blend the lower layers using heavy pressure. For best results, lay down all the layers of color you want before you burnish as the process will flatten

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the paper texture making it much more difficult to add color later. Keep in mind whatever color you choose for burnishing will affect the colors below, which is why lighter colors are typically used over darker colors to minimize this effect. To burnish without adding color, use a colorless blending pencil such as the Lyra Splender.

Brian Scott

DRY BLENDING

Dry blending methods are easy to do and utilize easily accessible materials. Tissue or paper towel is great for light blending between layers of color as it doesn't push down the paper texture as much as burnishing does. Tortillons (blending stumps) are great for blending details. A cotton swab can be also be used in a pinch.

SOLVENT BLENDING

Solvents break down the binding agent in colored pencil making it more paint-like for smooth blending. It is very important to test any solvent with your colored pencil on a scrap piece of paper allowing it to completely dry before you use it on your artwork. All solvent blending is best used over heavy applications of colored pencil, although some artists use it with lighter layers for a watercolor wash effect.

Rubbing Alcohol is a great option for light blending. It's inexpensive and non-toxic. For best results, stick with 70% or lower to minimize pigment pickup.

Odorless Mineral Spirits break up binding agents better than rubbing alcohol therefore allow better blending. It can be used with cotton balls, cotton swabs, or soft paint brushes. You can also find it in colorless solvent markers which are convenient and great for detail work.

Turpentine can be used for more powerful blending needs. Use it sparingly as it can remove too much color. Use as you would Odorless Mineral Spirits.

Rubber Cement Thinner is the most heavy duty blending solvent. It can damage your paper so always test before using. It is very toxic so use sparingly and only if other solvent blending mediums are not strong enough for the effect you want to achieve.

When using any solvent for blending always use with care, especially if there are children or pets around. Always work in a well-ventilated room, recap containers immediately, and thoroughly clean up your work area and tools promptly.

The Last Word

Always test your materials to ensure you're going to get the results you're looking for. It's frustrating to spend hours on a piece only to ruin it with a new technique or material that didn't react like you expected. When purchasing your materials, remember that better quality art supplies will deliver better performance. However, don't spend so much money you feel paralyzed to use your new supplies because "nothing I can make will be good enough". Find the sweet spot of buying the best quality materials at a price that fits your budget. Down the road if you decide you want to continue using colored pencils, treat yourself to a larger set or trade up to a professional level set. The only way you will waste money buying better quality art materials is if you don't use them, otherwise your investment repays itself in final pieces you're happier with and have more enjoyment creating.