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ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 21 | ISSUE 4 | Winter 2023

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Artist Tutorials
Still life paintings in different mediums with Kate Birch

Online Workshops
You can still watch all the tutorials from our free 2023 workshops!

New Pads!
Check out our newest offering for your creative endeavors

How It's made
Ever wonder about the paper making process? We start with pulp...

MAIN FEATURE

Drawing From The Past

By Jamie Gustafson

Wildlife has been the main subject of my art since I first began drawing as a small child. Today, as a scientific communicator, the focus of my work is looking deeper into these animals. Not just presenting wild animals as they appear to us, but what they look like inside, how they live and how they coexist with their respective ecosystems.

continued

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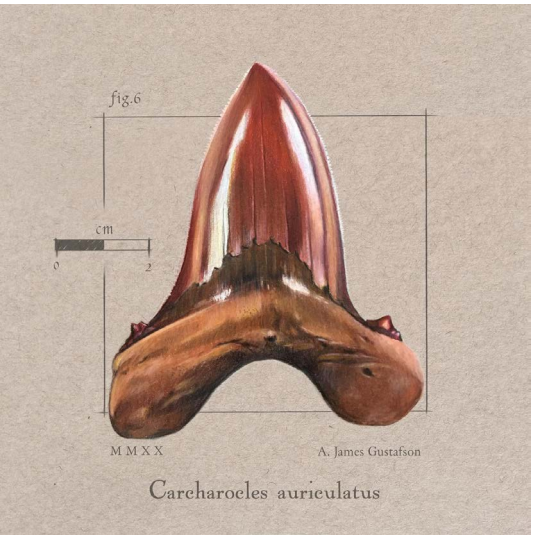
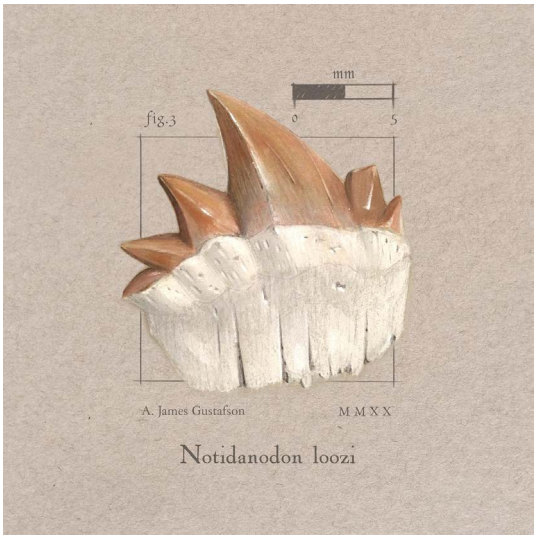
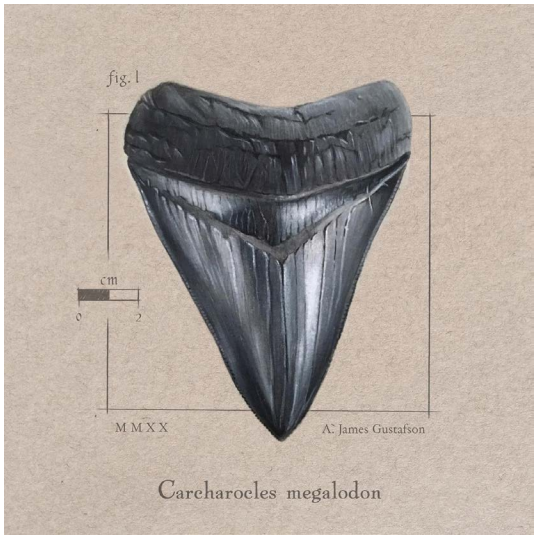
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 21 | ISSUE 4 | Winter 2023

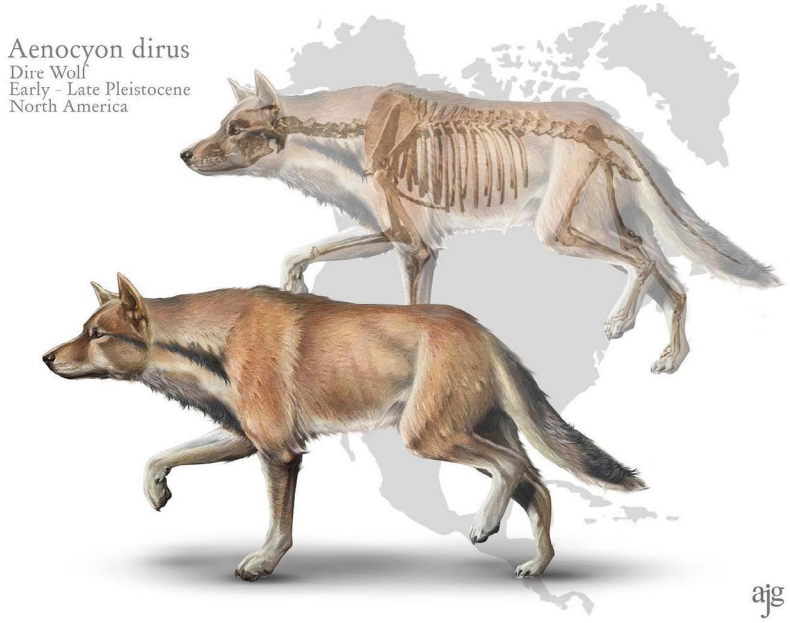
Shark teeth illustrated in colored pencil on Strathmore 400 Series Toned Tan Paper







But not all of the wildlife that I illustrate are animals that you see living today. As a natural history illustrator (or "paleoartist" as we're often referred to) many of the animals that I draw hail from a time long gone by. In effect, it's my job to help tell their stories.



Reconstructing animals of the past is a pursuit that involves working hand-in-glove with members of the scientific community including educators, researchers and paleontologists.

Recently I was tasked with reconstructing the American Lion, a prehistoric big cat that roamed North America some tens of thousands of years ago. And within these pages I will be sharing with you the process by which I tell his story; and bring him back to life.

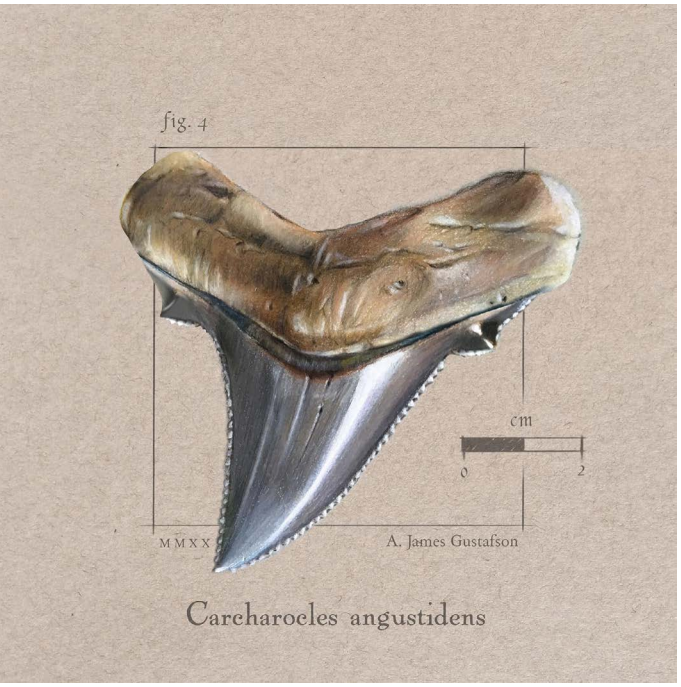
> *"Many of the animals that I draw hail from a time long gone by. In effect, it's my job to help tell their stories."*

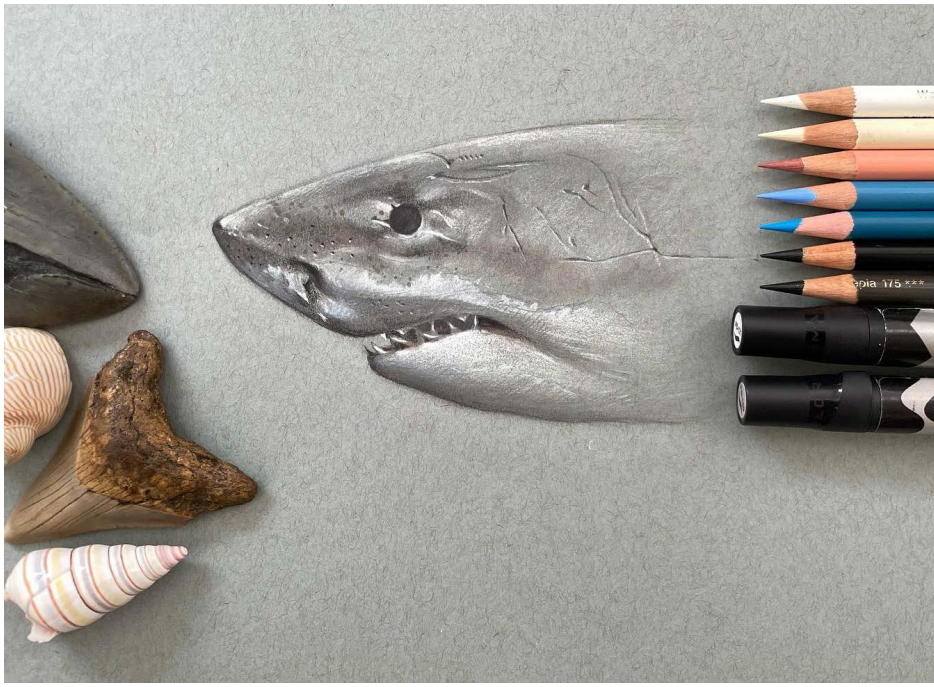
Prehistoric reconstruction requires a lot of preliminary work, including a great deal of research. But once the pencil hits the paper, the illustrating process is just like any other. The aforementioned pencils that I choose are of the colored variety. And though I am primarily a colored pencil artist, I also use a variety of gray scale brush markers for value definition, shading & blending. I use a combination of both wax-based and oil-based colored pencils. Each variety offers its own benefits and works well on its own. But I find that when used in tandem, they offer even more advantages.

continued

Oil-based pencils are harder, almost drier in a sense. Whereas waxed-based pencils are softer, more malleable. I find that oil-based pencils are great for laying down multiple layers of color. Their hardness also allows for finer sharpening, which makes them ideal for detail work.

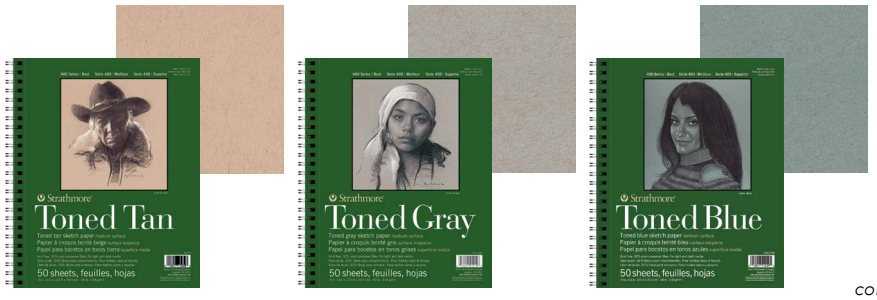
> *"Working with colored paper affords me better control over my lighter tones. It allows me to use white as positive space rather than negative space."*





Wax based pencils are well suited for blending. Their softness lends itself well to blending multiple colors to achieve a desired hue, much like one would with paint. Wax-based colors are also great for smoothing out uneven or overly textured areas. Colorless, brush-tipped markers aid in blending & smoothing the finalized layers of color. Using an array ranging from 10%-100% black, I can transition my colors seamlessly from light areas to dark.

I prefer toned paper rather than plain white. Working with colored paper affords me better control over my lighter tones. It allows me to use white as positive space rather than negative space. When working with white paper, anything that you want to be white you essentially have to leave blank. Strathmore has a variety of toned paper available. I tend to choose the paper based on the subject matter.

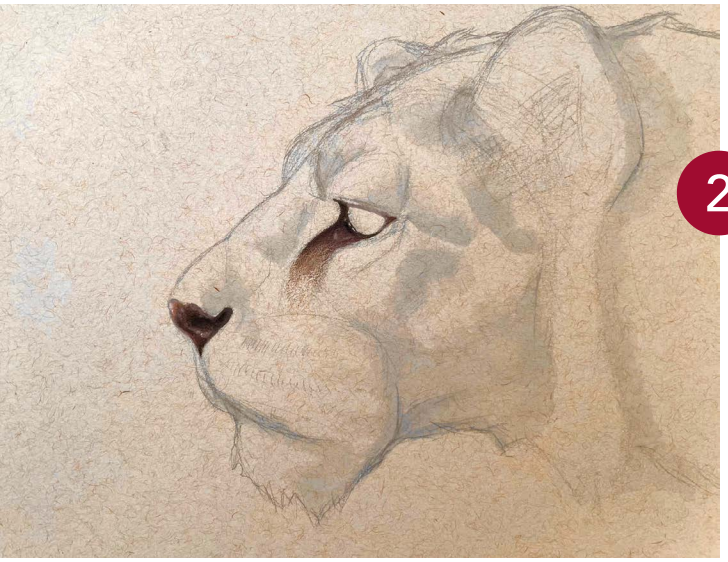


continued

In this piece, I've chosen to depict my subject as having a variety of blonde, golden and light brown colors. So *Strathmore's 400 Series Toned Tan Sketch Paper* is the perfect choice.

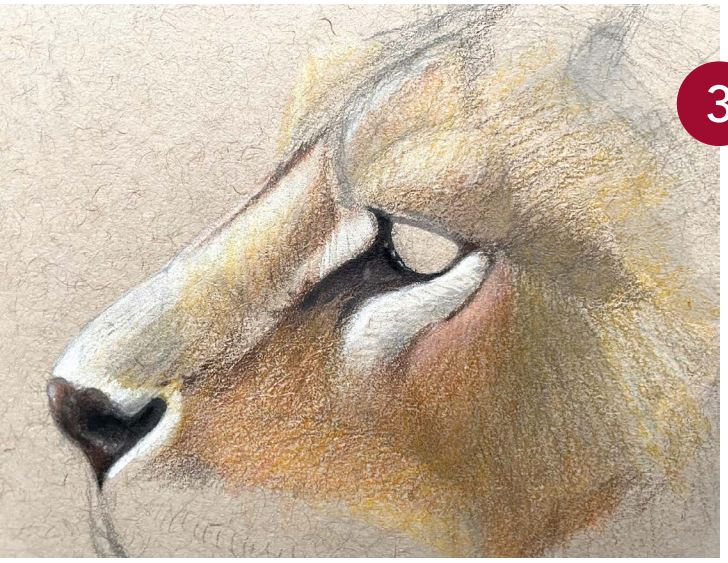
1

All of my illustrations begin with a rough sketch. At this stage, detail is of minor importance. I don't intend for my sketch to be a literal framework for the final illustration. It merely serves as a general "footprint" of where my final illustration will sit on the page. For sketching, the key for me is using a hard graphite pencil and light strokes. A light sketch affords me the ability to make changes to my design as I go along, with little to no impact on the final image. Applying too much pressure will cause the pencil to cut into the paper, leaving impressions that will show through - particularly in areas of lighter color. It's also worth noting that I don't sharpen my sketch pencils as often as my colored pencils. In addition to using lighter strokes, this will also prevent the pencil from marring the surface of the page. My grip is also much gentler at this stage. I hold the pencil loosely, away from the tip, using a light waving motion as I sketch. Once I have a sketch that I'm happy with, I am ready to proceed.



2

I begin with the darkest areas of the face, such as the nose and the markings around the eyes. Using a base layer of dark grays still allows me to layer on darker colors such as browns and blacks for shadows, and lighter colors such as off-whites and light grays for highlights.



3

When drawing fur, I always ensure that my strokes are moving in the direction of the grain of the fur. Fur grows in many different *directions, so it's important that I'm always checking my reference photos for accuracy. In the early stages of laying down color, it's important not to apply too much pressure with your pencils. Firm pressure crushes the fibers of the paper, not allowing them to take any more color. At this point I'm still not concerned with small details. I'm more focused on building towards the underlying tones & hues upon which more detail will be added later. With areas that I know I will want to be absolutely white, I am mindful not to add anything at all ahead of those steps. That's going to allow those areas to really pop.*

I like to keep a variety of light-toned pencils at my disposal. Even surfaces that appear white will have lots of subtle variations. So even when I'm drawing a patch of "white" fur, I will use white, ivory, cream, beige, light gray & even hints of color to achieve the desired tone.

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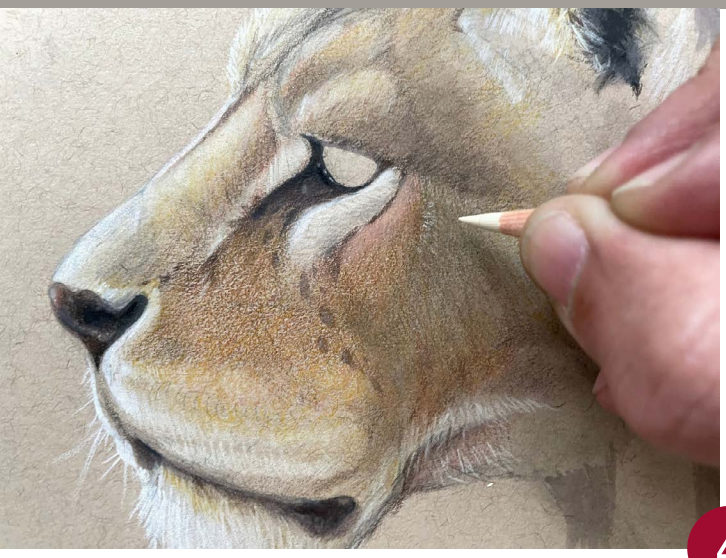
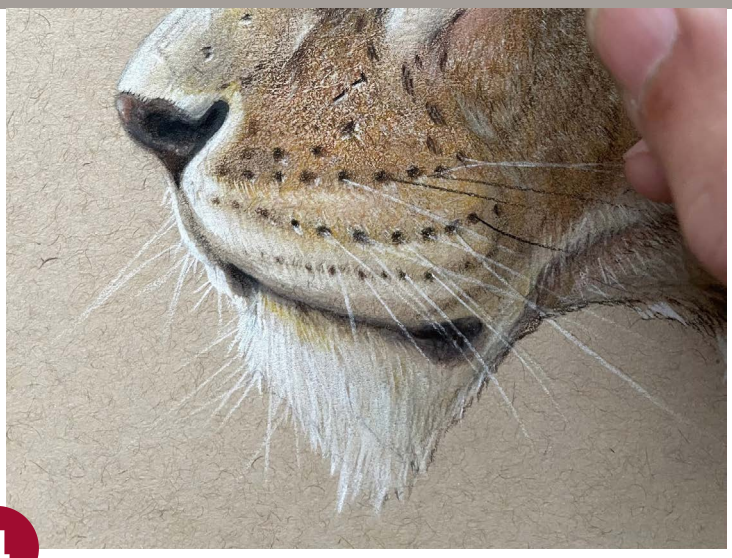
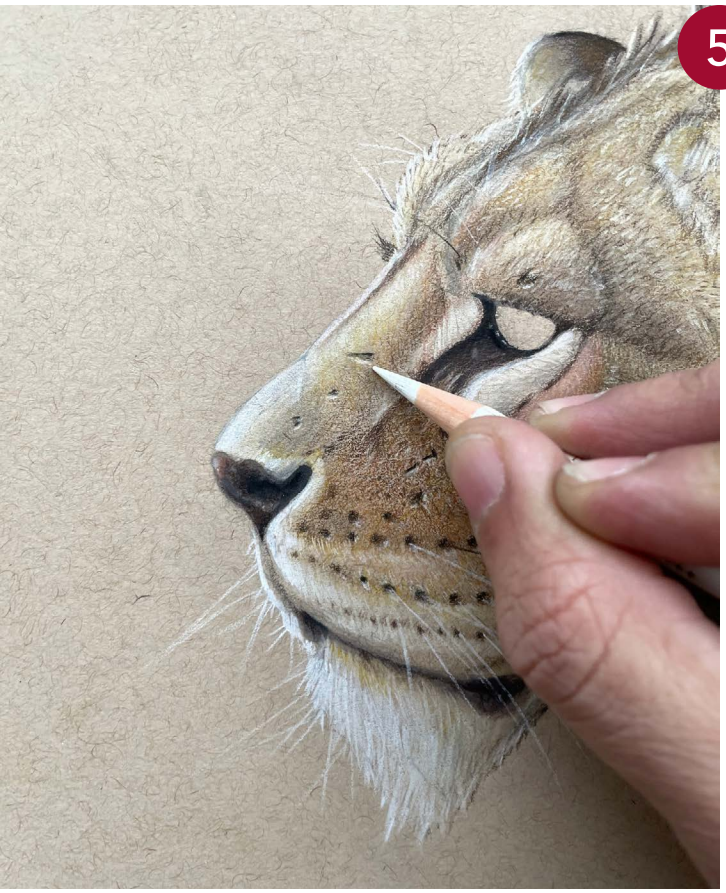




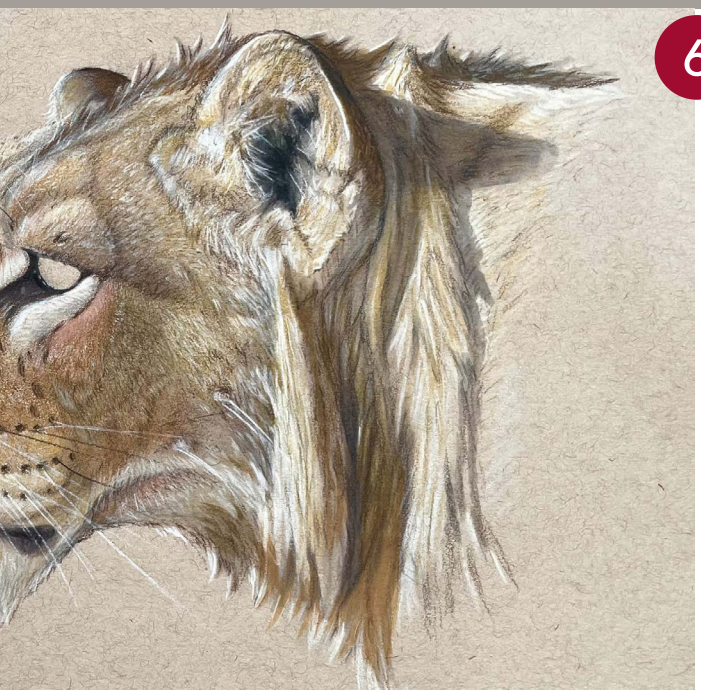
4

As I begin to think about adding detail, this is where some of the research-based artistic choices come into play. Features such as spots or a tuft of hair begin as gentle strokes of a lightly toned grayscale marker. I rely on brush tip markers for these types of techniques. I prefer them to that of a chisel or a point because of the natural movement they allow me to capture, while also lending themselves to a natural feathered effect. Once again, using mid-dark ink tones will allow for the addition of both darker and lighter pencil colors as highlights and shadows, adding depth to the final composition. Using a sharp off-white pencil, I begin adding more texture to the fur. Repeating that process with a dark gray pencil adds further definition. I'm not overly concerned with drawing every individual hair as I would on a larger, more detailed piece; I simply want to add a bit of texture. I add small touches such as whiskers, lashes and stray hairs by using a well sharpened pencil and quick, firm, decisive strokes.



5

Adding small details such as scars or imperfections in the fur help to bring a little more life to the animal as well. Making these as believable as possible once again relies on understanding how light plays on different surfaces. Indentations will have a subtle shadow where light is obscured. And there will be a subtle highlight where the normal surface resumes. I really believe that these types of understandings go a long way toward improving one's art. I find that I spend a great deal of time simply studying light and how it interacts with the world around it; how it reacts on different surfaces & textures. I really do believe that is one of the most critical abilities that an artist can harness.



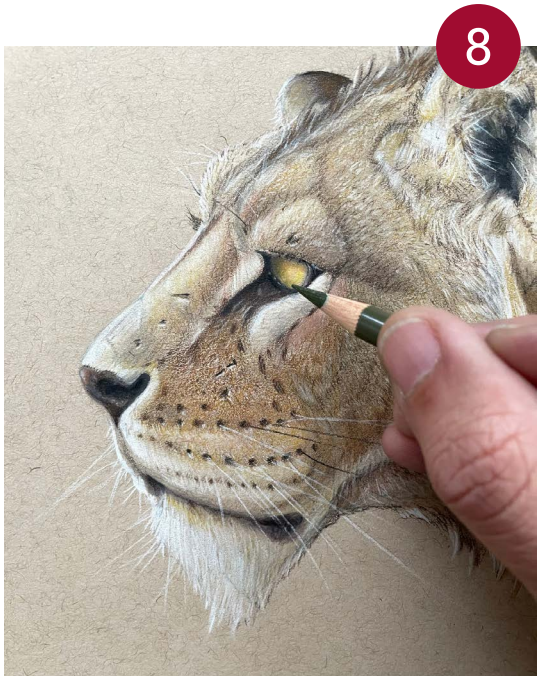
6

As I begin to illustrate the lion's shaggy mane, it becomes important to remember my "imaginary light source". Tufts of hair, folds in the skin, and obstacles such as the ears will break up light. These all become opportunities to add a bit more depth & character. I find that I can add further dynamics by knowing when to randomly break up the shadows, letting in small peaks of light such as the fur along the throat and along the top of the neck.

At times my subjects are depicted amidst a natural landscape. This allows the viewer to imagine the animal as it would have appeared in its natural habitat. So even though the images are still, in a sense they still tell a story. But other times my subjects appear as isolated images, often against a plain, white background. But the lack of a surrounding environment doesn't necessarily mean that a story can't still be told. In these cases, I find that I can often imply the animals' surroundings through the use of light and color. Occasionally I will tint an animal's fur to suggest that it is drenched in the light of a setting sun, or incorporate the hint of a tree-lined horizon reflected in the animals eyes.

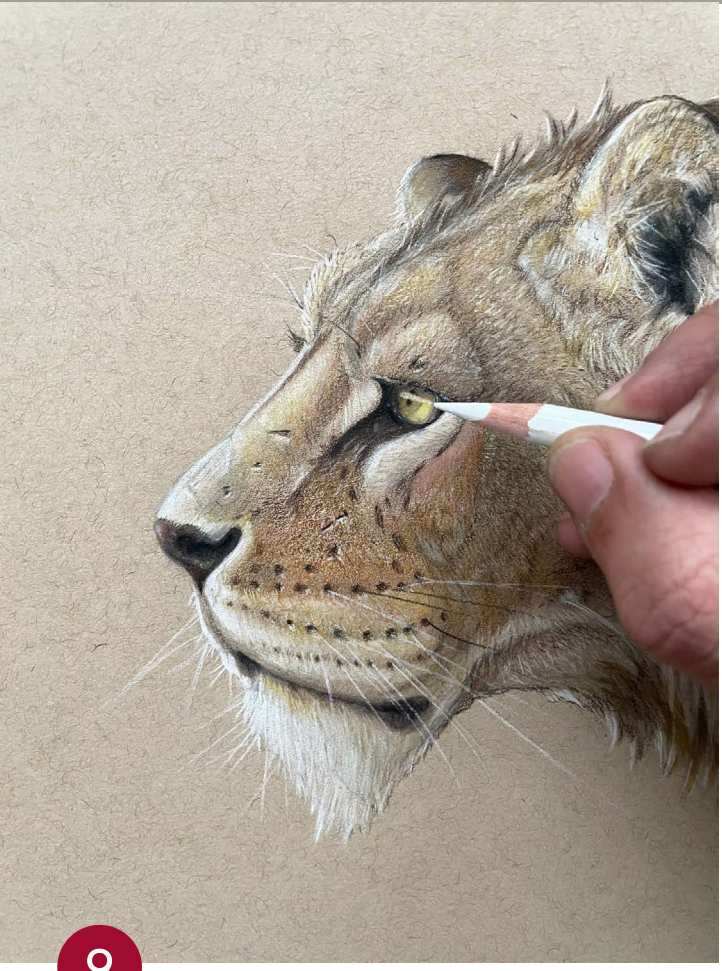
7

"Listen to the eyes; they have much to say". I believe that the eyes are where a piece truly comes to life. The eyes are filled with many subtle details, so I take my time with them. This is once again where I refer to many photographic references. I want to understand the eyes, how they sit, how they shift, how they reflect light. I start by adding shadow and building contour.



8

My subject's eyes, for the most part, will be yellow. But a cat's eyes have several subtle variations in color, including blues and greens. This is where my wax-based pencils really excel. Using different shades of orange and yellow, I can blend together lighter tones to highlight the sun-lit areas of the eye.



9

Adding white highlights over the pupils and the dark shadowy corners can add dimension and depth. I find it is most effective to allow these highlights to span over both the dark & light areas. This helps to imply the existence of the lens that covers the entire eye. To give the impression that my subject is facing a bright horizon, I allow the highlight to span the diameter of the eye, rather than just adding a simple white dot.

Finally, I use small flecks of white acrylic paint to add a glistening effect to the eyes and the wet areas of the nose. These types of details can be quite effective, but I try my best to exercise restraint. In an effort to keep them as realistic as possible, I use the "less is more" approach.

10

This facial portrait is just the first step in what will ultimately be a full-body reconstruction. The illustration will be accompanied by text, scientific language & perhaps even photographic references of the fossils this animal left behind. But my mission as an illustrator - the task that I truly see as being my job - is to create artwork that allows the viewer to be transported. I want the audience to feel they know & understand these creatures. My aim is to present these animals as they lived, not as fictional monsters or mythical creatures. To help tell their stories. And that is the guidance I would give to any artist; regardless of subject matter, irrespective of medium: create art that speaks, and tells a story all its own.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Known as Jamie to friends, family & colleagues, A. James Gustafson is a Chicago-based science & natural history illustrator specializing in zoological anatomy & prehistoric restoration. Working primarily in colored pencil, Jamie's artwork is focused on creating realistic, life-like portrayals of natural specimens, while maintaining artistic, illustrative qualities that captivate the viewer's eye. His personal work & collaborative efforts have received international awards & his illustrations have appeared in a wide range of publications, digital platforms & institutions. Sharing his love of science & the natural world, the aim of his artwork is to bring unique attention to the awe-inspiring beauty that exists all around us. That philosophy is the inspiration behind the scientific illustrations of A. James Gustafson; works of art designed by nature…and drawn by hand.

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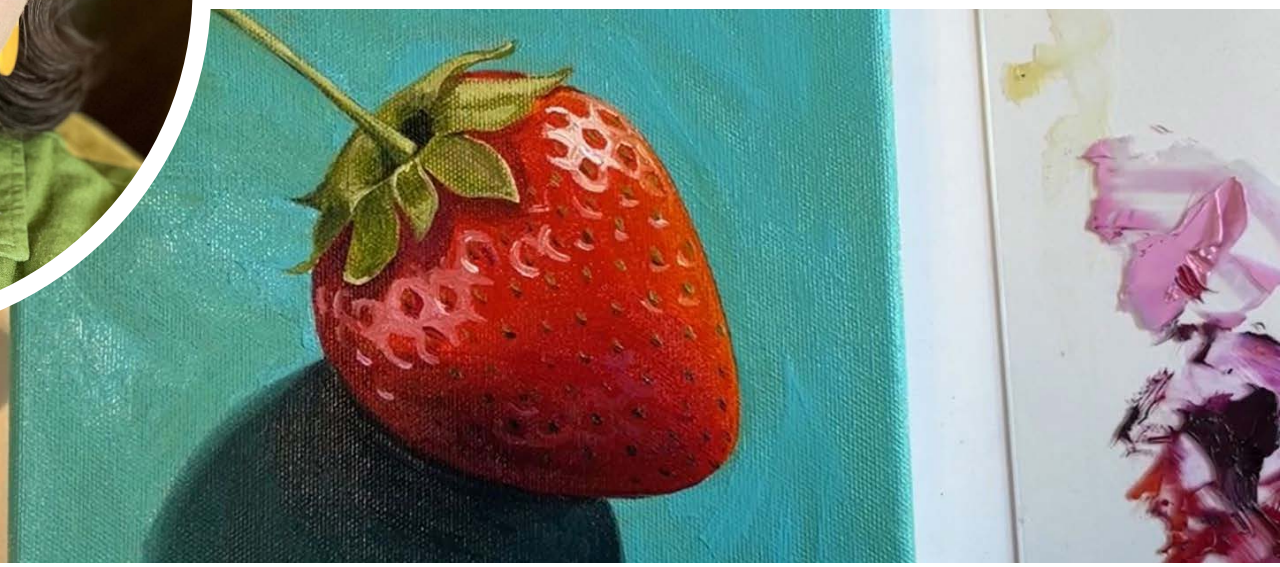
STILL LIFE PAINTINGS *in different mediums*

WITH KATE BIRCH



Join us with artist Kate Birch as we explore painting still lifes in different mediums. Follow along to learn how to paint a strawberry in water mixable oils, a tootsie pop in gouache, and a fried egg in acrylics.

Supplies

- Strathmore 300 Series Stretched Canvas & Canvas Panels
- Strathmore 400 Series Watercolor Artist Tiles
- Daler-Rowney Georgian Water Mixable Oils & System3 Acrylics
- Maimeri Gouache
- Princeton Velvetouch Brushes

CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE FULL TUTORIALS!

300 SERIES **CANVAS PADS**

NEW Strathmore 300 Series Canvas Pads are a convenient alternative to traditional stretched canvases and panels. Created with plein air painters in mind, these canvas-material sheets are designed to meet the needs of on-location artwork. The compact pads make for easy storage and portability. Excellent for use with acrylic, oil, and water mixable oil paints.

300 Series Canvas Sheet Pads are available in these sizes:

9 x 12"	12 x 16"	16 x 20"	18 x 24"

• 100% cotton canvas • triple primed • medium grain texture • acid free
• 8 oz primed weight • ready-to-use painting surface

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Strathmore® 2023 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

All of our **FREE** 2023 Online Workshop lessons are now open!

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 releases, it remains on the site for viewing the rest of the year.

Share all the fun on Instagram and Facebook using #StrathmoreWorkshops

NOW OPEN! Watch all the lesson through December 31, 2023

Workshop 1: Drawing What You See AND What You Don't

Instructor: Kelly Foss

Let's learn to draw realism, but not be limited by it. One of the best things about making art is taking control of your creative choices. Students will build solid techniques while drawing their hand and a statue and learning to draw what they see. Then students will be shown how to breathe new life into their art, drawing by dreaming and design.

Workshop 2: Spontaneous Watercolor Landscapes

Instructor: Steve Mitchell

Steve's spontaneous landscape painting is a process of playing with watercolor in a largely unplanned way. It began as a way to test supplies and techniques with little pressure to produce a finished work. Eventually it became a game of trying to pick out landscape forms and sometimes produce a finished painting. It provides a fun, stress-free and exciting approach to experimenting, often leading to unexpected discoveries.

Workshop 3: Rendering the Human Face with Different Mediums

Instructor: Hazylle Mae

In this workshop we'll walk through the process of drawing and painting portraits, all the way from learning basic head anatomy to painting and sketching a fully rendered picture. We will use different mediums to get to know the human face together and in the end you'll be able to get comfortable with drawing and painting portraits on your own.

Workshop 4: Colorful Watercolor Sketchbooking

Instructor: Jane Beata

Let's fill the pages of your sketchbook while focusing on 4 subjects: botanicals, animals, landscapes and portraits. Jane will introduce basic watercolor techniques and watercolor special effects which you'll learn how to apply in unexpected ways to create mesmerizing paintings. Ultimately, this workshop will inspire you to experiment with your sketchbook and create a regular, colorful, and creative painting habit.

Don't have time to watch the lessons this year? All the videos will be moved to our *YouTube channel* in January of 2024! Subscribe so you don't miss any videos!

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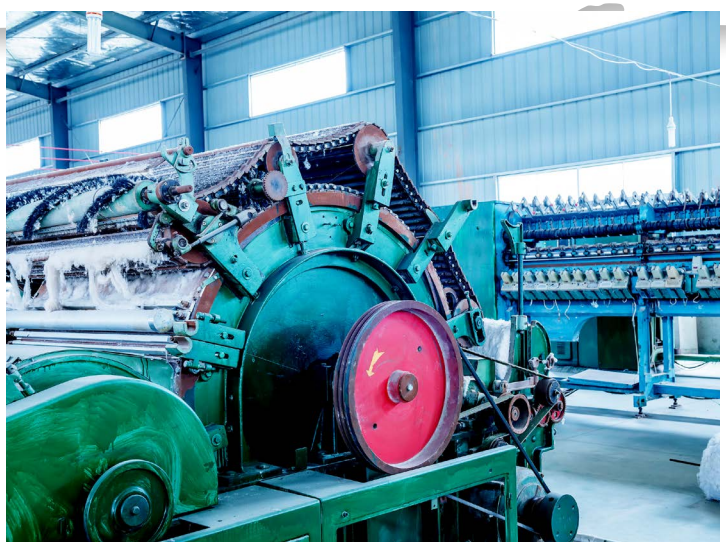
WHERE DO PAPER MANUFACTURERS SOURCE THEIR FIBERS FROM?

There are 2 main fiber sources: Mills that do their own pulping and create virgin fibers and Mills that turn recycled fibers into pulp

1. MILLS THAT DO THEIR OWN PULPING AND CREATE VIRGIN FIBERS

Logs being debarked



Cotton ginning machine

Log Mills - These mills bring logs in from tree farms. The logs are debarked and chipped, then prepped though finishing processes to turn them into pulp. The pulp then gets sent to a paper manufacturer to go through the full papermaking process.

Cotton Mills - Cotton plants are put through the ginning process to separate the cotton from the seed. The cotton gets prepped through a few processes to turn it into pulp; cooking, washing, screening, and beating. Then it gets sent to the paper manufacturer to go through the full papermaking process.

2. MILLS THAT TURN RECYCLED FIBERS INTO PULP

Paper Scraps

Pulp fiber sheets to be used for papermaking

Some mills turn excess materials like recycled office papers, textile mill clippings, papermaking trimmings, and recycled newspapers & magazines into pulp. Just like virgin fibers, recycled materials are prepped in various ways to create pulp; mostly by beating and compressing the fibers together.

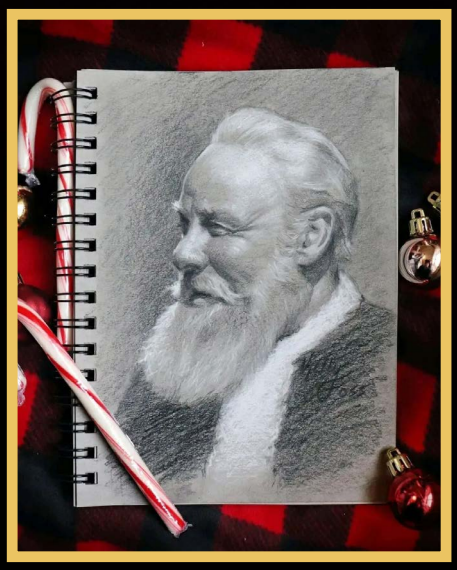
After the pulp fibers are formed: - Regardless of the type of fibers used and manner in which they were formed, the pulp sheets get sent to paper manufacturers to go through the entire papermaking process. The pulp fiber sheets are put in a pulper, then beaten down and combined with water and other additives depending on the type of fine art paper being made. From there they continue on the machine through the rest of the papermaking process.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FULL PAPERMAKING PROCESS.

Happy Holidays!

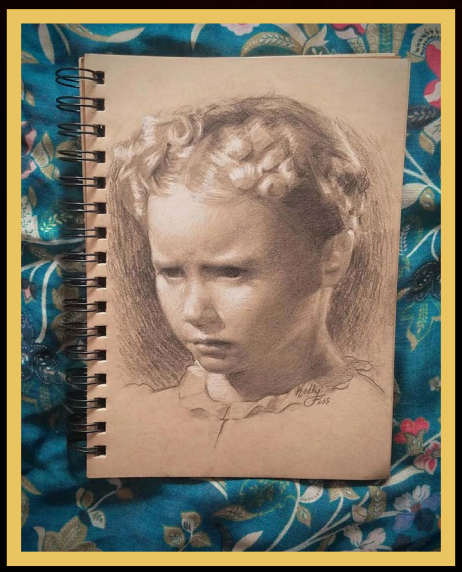
Artist Spotlight: Strathmore Ambassador Kelly Foss

Beneath the glow of twinkling light, an artist's hand renders delight.
With iconic characters in our hearts so dear, Kelly brings the holiday cheer.



Edmund Gwen as Kris Kringle in *Miracle on 34th Street*

Macaulay Culkin as Kevin McCallister in *Home Alone*



Karolyn Grimes as Zuzu in *It's a Wonderful Life*

Kelly is a realism artist living in New York City. Kelly studied old masters' methods for 4+ years, drawing and oil painting from life. Nowadays she specializes in portraiture and figurative art, sometimes mixing impressionism or whimsy in with her realism.

Learn more about Kelly Here

Instagram: *@kellyfossart*
Website: *kellyfoss.com*
TikTok: *@kellyfossart*
Youtube: *Kelly Foss Art*