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Strathmore®
ARTIST NEWSLETTER

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2026 Online Workshops

Workshop 1 with Justin Maas is now open!



Oil Painting Pads

Take a look at this convenient alternative to canvas.



Artist How To Series

Join Artist Chris Straver in creating a fantasy ink illustration



Art FAQ

What are the main factors to increase longevity?

MAIN FEATURE

Step by Step Acrylic Goauche Portrait

By Jordan Rhodes



This past winter was the first time since I moved to Rhode Island in 2022 that we actually had a "real" winter complete with several storms that dropped feet of snow and weeks of subfreezing weather that reminded me of the winters I used to experience growing up in the Northeast. I currently live in a loft with wide open space and big windows, so in the winter sometimes it is just faster to throw on a jacket and hat to stay warm while waiting for the space to heat up. It's also cheaper on the electric bill too!

Those cold, snowed-in days gave me the chance to really dive into some studio work. I am working on one of my favorite surfaces which is the *Strathmore 500 Series Mixed Media Art Journal*. I love this paper because it is 100% cotton, so it accepts water-based media very well like some of my favorites being watercolor, gouache, and acrylic gouache. Additionally, the paper has smooth, subtly textured finish that makes it easy to create distinct and block brushstrokes that is signature to my style. I also love painting on two-page spreads for more of a cinematic widescreen feel. It can be a fun challenge to arrange the piece in such a way that the most important elements of the painting do not end up in the gutter between the two pages. I usually try to strategically place elements away from the gutter or easy to paint things in the gutter.





For the reference photo I snapped a quick photo on my iPad using the selfie camera. The reference image was not the greatest quality, but I have found over the years that low quality reference photos sometimes result in my favorite paintings because a lot of the details are left up for interpretation by me. I have to fill in the blanks and add my own input by me rather than copying exactly what I am seeing. Also, I took a few pictures and use elements of each that I liked the most rather than just one. The overall color scheme was fun to work with as well as it was a night scene with the portrait being illuminated from my art desk lighting set up that I use to record videos with. It creates nice soft and even lighting on my paper but since that light is shining on my desk and not me directly it creates a soft bounce light and rather flat lighting situation. This can be a fun challenge because you have to tune your eyes to see all the subtle value and color shifts to help the portrait read in an interesting way without relying on an interesting and dramatic light set up complete with well defined shadow patterns. Also, the colors overall are muted in general so that is also a fun challenge and can create a more harmonious image.

Initial sketch. I like to draw with a regular ballpoint pen just to create a roadmap of the key shapes and features of the painting. No need to worry about shading or too many details at this stage.

1





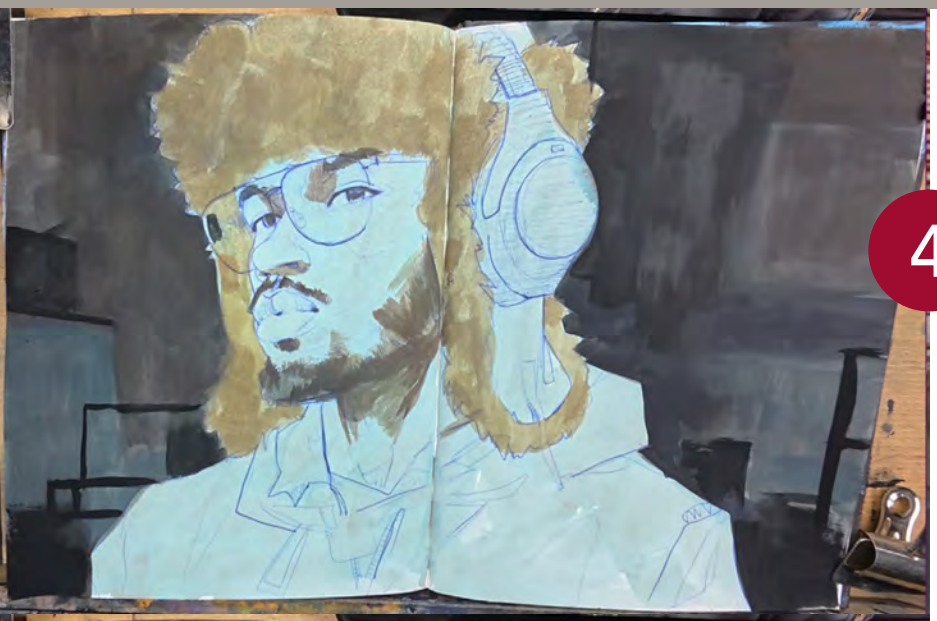
2

After the drawing, I like to start painting with a single unifying color to use as the base layer. I went with a teal mint green color that I mixed from my already dirty pallet. I didn't overthink this color too much, I just wanted a cool color in general because all the skin tone colors that I will fall into the warm range so by having the cool under painting it would help to compliment that.

After the underpainting, I painted the background of the image. I like to get in the dark background early so that it will help me with selecting colors for the portrait later on because I have the context needed. Color and value relationships are contextual so they will appear different to the eye depending on the colors around them.

3





4

Next, I start placing the general color of the hat fur that I see along with some of the dark landmarks on the face . As I start layering with more opaque paint the drawing underneath can start to get lost, so I like to reinforce the landmarks as I am building up the layers.



5

Initial skin tone swatches are applied to the paper. I am just trying to get into the ballpark but not worried too much about getting the exact colors I see on the first attempt. Acrylic gouache changes color when it dries so the initial layers are just to see what the paint will end up looking like once it is dried on the page.

Other elements like the headphones and jacket initial layers are added as well. More layering is added to the face, making adjustments now that I know what the paint looks like after it dries. I like to think of painting as layering sections of color together like a puzzle to make something that hopefully reads like I want it to.



6

The main challenge I wanted to tackle in this painting was to achieve the illusion of texture in the furry hat in an implied way without physical drawing every strand of fur in the hat. To do so I tried using a fan brush *(Princeton Velvetouch Fan 20/0)*, which I almost never use. It worked somewhat but I struggled to get directional fur texture that would help it to read as fur. Then I tried a Filbert grainer *(Princeton Velvetouch Filbert Grainer 3/8")*. This turned out to be the key for me.





I started with a dark area of paint for the shadows of the fur and then painted over top of it with the grainer brush with an opaque lighter fur colored paint. The nice thing about acrylic goauche is that you can paint on top of dark colors with light or vice versa. You have that same flexibility as regular gouache, but you just have to be careful when applying the paint so as to not disturb the paint below. You don't have to worry about that with acrylic gouache though after the initial layer completely dries because it doesn't reactivate.

One more layering pass to build and carve out the shapes that I want before finishing up with small details like highlights, reflections, hairs to tie everything together. And with that, the painting is complete! With nice weather just around the corner, when I look back on this painting I will definitely remember the cold winter we just had and will appreciate the warmer months even more!



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jordan Rhodes transitioned to an art career after earning a Ph.D. in chemistry. While in graduate school, he rekindled his passion for art and now specialized in portraiture, life drawing, and plein air painting. Jordan primarily works with traditional water-based media like gouache and watercolor but also enjoys using digital tools as well as oil paint.

Website: *jordanmrhodes.com* | Instagram: *@jmr_art* | Youtube: *@jmr_art*

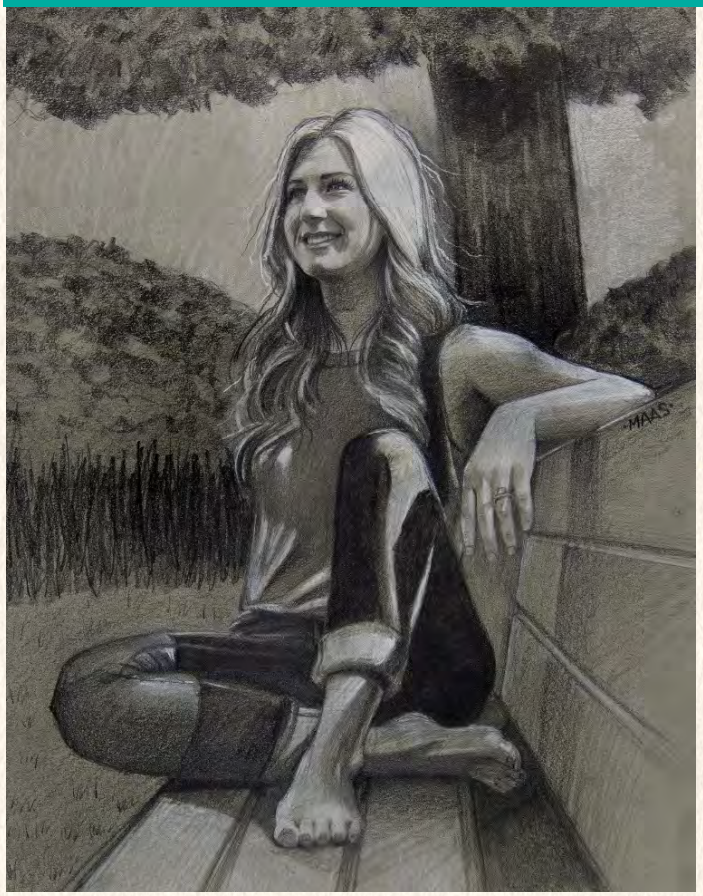
Strathmore® ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

Join us for Strathmore's **FREE** 2026 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 releases, it remains on the site for viewing the rest of the year. #StrathmoreWorkshops

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

Workshops start February 2 and continue through December 31, 2026



WORKSHOP 1 NOW OPEN

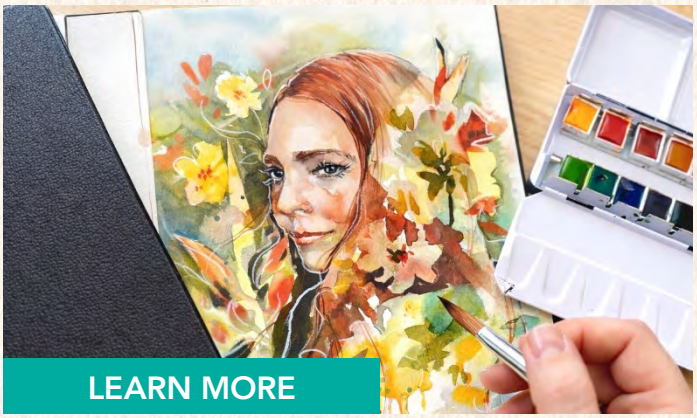
Radiant Figures: Drawing with Drama & Light

Instructor: Justin Maas

Learn to draw luminous, sunlit figures with Justin Maas. In this workshop, you'll master the clothed figure: from selecting references and blocking in the form to using value, contrast, and highlights to create a radiant, dynamic portrait. With just a few pencils and toned paper, you'll bring captivating figures to life.

Lesson 1: Intro, Materials, and Quick Sketches
Lesson 2: Blocking in & Basic Values
Lesson 3: Creating a Hierarchy of Values
Lesson 4: Finalizing Values, Adding Details & Finishing the Drawing

WATCH HERE



LEARN MORE

Workshop 2: *Painting Faces & Florals: A Stylized Watercolor Series*

Instructor: Jane Beata
Start Date: July 6, 2026



LEARN MORE

Workshop 3: *The Joyful Sketchbook: Watercolor Movement & Shine*

Instructor: Sarah Simon @themintgardener
Start Date: October 5, 2026



400 SERIES OIL PAINTING PADS

A Convenient Alternative to Canvases

Skip the prep and get straight to painting. Strathmore 400 Series Oil Painting Pads offer a convenient alternative to canvas with no gesso needed. Just tear out a sheet and start painting.

Perfect for artists with limited studio space, these pads give you the freedom to paint without storing bulky canvases, making them ideal for smaller workspaces or travel.

Each sheet features a heavyweight (215lb/350g/m^2) linen-textured surface that mimics traditional canvas, giving your brushstrokes something to grip while allowing for smooth blending and rich, layered color. Whether you're working in oils or oil pastels, it's a surface designed for finished, display-worthy artwork.

Item #	Size	Sheets
P430-309	9 x 12"	10
P430-312	12 x 12"	10
P430-318	18 x 24"	10

Strathmore®

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Appleton, WI 54913
strathmoreartist.com



ARTIST how-to series

MOONLIT INK ILLUSTRATION

WITH CHRIS STRAVER

Join artist Chris Straver for a three-part ink illustration tutorial series that takes you from the first sketch to a finished moonlit fantasy scene on toned paper. Each video breaks down a key stage of the process: clean inking, controlled shading with ink, and bright white highlights that bring the snow and moonlight to life. Learn how to plan a strong composition, build depth with value, and finish with crisp accents for a polished final piece.

MATERIALS:

- Strathmore *400 Series Toned Tan Mixed Media* Paper
- Daler-Rowney Calli India Ink (Jet Black)
- Daler-Rowney *FW Acrylic Ink* (Payne's Grey & Crimson)
- Daler-Rowney *System3 Ink* (Titanium White)
- Daler-Rowney *FW Paint Markers* (0.8 mm nibs)
- Lyra Rembrandt Polycolor Pencil (White)
- Princeton *Neptune Brushes* (sizes 0, 2, 4)
- Graphite Pencil, eraser, masking tape, ruler

FOLLOW ALONG HERE

LESSON 1: SKETCH



LESSON 2: SHADE



LESSON 3: HIGHLIGHTS





PRODUCT FAQ: LONGEVITY

Q: How do I ensure my art will last over time?

Paper permanence is essential for long-lasting artwork. The biggest threat is acid, which breaks down fibers, causing brittleness and yellowing. All Strathmore papers are acid free except Newsprint, which is intended to be a very inexpensive practice paper. For best longevity, consider not just the paper, but everything that comes into contact with it: materials, water, framing, and environment.

Key factors that affect permanence:

HUMIDITY

Too low a humidity increases paper brittleness. Too high a humidity increases the chance of mold. Cycling (temperature/ humidity fluctuations) weakens and breaks down paper fibers by causing fibers to expand and contract due to the water contained within them. On average 5% of water remains in a finished sheet of paper after the paper making process is complete, so think of paper as being alive...it can be affected by changes in the environment.

MATERIALS

Paper permanence refers not only to the acidic level of the finished sheet of paper, but also to factors that affect the paper like. paints, oils, fixatives, and other media. These can impact longevity, so choose archival-quality options.

ACID

Use acid free paper and materials whenever possible.

LIGHT

Sunlight fades all color. Ultraviolet and fluorescent light accelerates fading. Light energy is converted into heat and a minute amount is absorbed by paper, causing fibers to become brittle. Be sure to protect your artwork from the sun and hang it where it won't be directly exposed to sunlight. Consider installing UV shields on fluoursecent lights to prevent accelerated fading.

TEMPERATURE

Typically a lower storage temperature of paper makes it last longer (although extreme cold can cause brittleness). The life of paper is doubled with every decrease of 10˚ F. Too hot of a temperature can cause mold. In general, the average room temperature range is safe, and it's best to keep artwork in a place where there won't be a 20˚F fluctuation within a 24 hour time period.

STORAGE

The main consideration is not to let anything acidic touch your paper. Acid free interleafing can be used to store artwork. Acid free tissue paper is a cost effective option. Glassine paper can also be used, or museum barrier paper. They all prevent acid from touching your paper. Do not use a stiff cardboard container to crate your portfolio as the acid in the cardboard can enter your paper. Consider making a container out of either an acid free illustration board or acid free mat board.