

Pots & Pans

A new line of soft pastels offers a unique addition to your pastel arsenal.



Photo courtesy of Colorfin LLC

Imagine holding a compact of pressed, cosmetic powder in your hand. Instead of finding a bland color inside, though, imagine a brilliant turquoise, purple or green pastel. You're now on your way to understanding an exciting new development in pastel. Assuredly not for your face, PanPastels are meant to be used as an adjunct to traditional stick pastels, yet with them come some unique and appealing possibilities of their

own. Developed by Ladd Forsline and packaged in round plastic pans that screw into a neat, portable stack, PanPastels are made with high-quality artists' pigments with minimal binder that results in low-dust soft pastel. They're currently offered in sets of five, 10 and 20 basic colors, with shades and tints of each, as well as grays, black and white.

For those frustrated with the dust pastels generate or the messy aftermath

PanPastels package the pigment in flat plastic pans.

Product Spotlight

The PanPastels Toolbox



Using Sofft-brand sponges and foam-covered applicators minimizes mess. See examples of strokes and blending achieved with these tools on the opposite page.

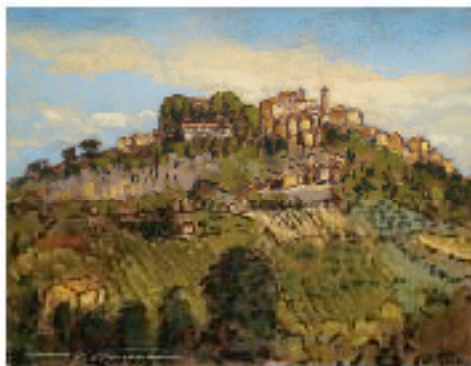
Photo courtesy of Colorfin, LLC



This is Alan Flattmann sketching the Italian hilltown, Montepulciano, just a few weeks ago.

Where can you buy these fantastic pastels?

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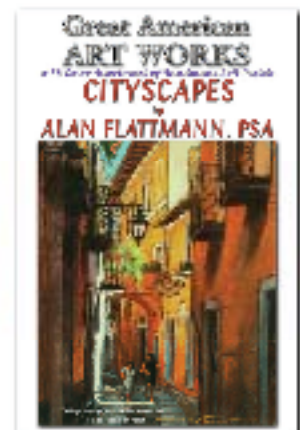


This is Alan's finished sketch.

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These are the pastels Alan used to make this beautiful picture.



I experimented with an oval pad sponge applicator on a piece of Brenda Mattson paper from Jack Richeson & Co., which is softly textured. It was useful for suggesting petals or leaf shapes, and the overlapping strokes increased the opacity of the pastel.



The rounded tip sponge applicator, combined with the long edge, is quite useful and makes blending with these soft pads easy.



Repeated strokes using the long edge of the wedge pad can easily be used to make grassy strokes of color. The long and short edges can each create different lengths, and a variety of colors result from overlapping.

PanPastels can be applied to paper with a variety of Sofft-brand sponges in different shapes and sizes, as well as faux palette knives with replaceable foam covers designed to help keep your fingers out of the pastel (see photo on opposite page). A nice range of dense, soft foam sponges, both large and small, and round to wedge-shaped, enable you to apply both a wide, sharp-edged path and a soft-sided circular stroke.

A smaller tool I particularly liked was the rounded sponge bar. I found the long flat axis gave some sharp edges, while the rounded tip created circles, ellipses or half-moons of color. The angle-shaped flat sponge made long, fine lines using the edge and grabbed significantly more pigment when it was needed, while the big oval sponge created wonderfully blended areas on the paper.

The plastic palette knives come in round, flat, oval and pointed shapes, with little foam sock-like covers to place over the tip. The foam is somewhat fragile and will abrade if used too aggressively on

sanded papers, but works very well on textured or soft papers. You can use the flat foam socks on flexible-tipped shapers as well, and Sofft™ has its own

shaper available. A miniature applicator like those used for applying eyeshadow is also quite useful for dabbing in smaller dots of color.

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Product Spotlight

Indigo Mesa (14x10)

My experiment with Arches Rives BFK printing paper was satisfying in that the delicate transparency of the PanPastel colors worked well.

At one point I erased the section of the foreground (in the detail at far right) and found that I could recover with fresh colors without leftover ghosting from the previous colors.



left on hands, the relatively clean application of PanPastels offers an appealing option. Personally, long since reconciled with dust and mess issues, I find that the most significant benefit of PanPastels involves the technical issue of opacity vs. transparency. If you've longed to achieve a passage in pastel with the sensitive subtlety of watermedia, and construct delicate layers of color while retaining the light of the paper shining through, PanPastels will delight you.

Support System

I experimented with several different papers to see what PanPastels would do. Beginning *alla prima*, I dove in using a piece of white Art Spectrum. As I'm used to placing juicy strokes on this sandpaper, it took a while before I appreciated the weightless transparency of the individual strokes. I fought to achieve a crisp skyline, but soon realized that the strength of this new approach was in its ability to create complex colors and interesting textures in the foreground.

More familiar to me was the white professional-grade Wallis sandpaper. Using charcoal, I made a grayscale rendering on it, over which I lightly layered PanPastels to achieve an underpainting that appeared similar to watercolor. The final pass using traditional stick pastels resulted in an appealing tonalist look. Leaving some very thin applications of PanPastel uncovered resulted in effective reflections (see opposite page).

I also experimented on the less-textured, "back" side of a pearl-gray Canson Mi-Tientes, without layering—which created an effect much like watercolor—and finally tried a piece of tan Arches Rives BFK printing paper that further enhanced the colors, thus allowing the paper's color to influence everything (see images above).

Making A Mark

Throughout these experiments, I tried various means of application. The applicators, which are sold separately, are very useful tools in their own right (see "The PanPastels Toolbox," on pages 14 and 15), providing the means for a great variety of strokes. Remarkably, I found that the pans weren't

easily polluted with other colors as long as I remembered to lightly wipe off the applicator before swiping the next pan. If I did contaminate a pan, it was equally easy to rub any offending color with a large, clean applicator sponge. Incidentally, I also found that these larger applicators created a very satisfying swath of color that blended nicely. This can be used as a means of overall toning, especially if you plan to begin with a blend of several colors.

If you've wanted the ability to erase what's been applied to the paper and begin anew without more than a ghost of color left behind, you'll be thrilled with these pastels. The color is virtually gone—especially if you take care not to abrade softer or more delicate papers with too much rubbing. Further possibilities include using an electric eraser to pick out delicate details from a field of color, if needed, or using a chamois to softly feather colors together.

If you'd like less mess and cleaner hands at the end of the day, you'll be very satisfied with these pastels. Their almost creamy consistency seems to

Continues on page 18



Granite Tranquility (17x11)

Here you see two stages of the same painting. In the top image, I've drawn the shapes on Wallis sandpaper using charcoal and then put down a light layer of Pan-Pastel color to establish values and under-color. I then used traditional stick pastels over this layer to achieve some interesting tonal colors. The reflections remain (see bottom image) through thin applications of sheer PanPastel colors.

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Product Spotlight

greatly reduce the amount of dust, although as it's applied there will be some fall-off, as in any pastel painting. Gossamer-thin layers may be slowly built up into beefier colors. Lean layers also invite a light spritzing of fixative to hold them in place, depending on the depth and textural qualities of the paper you're using.

This innovation in pastel presents possibilities for many different applications and methods. I look forward to seeing the many new directions it will take our medium. 

Deborah Secor (www.deborahsecor.com) is an artist, workshop instructor and regular contributor to *The Pastel Journal*. She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Product information

\$5.99 per 9-ml pan; \$24.95 for set of five; \$44.95 for set of 10; \$89.95 for set of 20. Contact: 484/646-9900; www.panpastel.com



Photo courtesy of Colorfin LLC

See a video demonstration of PanPastels with Ladd Forsline at the International Association of Pastel Societies convention last May at www.pasteljournal.com/videos.

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