

Soft Pastels – Useful Information

Recommended Soft Pastels

- Unison My favourite pastel, hand made and a superb selection of colours, unlike other manufacturers these are not loaded with black and white for the tones and are produced in colour ‘notes’ the main advantage is that they mix true and don’t produce muddy/sludgy messes. The average price is £1.45 each, however they are a good size and not too soft so that they crumble too easily.
- Sennelier - Hand made pastel with some exciting colours especially in the pinks and vermilion’s – a must if you paint flowers. Very useful is the No: 177 an intense dark green, they are very crumbly and the price is dependent on the exchange rate around £1.40 each. Also available in metallic and iridescent colours.
- Schminke Extremely soft pastels, superb for highlights, I find their white the purest for highlighting sunlight on the edge of clouds etc, they also have some good sludgy grey greens that are useful – they are the softest and most expensive at about £1.70 each
- Art Spectrum Useful Australian rich darks – rather inconsistent sometimes however exciting to try and they are bringing out new colours (see art magazines for details of stockists)
- Pastel Pencils Very useful for drawing, sketching and fine lines, variety of manufacturers, I prefer the Faber-Castell PITT Pastel pencil, around 95p each, they work well with traditional pastels.

Recommended Surfaces

- Canson Mi Tientes Good quality paper, I use the smooth side to avoid the cellulite look, wide variety of colours ~ £1.30 per sheet.
- Somerset Velvet My preferred paper, superb quality 280lb weight and more importantly both sides are smooth! The only problem is that

it is only retailed in ‘pochettes’ of about A4 size and a variety of colours, however I am able to purchase it (*minimum order 100 sheets!*) in full sheets. I prefer the buff colour, black for drama or the white if I wish to pre tint the paper, price from me approx £2.00 per sheet.

Pastel Card Superb surface to work on however it is crushed, dyed cork blown on to an adhesive surface, if it gets wet the surface comes off. Around £4.25 a sheet.

Glass Paper The surface I regularly use, these are made for industry not as an art paper, be careful not to use the papers with the ‘self cleaning’ coating or non clogging ‘round’ particles of glass as the pastel sheds off. Price approx £3.80 per sheet 550 x 760 mm. The most reliable stockist is Framework Art & Craft of Swindon Tel/Fax 01793 513069 they currently stock 2 types 713E P400 Beige and 991C P500 Blue/Grey – finer wet & dry paper.

Primers Art Spectrum make a Colour Fix Abrasive Primer which will give any type of paper a tooth to accept soft pastel, I currently use the clear version on my own hand made paper. It also comes in 16 colours – approx £7 per 250mm tub – also available as sheets 500 x 700mm approx £4 per sheet.

With the renaissance of soft pastels in the last few years there are many more surfaces and pastels available. I would suggest you avoid the velvet cards and papers as these require a good deal of fixative to keep the pastel on the surface – and the colours will be affected. I haunt art shops when I’m on holiday and have found some useful and interesting soft pastels and papers, and some awful ones!! *You just need to experiment!!*

Reliable mail order companies are Art Express, contact 0800 7314185 www.artexpress.co.uk, and Jackson’s Art Supplies on 0870 241 1849 www.jacksonart.com for free catalogues their prices are usually the most competitive and they offer free delivery on orders over £35 or so.