

## Work towards Understanding Colour with Soft Pastels

Finding the right colour is often a problem, we can spend a fortune gathering up lots of pastels then suddenly we find we just haven't got the "right" colour however, there are lots of ways we can achieve the colour we need by using application techniques such as blending, hatching and optical mixing – placing colours close to one another so the eye does the mixing.

The following exercise will help you to understand how colours effect and relate to one another, and what is meant by Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Neutral Colours.

**Primary Colours** – Red, Blue and Yellow – these are colours cannot be achieved by mixing, however there is no such thing as a pure colour, each one will have a bias towards hot or cool. If we say that basically Red is hot and Blue is cold you will notice that each of the primaries will have a bias towards either red or blue.

**Secondary Colours** – more or less equal mixtures of 2 Primary Colours

**Tertiary Colours** – contain all 3 primary colours in various mixes, these include the greys, browns, ochres, olives ~ the colours of the land, shadows etc.

**Neutral Colours** – the 'purest' contain all 3 primary colours in **equal** mix, so the darker the primary the darker the neutral also they will vary according to the tonal value of each primary, found mostly in shadows.

For this exercise use a quality mid tone pastel paper or glass paper. Mistakes are so easy, however with a quality paper you can cover your mistakes by brushing off the surplus and then placing in the colour you feel is right, you may wish to change colours under different light circumstances.

- 1 Sort out your Primaries and Secondary colours these are the bright clean colours that appear in the rainbow, simplify them by eliminating the lightest and darkest (these often have black or white in them to darken/lighten).
- 2 Make a circle on the paper, about 8" diameter, divide the circle into  $\frac{1}{4}$ 's then each section into three to give you 12 segments. (*Use an ordinary pencil*)
- 3 Start at the top and clockwise mark out the segments **Red** ♦ *red orange* ♦ **Orange** ♦ *yellow orange* ♦ **Yellow** ♦ *yellow green* ♦ **Green** ♦ *green blue* ♦ **Blue** ♦ *blue violet* ♦ **Purple** ♦ *red violet*
- 4 **Primaries** at the red segment select your purest looking Red – make a decision as to whether it is warm or cold, if it looks a bit warm then put it towards the yellow, a cool one will need to go towards blue. Then place one of the opposite temperature next to it within the segment, repeat this with Blue and Yellow so each primary segment 2 versions of the primary colour - warm version and a cold version.
- 5 Now bring in the **Secondaries**, orange, green and purple halfway between each of the corresponding primaries you now have  $\frac{1}{2}$  the wheel complete so filling the segments with the appropriate colour until the whole of the outer ring is complete. Don't worry if some white spaces remain they will indicate a colour you need to complete your range.
- 6 Now starts the real fun or testing time placing the tertiary colours, make a mark in the centre of the wheel and put in your most balanced looking grey in the centre, then locate those colours closest to grey or brown or tan very close to the centre. Next look for your brightest tertiary colours and place these near the Primary/Secondary Rim, think carefully **each tertiary colour contains some of each primary** so an olive green which is mostly green with a hint of orange will belong near the green edge but a little way in, how near will the brown go – is it a red/brown or a yellow/brown? How close to a neutral is it? Remember a complete neutral is created with equal mixes of the three primaries.

As with all exercises, don't get bogged down and feel that you **have** to do it **straight away**, once you have worked on the outer rim, put it away then complete it at your leisure – keep it close to you and add bits to it as you are working. Remember no 2 people see each colour exactly the same – **this is fact** – make this colour wheel personal to **YOU!** Enjoy it ..... and use it!