

Work towards Understanding Colour - using Soft Pastel

Understanding colour can be quite a nightmare – everyone perceives colour differently. Colour is affected by other colours in close proximity, and, of course the light. 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 the colour wheel sheet provided, the paper will not take masses of pastel however as pastel is opaque you can cover your mistakes by brushing off the surplus until you feel the placement of each colour is right.

- 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 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, continue with the rest of the primaries so each segment has a warm version and a cold version.
- 3 Now bring in the secondaries, orange, green and purple halfway between each of the corresponding primaries ~ once again notice the bias and place it closer to the appropriate colour, you now have ½ the wheel complete so continue on until the whole of the outer ring is complete. Don't worry if some white spaces remain they will indicate some colours you need to complete your range.
- 4 Now comes the real fun and testing time - placing the tertiary colours, make a mark in the centre of the wheel and put in your most balanced looking grey then locate those colours closest to grey or brown or tan very close to the centre.
- 5 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 remembering that a 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 or perhaps redraw the circle on a piece of pastel paper. Then complete it – keep it close to you and add bits to it as you are working. Remember no 2 people see each colour exactly the same – **fact** – make this colour wheel personal to **YOU!** and use it.