

# Studio Arts Teach Yourself Series

## Topic 4: Materials, Techniques and Processes (Units 1, 2, 3 & 4)

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# Materials, techniques and processes

In all units of Studio Arts, you will need to further your understanding of materials, techniques and processes to make your own artworks. In units 1, 2 and 3, you will also need to apply this understanding to artists that you study. Unit 4 will need you to link the materials with their particular conservation needs.

Artworks can be made out of many different things. This booklet will cover some of the more popular mediums and some of the terminology you can use for each one.

## *Drawing*

### *As it appears in Unit 1, 2, 3 & 4*

Techniques such as **smudging**, **layering**, **blending**, **burnishing**, **stippling**, **hatching**, **cross-hatching** and **scumbling** can be used in drawing. When using some of the drawing mediums, it is wise to rest your hand on a clean piece of paper so you do not smudge to work underneath or transfer colour to other areas of your paper. Once you have finished your work, it is also wise to spray it with a **fixative** to minimize damage after completion.

#### *Grey lead and coloured pencils*

Also known as **graphite**, grey lead pencils can be used to **under draw** your ideas, or as a way to produce a finished artwork. They come in different sizes and have different effects. B stands for **BOLD** or **BLACKNESS** and these are used to make darker marks on your paper. B pencils are harder to erase the higher their number, so these are best to use once you know what your image will look like. H stands for **HARDNESS** and are lighter in their outcome. A good pencil to start your drawing with is a 2H or HB, as these are the mid-way point between the two gradings.

Coloured pencils are binders and pigments that are contained within a wooden casing. They can be layered to create a multitude of colours and a depth to your artwork. Coloured pencils are harder to erase than grey lead pencils.

#### *Charcoal*

Charcoal, is as the name suggests, burnt wood. There are two types- **willow** and **compressed**. Willow is the twigs of the willow tree and are very brittle. Compressed charcoal is where charcoal powder is pushed together with a binder to make it form a hard rectangular piece of charcoal. A technique for charcoal is to colour the page with charcoal and then use an eraser to create the image.

#### *Pastels*

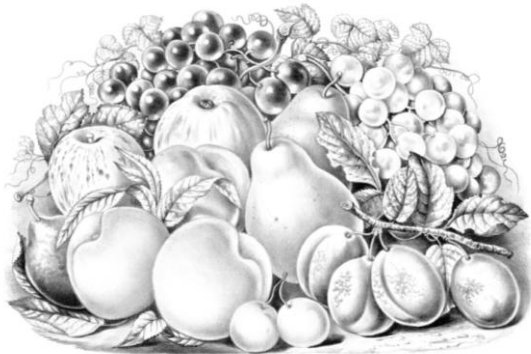
There are two types of pastels- **oil** or **dry**. Dry pastels are similar to chalk, whereas coloured pigments have been added to oil to create oil pastels. Both come in a wide variety of colours, but are very different to use.

#### *Ink*

Ink comes in many different colours and can be used with a number of tools. These include **ballpoint pens**, **fine liners**, **textas**, **copic markers**, **pen nibs for dipping** and **brushes**. Water can be added to the ink to dilute the colour.

## Review Question

1. The following artwork was drawn with grey lead pencil.



Discuss the materials, techniques and processes the artist may have used in the creation of this artwork.

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## Painting

### As it appears in Units 1, 2, 3 & 4

Paints can be applied in a number of different ways. Obviously you can use a **brush** which come in many different shapes and sizes. Shapes can include **flat**, **rounded** and **chiselled** edges, as well as **fan** shaped. Each of these will give a different look to how your paint is applied. For example, a flat brush is perfect to use when painting straight edges. But you can also use a **palette knife**, **sponge**, **roller**, **scrapers**, **spray can** and **stencils**. In fact, the only limitation is your imagination when it comes to putting paint onto a surface!

### Acrylic Paint

This is a water based medium that is very user friendly because it dries very quickly. Acrylic paint is what you will find in most art classrooms, as it can be bought in large quantities quite cheaply. However, more expensive acrylic paints give a nicer finish to your work. **Impasto mediums** can be added to acrylic paint to make it thicker, as it generally does not give as much texture and form to your artworks as other paint types.

### *Oil paint*

As the name suggests, oil is mixed with coloured pigments to create this paint. This means it is not water soluble and so the cleaning process for your brushes will be different. You will need turpentine or commercial brush cleaner to do this. Oil paint retains its form when it dries and thus gives good texture to artworks. However, **linseed oil** or **turpentine** can be added to it to make it smoother. The canvas that oil paint is applied to must be **primed** with **gesso** beforehand. This is so the oils do not bleed into the fibres of the canvas and it also gives a firmer surface to paint onto.

Two techniques that you can use when working with oil paints are **wet-on-wet** and **wet-on-dry**. Wet-on-wet is when a layer of oil paint does not dry before the next layer is applied. This means that the colours will blend together. Wet-on-dry (or **Alla Prima**) is when the under layer is allowed to dry before the next coat is applied. Colours will not blend in this instance and more height will be created.

Oil paints take a long time to dry. When linseed oil is added to the paint, it becomes **fatter** and takes longer to dry. When turpentine is added the paint becomes **leaner** and is not as thick as the turpentine breaks down the oil content. This means it will dry quicker. As a result of this, the '**fat-on-lean**' rule must be followed, meaning lean layers are painted before fat layers. If the process is the other way around, the under layer will not dry before the lean layer is painted over the top and may cause cracking in the surface.

### *Watercolour paint*

Watercolour can come in compact dry cakes or as a paste in a tube. They are water soluble and the more water that is added, the thinner the colour is. Because you use a lot of water with this medium, specialised papers need to be used. These come in various thicknesses and qualities.

Some techniques include letting each layer dry completely and creating a **wash**, and adding substances such as **rice** and **salt** onto the paper to create different effects. You can also use **masking fluid** to block out areas that you want to remain white. This rubber based fluid is painted on and peels off easily once the paint is completely dry.

### *Spray paint*

You may wish to use spray paint in your studio practice. This requires some safety measures such as wearing a mask and spraying outside. This then becomes dependant on the weather, as if it is too windy, you won't be able to spray. So, always have a backup plan! It is also a good idea to wear gloves when spray painting because it does not come off your hands very easily.

You can use **stencils** to help create your image, but make sure you choose a suitable material to spray onto. Always spray from about 30cm away so that the paint doesn't start to run (unless this is the effect you want). Hosier Lane in Melbourne is a great example of spray painting and street art.

## ***Solutions to Review Questions***

1. The artist may have drawn this grey lead image through observation of real fruits. They may have completed short trial drawings to ascertain the correct composition, before starting on the final piece. The artist has used a combination of smudging with a blending stump and stippling on the fruit to create texture and form. In the leaves, the artist also used a darker hatching technique. The light source is kept consistent and this helps to define the form of the subject matter. Once the artwork was complete, it would have been sprayed with a fixative to avoid any further smudging.
2. The artist has used a wash technique with a paint brush to complete this piece. The areas of purple were completed first. When this was nearly dry, the lighter colours containing more water were added, slightly blending into the purple. Because of the amount of water in the lighter areas, the colours have marbled together and created a wash. The same colours were then randomly splattered around the edges of the feather. Finally, once the feather was completely dry, white paint was applied with a fine brush to accentuate the veins of the feather, adding form.