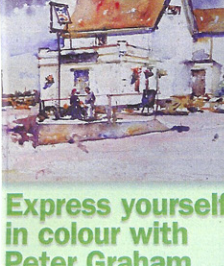


the artist

THE PRACTICAL MAGAZINE FOR ARTISTS BY ARTISTS – SINCE 1931

Capturing real people in everyday life



Express yourself in colour with Peter Graham

Create life and impact in your watercolours

Paint in oils with a palette knife

Try drawing in pen and ink

Follow Cheryl Culver's pastel demonstration

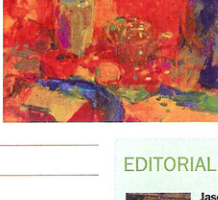
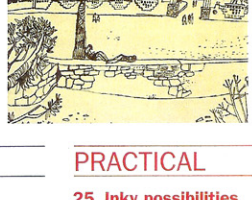


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PASTEL SHOWCASE 3

A walk on the dark side

Ken Gofton talks to two members of the Pastel Society who specialise in charcoal, although their drawings could hardly be more different

Susan Dakakni
Susan Dakakni was very much a pastels enthusiast for many years. It was only about four years ago that she began to use charcoal in a major way. It was, she says, a sudden breakthrough. She began doing some mood drawings, purely in black and white, and found that her clients really liked them. 'I find that charcoal lends itself very well to capturing mood and tone, and that's what I love about it,' she adds.

Life studies, woodland scenes and skies are her favourite subjects, but she is a versatile artist who also produces portraits, garden views and landscapes, sometimes incorporating wildlife. The sketchbooks she has completed over the years – a habit continued from art college – are full of drawings of cats, people in restaurants and on trains, and landscapes fleetingly captured through a car window. Her approach to life drawing is well illustrated in *Male Nude* (below), 'I begin working on the overall pose in very faint

charcoal, just getting the position right. When I'm happy with that, I start to work on the detail within the figure, working from the centre out, developing the form through the tones. I don't want my life drawings to become portraits. In this particular case, my focus was on the hands and feet. Although the outline appears strong, that is the very last to be drawn.'

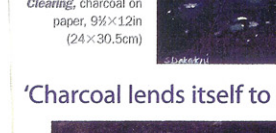
Landscapes
When it comes to landscape, Susan is more inclined to let her imagination loose. She was trained to observe, so there is a lot stored in her visual memory. And she's never afraid to improve on nature, regarding what she sees before her as merely the starting point. *Forest Clearing* (right) is a case in point. 'I did this one on the spot, although I shifted

things around,' she says. 'There is a subconscious feeling about what needs to be done to make a composition stronger. This drawing was very much about light, about the sun filtering into the foreground.'

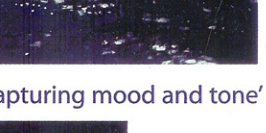
She developed *Birds over the Downs* (below) in a similar way, but working in the studio from sketches and her imagination – she doesn't copy sketches or other material – she simply influence her. She gets the idea down on paper, 'and then everything changes!' In this particular case, the birds were an invention, based on previous observations.



Susan Dakakni *Male Nude*, charcoal on paper, 21x17in (53.5x43cm)



Susan Dakakni *Forest Clearing*, charcoal on paper, 9x12in (24x30.5cm)



Susan Dakakni *Birds over the Downs*, charcoal on paper, 9x12in (24x30.5cm)

'Charcoal lends itself to capturing mood and tone'

PASTEL SHOWCASE 3

Colour
Finally, the mixed-media picture, *Moonlit Wood* (right), is entirely the product of her imagination. Susan has recently begun to introduce some colour to counter the black, although she doesn't find it easy to strike the right balance. On the whole, strong colours seem to be required. Here she laid down a darkish blue sky and yellow moon in watercolour before adding the silhouetted trees in charcoal. She used dabs of pastel to lighten the foreground, 'otherwise it would have been too dense.'

Roy Wright
Roy Wright used to paint in a range of media, but admits he is not a great colourist. When chance led to him picking up his daughter's box of charcoal, 'it just came naturally because I had spent years working in black and white for newspapers.'

He frequently works on a large scale, perhaps 36x52in (91.5x132cm), and in such detail that it prompts the question whether he sees things in a different way to many of us. But he laughs at this suggestion. 'My work has always been very detailed and precise,' he observes, 'so it is really just a question of time and patience.'

Roy particularly enjoys drawing trees, both singly and in woodland, but he has also drawn shire horses in the park, and objects he has found, such as chestnuts. Cityscapes provide his other main inspiration, and he often chooses a panoramic view from the top of a high building.

Roy works on either a heavy-grade watercolour paper, with some tooth, or



Moonlit Wood, watercolour, charcoal and pastel on paper, 13x13in (33x33cm)



Roy Wright *February Oak*, charcoal on paper, 34x50in (86.5x127cm)

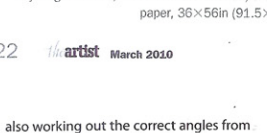
Khadi paper,* a hand-made cotton rag paper from India. He begins by laying out a row of thin charcoal sticks, all sharpened to a point with a blade. As one stick blunts, he moves to the next, until the line is finished and he has to re-sharpen. This method allows him to work for an hour or so without stopping.

To minimise the risk of smudging, he attaches the paper to a vertical board on his easel. 'If I have to get really close, I can rest on a support,' he adds. 'And if I do smudge – which I do – I can rub it out.'

The tree in *February Oak* (below left) is one of his favourites, and he has drawn it at different seasons. He works from sketches, made with a soft, 6B pencil or a pointed graphite stick to approximate the look he will get in the finished charcoal drawing.

He positions the trunk first, then develops the network of branches. His tree studies are made on Khadi paper, which allows him to achieve a deep black in the shadows. Roy doesn't hesitate to omit some branches or add others to improve the shape and composition. He likes to create the impression of being almost under the canopy of branches, which increases the emotional impact for his viewer.

All his big drawings represent weeks of work, and this is particularly true of his cityscapes. For its source material, he supplements quick studies with digital photographs. 'These pictures, such as *London, West from the Gherkin* (below), are like huge jigsaw puzzles,' Roy says. 'The first task is to position the main buildings correctly, getting the verticals right and



Roy Wright *London, West from the Gherkin*, charcoal on paper, 36x56in (91.5x142cm)



Roy Wright *London, West from the Gherkin*, charcoal on paper, 36x56in (91.5x142cm)

also working out the correct angles from one landmark to another. Then the smaller buildings and streets can be added. 'I use the sky to aid the composition. In the case of the Gherkin, the clouds recede in a V-shape, and from dark to light, towards the horizon, which aids the feeling of perspective.'

Roy has also made a number of large-scale drawings of sweet chestnuts (below), another difficult subject. As he explains, 'By taking something that is 3in (7.5cm) wide and making it 36in (91.5cm) wide, you are almost making a different object of it. The first task is to make the shells convincingly round, before developing the spines, which point in all directions. 'This can be very frustrating. The one thing to remember is that no-one can argue to you that you have exactly the right number of spines or they are exactly the right length. They just have to be realistic enough to convince the viewer.'



Roy Wright *Sweet Chestnuts*, charcoal on paper, 28x37in (71x94cm)

*Khadi Papers, Chichester PO18 9HU. Telephone 01243 535314; www.khadi.com

A home for dry media
Both Roy Wright and Susan Dakakni are members of the Pastel Society. It is not widely appreciated that the Pastel Society, which merged with the Pencil Society in 1988, supports and promotes the use of all dry media, including hard and soft pastels, oil pastels, charcoal and graphite.

Senior members of the Pastel Society will again lead workshops during the society's annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries, London, from Tuesday, April 6 (Private View day) to Saturday, April 17. This is a regular feature of the society's main event of the year, and an opportunity for pastel artists of all levels to receive guidance from the experts.

Full details of the workshops can be found on the society's website: www.thepastelsociety.org.uk

Demonstration: Roy Wright Silver Birches

STAGE ONE
Using a thin charcoal stick, Roy lightly drew a composition – just the outlines of the tree trunks

STAGE TWO
The tree shapes were emphasised by making the trunks heavier; some background was added, and details to the bark

STAGE THREE
The ground was filled in

STAGE FOUR
The ground was made darker and much heavier in the foreground, to show distance, and more work was done on the trunks

STAGE FIVE
To show form, some light shading was done on the trunks, plus more detail

FINISHED DRAWING
Roy Wright *Silver Birches*, charcoal, 37x28in (94x71cm).
Roy said 'Finally, I added branches, darkened the spaces between the trees so they didn't get lost, and added finishing touches to the barks.'