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The Art of Figure Drawing

by Susan Lyon



5 minute pose

I start off with a small piece of General's Chalk in sienna. I sand the rough edges down so I can use the side of it to mass in the shadow areas. Once I get the big masses in I clean up the light areas with a kneaded eraser, then use a pastel pencil to define a few lines.

For years I drew on non-archival newsprint pads because I didn't respect my drawings. I was always very critical of my work and didn't want other people to see them. After years of practicing figure quick sketch and portrait, I started to create drawings that I wanted to keep. The problem was that the paper I used wouldn't last long due to the acids. Framing would be a waste.

I started experimenting with different types of surfaces. Once I discovered acid-free Strathmore® 400 Series Drawing, my figure drawings especially improved. I like the fact that the paper has the slightest warm tint and that my soft medium adheres to the slight texture. I use charcoal a lot, but my favorite medium is General's Chalks in sienna and any brand of warm colored pastel pencils.

I use a small piece of chalk to block in the large shadow shapes, rub the chalk into the paper to make a ghost-like effect, and then clean up the light areas with a kneaded



10 minute pose

I start off the same with shorter poses, I just study a little more and add in some lines with a pastel pencil.

eraser. If I have time on the drawing, I will use lines to define the shapes and outer contours with a very sharp pastel pencil.

When using charcoal, I start with soft willow or vine sticks for the initial massing in. Then, when I'm ready for some harder lines, I will either use a harder sharpened vine charcoal or a charcoal pencil.



Shadow study

I try hard to only see the form in light and dark shapes. I use a strong spot light so the shadows will be strong. I always start the drawings by massing in the darks.



Short term poses

On the right pose, you can clearly see how I let the light side of the body disappear into the paper.



5 to 7 minute pose

I kept the left side out of focus because that is the shadow side and I don't want to show any details in the area. Sometimes I don't even use a line where the form on the light side of the figure meets the background; I will use it only if it's necessary.



Figures in charcoal

I use charcoal about 10% of the time. I like the strong contrast. However, charcoal won't stick to the paper as well unless you use compressed charcoal and then it won't erase as well. When I use charcoal I spray the finished drawings.

I think that in order to get good at figure drawing you must try to draw from a model at least two to three times a week. I currently do a quick sketch session once a week. I start off with one minute poses and work my way through progressively longer poses until, at the end of three hours, I finish with a 20 minute pose.

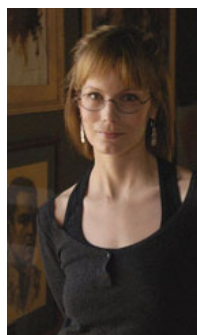
I personally like the shorter times because I like the action of the poses. I also like having that time crunch and feeling of adrenaline with the shorter time frames. Unfortunately most people that come and draw with me want longer poses because they want to get something finished or more refined. I feel that the unfinished work has such a beauty about it. The more you do, the better you get at simplifying the shapes so you are able to get more done in a shorter time.



Short term poses

I don't draw the model's props so sometimes the poses look like they are floating in air.

About the Artist



Susan Lyon grew up in Oak Park, Illinois. Her initial interest in art was sparked by a television show on Georgia O'Keefe. "I hadn't seen art like that before. Her work touched me emotionally and seemed so personal – a sort of window into her soul." Lyon studied painting at the American Academy of Art in Chicago and Chicago's 100+ year-old Palette and Chisel Club. It is there she first began exhibiting and selling her work.



20 minute pose

Even though it is longer it doesn't look that much more detailed; I really try to keep the shadow areas simple and the light areas clean. If I have more time, I will add a little definition to the hands, feet and face. I like to have less time because it seems the longer I spend on a pose, the more likely I will over work it and add too much.

Susan draws much inspiration from painters such as Zorn, Malavin, Sorolla and Cecelia Beaux. Susan Lyon lives in a rural area of North Carolina with her husband, artist Scott Burdick, whom she met at the Palette and Chisel in 1989 and married in 1993. She moved there to escape the hectic pace of city life as well as to experience an entirely different part of the country.

Surrounded by nature, Susan's studio allows her the space and privacy to grow as an artist. It also serves as a perfect home-base for her painting trips and travels which have included most of Europe, Turkey, Greece, Mexico, Canada, Nepal, Thailand, China, Peru, Tibet, India and Africa. Susan's mediums of choice are oil and pastel pencil and charcoal, with occasional forays into watercolor.

More about Susan Lyon

To find out more information about Susan Lyon, please visit her website www.SusanLyon.com where you can find a book of her paintings "Visions and Voyages" (2008), along with self produced online educational videos and her "Drawing the Portrait" DVD published by *American Artist Magazine*.

Gallery Representation

- Sage Creek Gallery, 200 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM
- Insight Gallery, 244 West Main Street, Fredericksburg, TX
- Germanton Gallery, Germanton, NC
- Sylvan Gallery, 171 King Street, Charleston, SC

New Pad Covers Feature Work from Susan Lyon



Yanca
Pastel pencil and hard pastel on Strathmore 400 Series Pastel.



400 Series Pastel

Our Autumn 2011 featured artist, Susan Lyon, also created a drawing that is featured on the new cover of our 400 Series Pastel pad. She was one of twenty five artists selected to create an art piece for the new covers of our Strathmore® 300, 400 and 500 Series of Fine Art Pads.

For the 400 Series Fine Art Pads, the subject of the art was open to the artist. However, you will find the iconic thistle incorporated into each art piece. The thistle has been a symbol of excellence in art papers since Strathmore's early beginnings.

We asked Susan Lyon to share a bit about her piece:

How did you interpret using the Strathmore Thistle for the pad cover artwork?

Since I was doing a portrait for my cover piece I thought that putting the thistle symbol as an earring would be appropriate.

How did the Strathmore paper you used for the project affect your drawing techniques?

I worked on the smoother side of the paper, it still had a little tooth to it which gave a nice texture when I softened the pastel with my finger. I felt the paper held up against my repeated layering of the material and it allowed me to erase what I needed to.

Which artists inspire you?

My biggest inspiration right now is a Russian artist Philip Malavin.

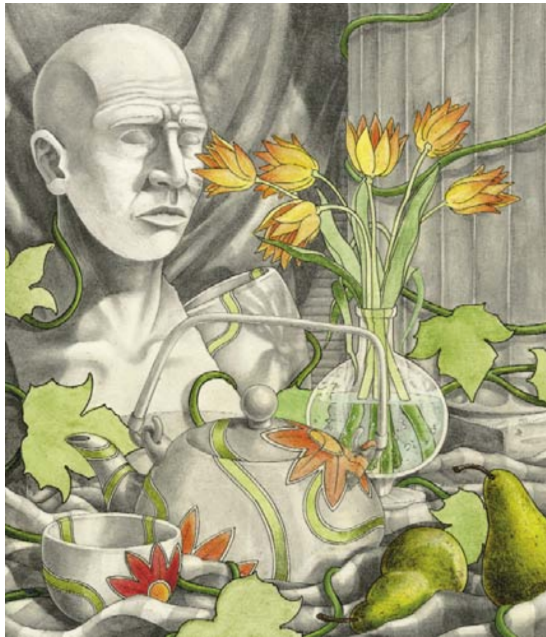
What advice would you give to beginning artists?

My advice is to work from life alongside other artists as much as possible. A group atmosphere helps the creative energy.



Susan Lyon

Featured Product



Featured art by Logan Childress.
Mixed Media: Watercolor, acrylic, colored pencils,
pen and ink, graphite.
Strathmore® 300 Series Mixed Media paper.



Featured art by Lisa Adams.
Mixed Media: Gouache, watercolor, acrylic, colored
pencil, pen and ink, graphite, collage and marker.
Strathmore 400 Series Mixed Media paper.

NEW! Mixed Media Pads

Papers that deliver true performance
for both wet and dry media.

We've combined the characteristics of watercolor paper and the finish of a drawing sheet, creating a paper that performs unlike any other. Our Mixed Media paper is ideal for watercolor, gouache, acrylic, graphite, pen and ink, colored pencil, marker, pastel and collage.

Mixed Media is available in a full range of formats and sizes to meet a variety of applications.

To learn about our new Mixed Media pads,
visit: www.strathmoreartist.com



300 Series | Better



400 Series | Best

Strathmore® 2012 ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

Registration is open! Workshops are FREE! Series starts January 1.

Learn techniques from experienced artists through online videos and downloadable instructions.

Get inspired from other students in our virtual classroom. Keep motivated with ideas and tips from your instructor. Register for our 2012 Online Workshop Series today.

Our online workshops are free and self-paced. Workshops are held in our virtual classroom website. Each workshop consists of four video lessons and supporting downloadable instructions. Students can participate in conversations on our discussion boards or share work in the classroom photo gallery.

Workshop Schedule



Workshop 1. Doodles Unleashed: Mixed Media Mark-Making Techniques

Instructor: Traci Bautista
Start date: January 1, 2012

Whether you are a beginner or an experienced artist, you will enjoy a creative escape as you combine different media, color, texture, collage, doodling, lettering and more to create your own mixed media paintings. Push yourself beyond traditional art media by incorporating stitching into your work. Learn basic bookbinding techniques when you repurpose a painting into a mini-book. Play with paper in ways you never imagined!



Workshop 2. Watercolor Sketching

Instructor: Cathy Johnson
Start date: March 1, 2012

Learn how to sketch from life using watercolor, pen and ink and more. Cathy Johnson will share numerous tricks and techniques, covering



Mixed media art by Traci Bautista

topics such as ink and watercolor, watercolor pencil, gouache and other mixed media. Learn how to start a sketch with pencil guidelines or jump right in with watercolors. Add interest and meaning to pages using a few select collage elements. Put all of these techniques to work in your nature, travel, urban or journal sketching adventures.



Workshop 3. FORCE Drawing Technique

Instructor: Mike Mattesi
Start date: May 1, 2012

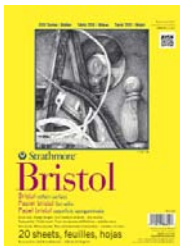
FORCE spans all forms of art, from animation to illustration, cartooning to fine art. Mike Mattesi, author of the popular and inspiring FORCE drawing books, demonstrates his drawing theory across four compelling videos. During the videos you will learn how to draw FORCE, form and shape. Through this knowledge you will add more life and drama to your work. These three main principles can be applied to occupations in the entertainment industry such as character design, animation, illustration, storyboarding and comic books.

Register for free workshops today at:
www.strathmoreartist.com/workshop-reg

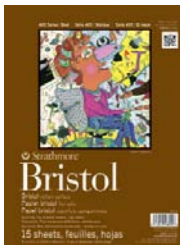
Questions From Our Website

What are the fiber and construction differences between your 300, 400 and 500 Series Bristol Vellum papers?

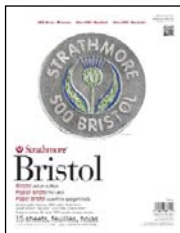
Strathmore® fine art papers are categorized into different series based on the quality level of the paper. Our 300 Series is classified as “Better” quality and includes products designed for college students and artists creating quick studies and practicing techniques. “Best” describes our 400 Series products and is artist grade, often the choice for finished art. Our 500 Series is our “Premium,” professional grade.



300 Series



400 Series

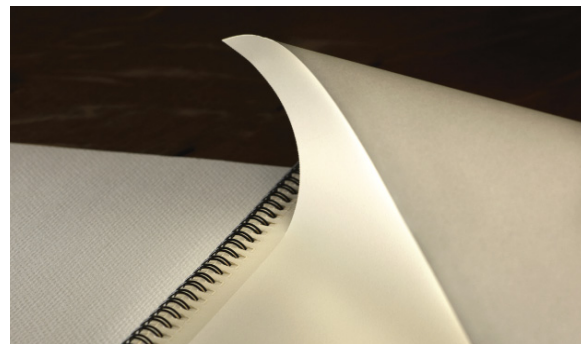


500 Series

When talking specifically about Bristol Vellum surfaces, our 300 Series Bristol is a single-ply sheet constructed of wood pulp fibers. The 400 Series Bristol is also a wood pulp sheet but features multiple plies of paper. For example, our 400 Series Bristol pads feature 2-ply sheets. Pasting multiple plies of sheets creates a stiff, heavy sheet of paper that resists warping. Our 500 Series Bristol also features multiple plies (2, 3 or 4-ply) and is constructed of 100% cotton for exceptional surface strength. All 300, 400 and 500 Series Bristol papers are acid free.

I recently purchased a 400 Series Drawing pad. The size of the pad is slightly larger than before but the dimensions listed on the cover are the same. Can you explain?

Strathmore recently introduced a number of exciting new changes to our fine art pads. Wire bound pads now feature “actual size sheets.” That means when you remove the paper from the pad, either at the micro-perforation or trim it from the wire binding, it will yield the full dimension listed on the cover of the pad.



Are your products American-made?

We recognize that there is a resurgence of consumers who are interested in buying American-made products for a variety of reasons. Strathmore Artist Papers™ is proud to be a U.S. based company located in Neenah, Wisconsin. All of our fine art papers and pads are manufactured in the United States, except for a few fine art papers (Acrylic, Wet Media, Gemini, Pure Paper Tints, Aquarius II® and Newsprint).