



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



### Online Workshop #2

Learn all about underpainting in Watercolor with Mallery Jane!



### New Strathmore mini pads

Small but mighty for art on the go



### Artist How To Series

Themed Watercolor Landscapes with Elina Zhelyazkova



### Artist Spotlight

Strathmore ambassador Janice Sung and her ethereal illustrations

## MAIN FEATURE

# The Joy and Benefit of Painting Outdoors

By Marco Bucci



I have always been very interested in capturing a sense of light and mood in my work, and I learned early on that painting outdoors is the single most important exercise one can do to build that skill. Painting directly from life makes you the sole filter between real life and the art. You gain the benefit of not only seeing the scene, but understanding what it feels like to physically be there witnessing it. Both of

those things can inform you as you consider the many options you have as a painter tackling a scene. Sometimes you want to capture exactly what's there. Other times you need (or simply want) to modify what nature brings, to fit a certain aesthetic. But no matter the choices you make while painting, the important thing is that you are developing your own visual understanding, using perhaps the most pure source.





Over the twenty years that I have been painting outdoors, perhaps the number-one lesson I learned is to have a travel setup that is lightweight, and fast to set up and take down. This is necessary because you never know when you'll see something that catches your eye. I learned early on that painting outdoors is not about those grand post-card scenes. It's more about the smaller world: light filtering through some buildings, reflections in a pond, a tree that frames a wall, a quick capture of a sunset raking across the park, rooftops playing peek-a-boo.

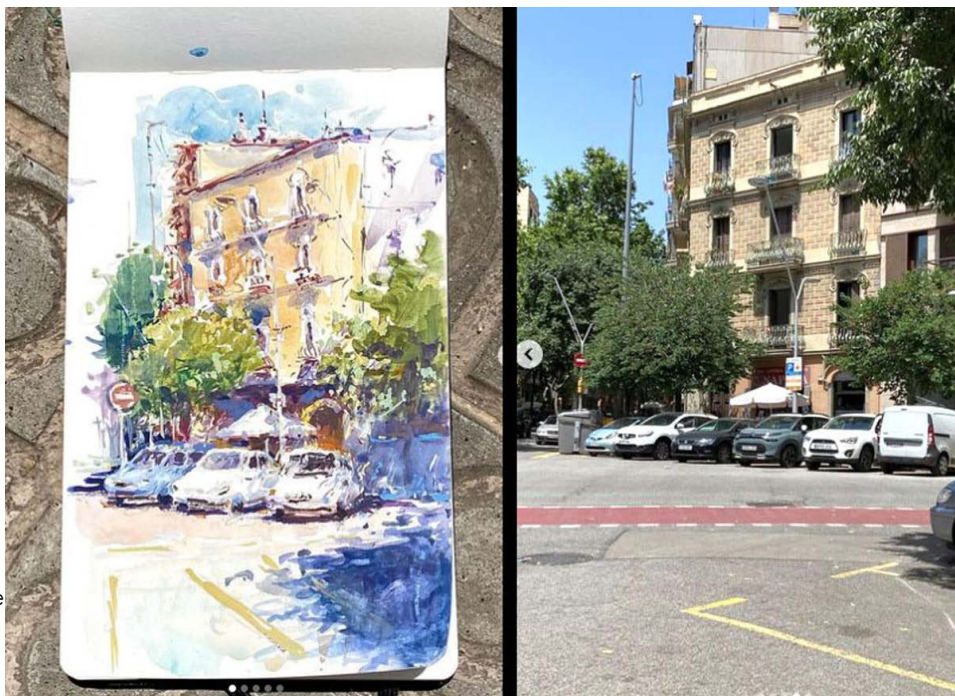
In the summer I often go camping. And it's the serious kind of camping, where you get in a canoe, and carry it through barely-

“

*...you never know when you'll see something that catches your eye.*

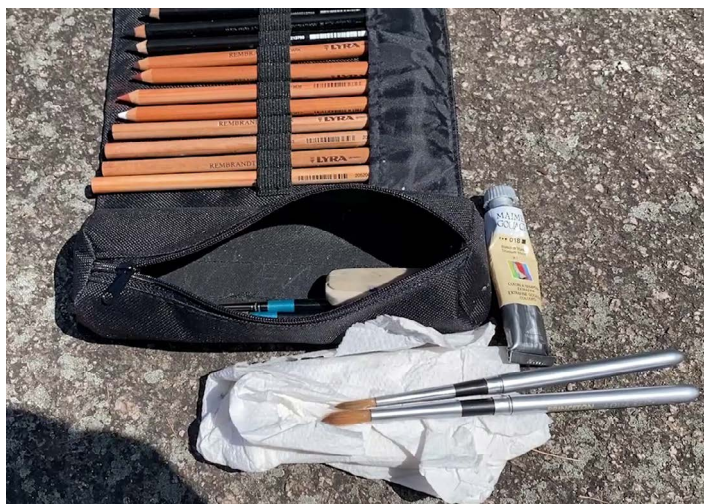
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visible paths in the woods in order to lake-hop your way to a remote campsite. That's another reason to travel light: you want to be able to easily bring your gear with you, no matter where you go.





I travel with a watercolor kit that weighs less than a single pound. The various pieces of the kit I put together myself. It consists of my Lyra roll (complete with pouch!) where I keep an array of pencils, brushes, a tiny clip-on water bin, and paper towel. My pencils are Lyra Rembrandt Polycolor pencils as well (they came with the roll), and I enjoy [Princeton Aqua Elite](#) Travel soft round brushes, in various sizes.



My sketchbook is the [400 Series Toned Mixed Media](#) book. The paper is heavyweight enough to be able to take a bit of a hammering with water, while also still responding well after it has become dry again. It's got just enough tooth to it for some fun drybrush opportunities as well. It's the best paper I've found for wet media at a small scale.



My paints are the [Daler-Rowney Aquafine Watercolor](#) Travel half pans, which I simply activate with a spray bottle whenever I set out to paint.

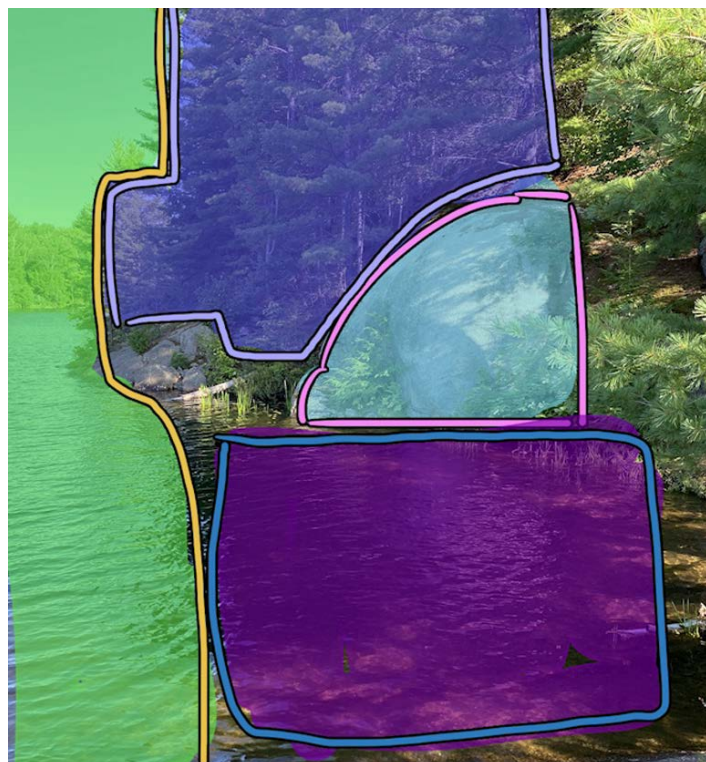
I do highly recommend painting small when outdoors, by the way. It mostly revolves around timing. Firstly, that light moves fast, and you need to respond faster. But also, you need to know if your picture works or not and if you are indeed capturing the life in front of you - quickly. The idea being that if you can make a series of good decisions in a row, you can actually paint quite fast, and working in a lap-sized sketchbook accommodates that by discouraging any fiddling with detail, and instead encourages you to capture things in broader swaths. Here is the painting we'll follow the process of in this article.







The real scene itself isn't really anything special. Again, I'm not out to paint post cards! It's just a large round rock, surrounded by trees and water. The rock lent itself as a nice, high contrast focal point, with a lot of abstract fun to be had in the plethora of trees, as well as the ever-changing reflection shapes in the water.



I try my best to break the scene down into as large, and as few, groups as I can. To do this, I choose objects of similar value, and see how I can arrange them on the page. Here I'm breaking the scene into four overall shapes. Each shape has a different value, which will help separate them, and each shape is big enough that it can support being further broken up with smaller shapes - which happens later in the process.



My plan of attack is to get a sense of the composition first. I start lightly sketching in my idea in pencil (usually a 2B, but I'm not particular about it.) The black frame is plain ol' electrical tape. This will preserve a razor-sharp edge at the end! (Tip: stick the tape to your clothes a few times first, to weaken the adhesive and not tear the paper.)



I don't spend too much time with the pencil. Once I have those basic shapes down, I get straight to mixing color. I first focus on the simple shapes I decided on compositionally. In this image I am starting with the large rock, which is my focal point. I am keeping the values close together, but having a bit of fun with some various color temperatures. To achieve this, be sure to paint wet into wet!



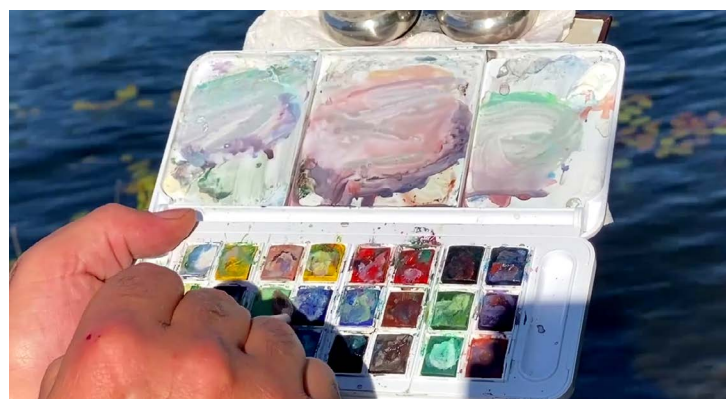


I quickly move onto the other three compositional shapes. As you can see, the picture can begin to take shape here, just a few minutes into the process! Also notice I've set up the green trees by painting their complement (red) as an underlay.

I do have some white gouache onto the palette. I don't use it in every mixture, but it does play a key role in my mixing process. This is how I will get the greens of the tree to lay on top of that red lay-in, for example, as well as how I can get some bright spots of sunlight on the rock. White gouache also allows me to get lighter than the initial tone of the paper. Lastly, sometimes I like the watercolor to have a little opacity/body to it, either to cover something, or to add a certain look that you can only get with a thicker pigment.



I really only allow myself to 'zoom in' to the picture once I have my compositional shapes laid in. In this picture, I spent some time refining the warms and cools on the rock - the sunlight shapes being warm, and the ambient light from the sky (in the rock's shadow) being cooler. For the warm sun, I mixed a thick bit of opaque, white gouache with some cadmium yellow watercolor. The body of the gouache 'takes over' the watercolor's transparency, but the color of the watercolor mixes seamlessly! For the cooler shadow (lit by ambient light coming down from the sky), I would either try to lay that in wet-into-wet at the beginning, but it likely needs a punch-up at this stage. Again, the white gouache can help me make a mixture that will sit right on top of my pure-watercolor lay-in. Remember that gouache is simply an opaque watercolor, and you can thin it down with water in just the same way.



In the spirit of working quickly, I never clean my palette during a painting session. Instead, I constantly mix into existing pools. I find that that gives your all the colors in your painting something in common, making it easier to achieve color harmony.

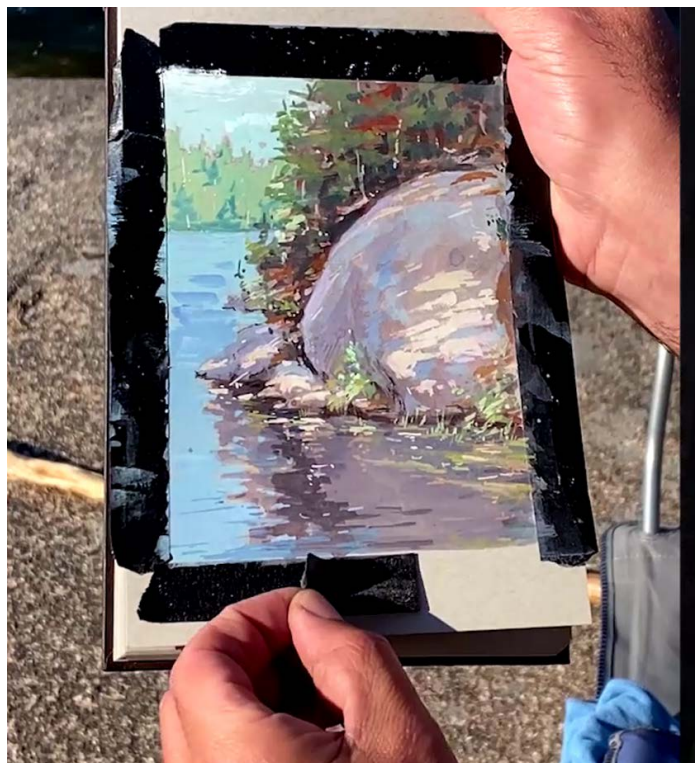
I learned this from a fine artist named Scott Christensen, who works with just the three primaries (red, yellow, and blue.) Instead of squeezing out just those colors at the outset of each painting,



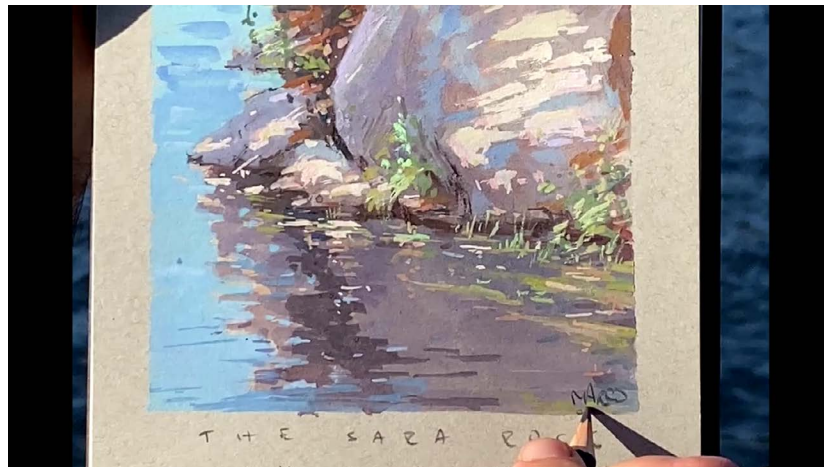


he pre-mixed various grays, made from those colors. You first mix all three primaries to achieve some kind of gray. Then you can steer the temperature of that gray in any direction you choose. If you want a warmer gray, for example, simply add more red to the mix, and the gray will move toward the red. You can do the same for any other color. Scott had a range of these 'chromatic grays' pre mixed (and even pre-bottled!) allowing him to immediately start achieving a pleasing sense of color. Of course, the real key to color is that you get your values right. Value is the tone, or the lightness or darkness, that you're mixing. If you don't get that right, it's actually impossible to get the right color, because value is how we resolve the form of things.

After about 40 minutes, the painting is finished! Now is the fun part: time to peel off the tape!



The other reason I love doing this type of work in a sketchbook specifically, is that the book itself acts as a visual journal. I've never been much of a journal writer. But I do have piles and piles of sketchbooks, each one a little time portal into that particular day, that particular moment, in my life. Like a journal, I can revisit those paintings and be put right back in that space and mindset. It stimulates memory unlike anything else I've encountered. It's almost magic how a painting can do that - far, far more than a snapshot can. For that reason, my sketchbooks mean more to me as the years go on. I really encourage anyone reading this to go give this a try. Keep your materials light and compact, paint small, and paint lots!



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Marco Bucci recognized two things at a young age. The first was that he wanted to become a professional artist. The second was that he lacked any natural talent. This delayed him for quite some time. He filled that time pursuing other artistic interests such as music and writing, but the urge to draw and paint never left him. At age 19 he began to study classical figure drawing, which led to the discovery that one could indeed learn to draw and paint. He hasn't looked back since. Marco has since worked professionally for clients such as Disney, Marvel, and Wizards of the Coast. On his own time, he loves to get outdoors and paint in his sketchbook, which is where he firmly believes real learning and growth happens!

Instagram: [@bucciblog](https://www.instagram.com/bucciblog)

YouTube: [@marcobucci](https://www.youtube.com/marcobucci)

Website: [marcobucci.com](https://marcobucci.com)



# Strathmore® ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

## Join us for Strathmore's FREE 2025 Online Workshops!

Strathmore's Online Workshops feature free video lessons and downloadable instructions created by experienced artists. Follow along in the online classroom as instructors guide you through various art topics. After a lesson releases, it remains on the site for viewing the rest of the year. #StrathmoreWorkshops

Share all the fun on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) using #StrathmoreWorkshops

Workshops start March 3 and continue through December 31, 2025

NOW OPEN!



## WORKSHOP 2

### Underpainting in Watercolor

Instructor: Mallery Jane

Learn how to use underpainting in watercolor to create beautiful undertones, define shadows, and enhance color harmony. Discover how to choose the right colors, where to apply them, and how to integrate this technique into your own work.

LEARN MORE & FOLLOW ALONG



## WORKSHOP 1

### Sketching - The Foundational Artistic Skill

Instructor:  
Jordan Rhodes

NOW OPEN!

Sketching is the first step in the creative process—a fast, visual way to bring ideas to life. In this workshop, Jordan will share how he sketches, how it supports idea generation, learning, and practice, and how it can simply be a fun, essential part of any artist's routine.

LEARN MORE  
about Workshop 1



## WORKSHOP 3

### Drawing Birds of the World in Colored Pencil

Instructor:  
Claire Milligan

Start Date:  
August 4, 2025

In this workshop, we'll draw four realistic birds using colored pencils. You'll learn to capture feather textures—from soft and fluffy to sleek and iridescent—while exploring rich color palettes. We'll focus on layering, blending, and fine details to bring each bird to life.

LEARN MORE  
about Workshop 3



## WORKSHOP 4

### Vibrant Illustrations with Gouache

Instructor:  
Sofia Pavan Macias

Start Date:  
November 3, 2025

In this four-part workshop, we'll create seasonal sketchbook spreads—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—using vibrant gouache paint. You'll learn techniques for painting with gouache, keeping colors bold, and making your illustrations come to life.

LEARN MORE  
about Workshop 4

Join us for our free workshops at: [strathmoreartiststudio.com](https://strathmoreartiststudio.com)



# NEW!



## 300 SERIES MINI PADS

### Big Creativity in Small Sizes | 4in. x 6in.

Our best-selling art papers are now available in a compact 4" x 6" pad—perfect for artists who work across a variety of techniques and mediums. These pocket-sized pads are ideal for travel, testing materials, or making mini masterpieces wherever inspiration strikes.

Item #	Size	Description	Weight	Sheets
P350-4	4" x 6"	300 Series Sketch, Tape (4")	50 lb/74gsm	100
P340-4	4" x 6"	300 Series Drawing, Tape (4")	70 lb/114gsm	60
P362-4	4" x 6"	300 Series Mixed Media, Tape (4")	117 lb/190gsm	36
P342-4	4" x 6"	300 Series Bristol Smooth, Tape (4")	100 lb/270gsm	20
P342-04	4" x 6"	300 Series Bristol Vellum, Tape (4")	100 lb/270gsm	20
P360-4	4" x 6"	300 Series Watercolor, Tape (4")	140 lb/300gsm	20
P315-04	4" x 6"	300 Series Canvas Pad, Tape (4")	8 oz	10



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strathmoreartist.com





# Watercolor the World

with Elina Zhelyazkova

Join Elina Zhelyazkova as she takes you on a creative journey across the globe in this 5-part watercolor landscape tutorial series. From icy arctic scenes to the golden sands of the Sahara, rolling Tuscan hills, the vibrant lavender fields of Provence, and textured Venetian walls, each video will teach you watercolor techniques that bring these stunning landscapes to life.

## SUPPLIES:

- Strathmore 500 Series Ready Cut Watercolor paper (100% Cotton, 140lb/300gsm, 8x10")
- MaimeriBlu Watercolor Themed Sets: Arctic, Sahara, Provence, Tuscany, and Venice
- Princeton Watercolor Landscape Set: Neptune and Aqua Elite brushes

WATCH THE TUTORIALS







# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT WITH ILLUSTRATOR AND STRATHMORE AMBASSADOR JANICE SUNG

*Illustrator Janice Sung creates art with a story that becomes part of a story... in the form of bookmarks.*

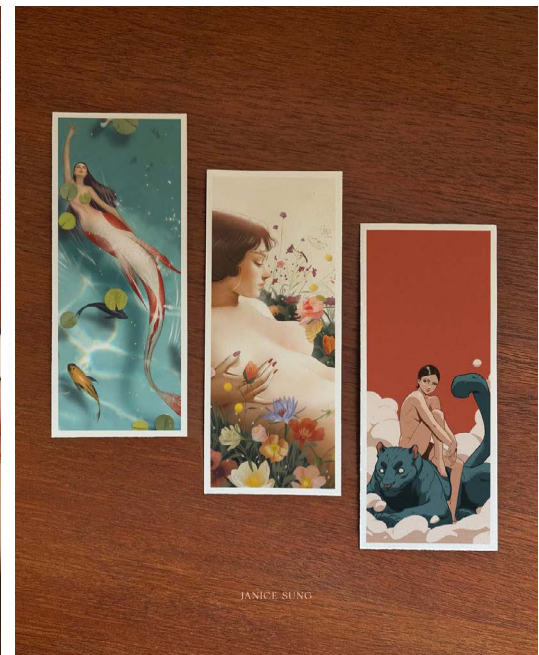
Each piece in Janice's stunning and archival bookmark collection began as original artwork on Strathmore 100% cotton [500 Series Mixed Media Boards](#).

Her subjects range from introspective figures and dreamlike portraits to nature scenes and mythic imagery. She works in a variety of mediums including oil, gouache, watercolor and colored pencils.

The finished bookmarks are crafted with archival inks and paper, retaining the richness of the original works. Whether tucked into a book or collected as small pieces of art, they offer a glimpse into Janice's distinctive and imaginative visual world.

 [@janicesung](#)

 [janicesung.com](#)





# PAPER WEIGHT: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Paper weight can be confusing. In the U.S., it's measured in pounds (lbs.), while it is standard to measure in grams per square meter (gsm) outside of the US.



## Pound Weight:

The weight in pounds of 500 sheets (a ream) of a paper's basis size, which varies by type.

### Example:

- 500 sheets of 400 Series Drawing Paper at 24"x36" basis size weighs 80 lbs
- 500 sheets of 400 Series Pastel paper at 25"x38" basis size weighs 80 lbs

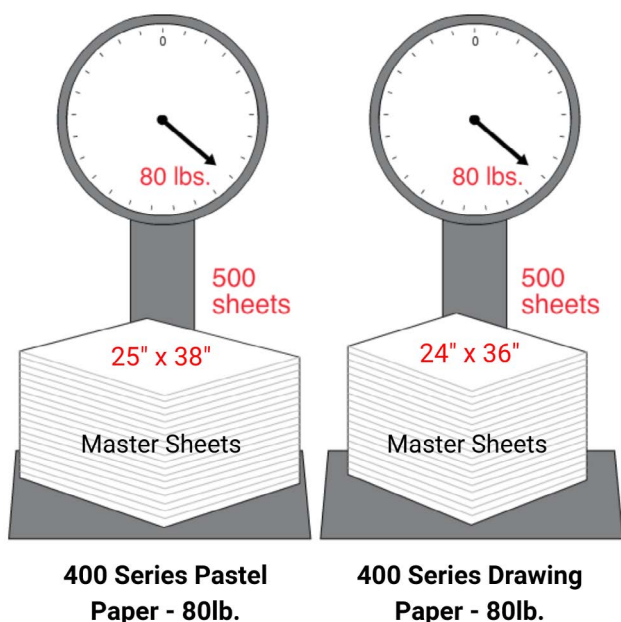
## GSM Weight:

Provides an accurate comparison by weighing 1 square meter of paper.

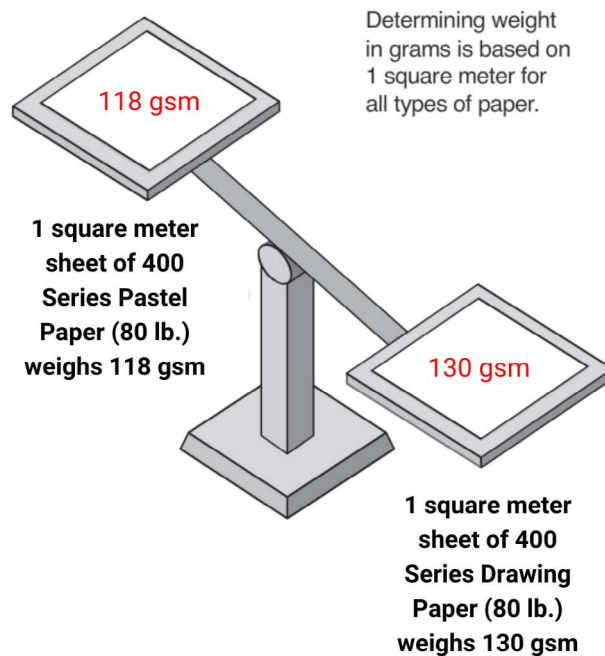
### Example:

- 1 square meter of 400 Series Drawing weighs 130 gsm
- 1 square meter of 400 Series Pastel Paper weighs 118gsm (lighter, despite both being 80 lbs in the U.S. system)

## Weight in Pounds



## Weight in Grams



**Takeaway:** GSM gives a true weight comparison, while lbs. can vary based on master sheet size.