

IN THIS ISSUE *Finding My Way* • *Featured Product: Skills Series* • *2014 Catalog Cover Artwork Request* • *Questions From Our Website*

Finding My Way

By Paul Knight

My keen interest in art developed early on for me in primary school. Most schools in 1970's England had strong religious ties and used great classical pieces of art within their lessons. This inadvertently created the interest within me that now, as a 48 year old, has not faded.

At school I wasn't particularly focused on the literary side of education and bumbled through the academic process, doing just enough to get the average grade. However, when it came to attaching an illustration in a history or science project, I would spend countless hours on it. I always found text quite boring and long winded, but anything illustrative was fascinating to me and I always looked forward to the weekly art class. When looking at my options at age fourteen, I wanted to take art with the aspiration of going to art school. Coming from a mining area with strong local and family ties to the coal industry and being part of 1981 working class Britain, both my parents and teachers made me feel that this wasn't an option. I was discouraged from following my dream, so at the age of sixteen I took a



Do Stars Sleep?, charcoal on paper
Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal

mining apprenticeship. I worked for the next thirteen years in the coal industry.

Art became a distant memory and having a family became my life as it naturally does for many of us. Thirteen years later I found myself jobless in a region decimated by pit closures. I was lucky enough to find a job in the prison service, later moving through the fire service, then the ambulance service where I am currently employed.

About seven years ago I went to an old miner's home who had called for an ambulance. His house was full of paintings and carved coal pieces. We tended to him and while my partner made him a cup of tea, he showed me his sketch books. I told him he should try selling his work as people would really appreciate it. He noted I had an interest in art and asked why I didn't do the same. I told him that I never had the time. He answered, "Anyone has the time to sketch, all you need is a sketch pad and a pencil." That was it. Within a few days and after spending the princely sum of five English pounds I was back to drawing after all of those years.



Up Close, pastel on paper
Strathmore® 500 Series Charcoal

Within a year I had developed my work and decided to enter a piece, "The Man from the Land Down Under," into an international art magazine's people and portrait's online competition. Several months later, I received an email, confirming the entry had been chosen as a Finalist Piece and would be shown in a forthcoming edition of the magazine. They told me they would require a written overview of my art qualifications/experience, inspiration and process of technique. The piece was my first ever developed work and was my very first ever submission. Therefore, I had no experience with art related terminology, no formal training and no art education. I excitedly bought a copy of the magazine only to find that my work wasn't shown in the edition. I contacted the editor who replied that the piece had been accidentally left out due to an editing mistake and would appear in a later edition; it never did. Although initially upset by this, I soon realized that my written submission may have been the cause and decided to consider art education.

The following year I enrolled at Nottingham University in their adult Fine Art Program. Initially I was very disappointed with the degree course due to the nature of the modern contemporary approach. I found myself having to defend my traditional style. They challenged me to adopt new ways of thinking and creating



Spirit, pastel on paper
Strathmore® 500 Series Charcoal



Between Heaven And Earth, charcoal on paper
Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal

work. Eventually I became intrigued by the concepts and really enjoyed my time in a student/artist group. I started to blend modern concepts with traditional work.

While at the university, one of the students had brought in several sketch pads, ripped up several sheets from them and made a collage panel by gluing them to a piece of cardboard ready to paint with found mediums. One of the pads had one sheet left in it and was discarded. Waste not, want not! I put it in my portfolio case and brought it home. Several days later I pulled it out along with my art history project notes which had a printed image of Rodin's "The Thinker" in one top corner. While considering my essay I set up a drawing of "The Thinker" on the discarded paper. I instantly found it amazing to work on. The cover was still intact – Strathmore® 500 Series Charcoal. Now I always work on Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal papers of various tones and do so not only because of the way the charcoal adheres, but also because of its fantastic durability.

During this period I entered a piece into another art company's online gallery, which was published in an edition of their member's magazine *PAINT*. This inspired me to enter another competition for which I was rewarded when my piece was placed on the front cover,



Backwards Glance, pastel on paper

Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal



White Lace Blouse, pastel on paper

Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal

along with a two page article showing several other works that I had produced.

Derwent, a well known British pencil and art product company, read the article and contacted me about producing artwork for a new charcoal set they were planning to introduce (which is now released). From this several other magazine articles focusing on my drawings and techniques were published.

Due to financial and work related responsibilities I had to take a break from the degree course. I really started to miss the group interaction so I looked at other art groups and attended several workshops. I found that although they taught techniques, it was done in a step-by-step method with everyone producing a near identical piece of work. I felt that this said more about developing the student in the style of the artist giving the workshop, than the style of each individual student.

I was also trying various mediums and becoming a little frustrated with my own attempts and work. It was always drawing that brought me back into balance. It was like a reset switch. Drawing slowed me back down and brought my own technique and style back into check. With growing inquiries about my drawing I decided to set up a small basic drawing workshop and taught four students in a local village hall. I realized through the workshops I had attended that it was important for students to develop their own style. I encouraged the students to look for their own point of interest in the subject and use different concepts to allow them to express their own desired effect. I provide Strathmore® 500 Series Charcoal for the workshops, which has become the firm favorite amongst the students. From the initial success, I have done several more workshops. I have kept them to a maximum of six students per seven hour workshop and we are now developing into oils through grisaille.

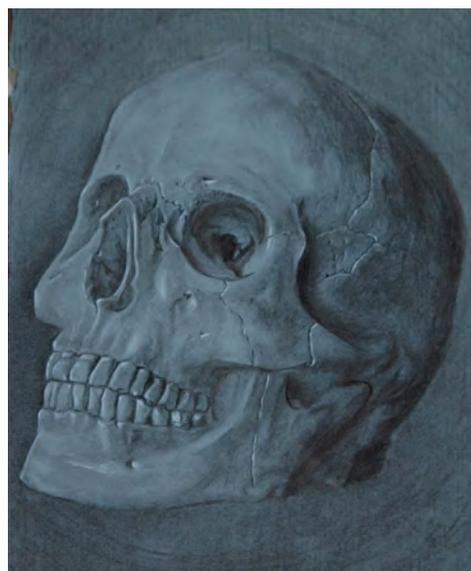
Thanks to the knock back with the magazine competition years ago, I realized that there was a lot to learn about art, both practically and theoretically. Admittedly it's been a very hard and frustrating path, but now I feel that I finally have a direction. I'm not sure where this will take me yet, and I'm actually no longer in any rush to get there.

I still have a long way to go and have had a lot of learning curves in the short distance that I have come. Through my studies I have come to realize that drawing is the corner stone to all good art throughout all of the eras and movements. It causes the artist to give careful consideration to the subject and slows down the process to allow careful evaluation.

Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal paper is the drawing media of choice for me as charcoal is my preferred medium. The charcoal adheres beautifully to the paper, but even more importantly to the way I work is that the surface allows me to move the charcoal around and blend. This gives more of a painterly effect. Most of the



La Femme Et Son Foulard, charcoal on paper
Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal



Skull image by Andrea Clarke, a student in Paul's grisaille workshop.

work I do uses Derwent tinted charcoals and background blends of Sennelier soft pastel.

A natural step from here was into oils. I have developed through grisaille and have started several oil paintings for interested galleries. All of these pieces were initially developed with charcoals on Strathmore® 500 Series. This is the method I've developed to map my drawing, composition, value range and concept. As mentioned before, I'd attempt a new work in a different medium and have to come back to drawing when I lost my way. So now I start with the drawing, which acts as a fail safe for any new idea and identifies the overall effect of the painting before the first brush stroke is even made.

About the Artist

Paul was born in 1965 and lives in Nottinghamshire, England. In 2007 he renewed his interest in art, and after a period of two years decided to pursue art education by enrolling in a Fine Art degree course at Nottingham University.

He continues to work on the degree course, and while taking a break from it, he has set up a small drawing workshop. This has driven him in the direction of developing a traditional method of cast and still life work that incorporates modern concepts.

Paul is very interested in modern American artists who show a resurgence into Realism. He attributes this to the fact that he did not take technique based drawing courses or workshops in the UK. Although he is inspired by the "traditional great masters," he is just as much inspired by modern American artists and says "their so-called outdated classical approach is still very much alive and thriving." This has given him the confidence to develop in the direction of a traditional style with modern conceptual thinking for his work and his drawing workshops.



work board, charcoal on paper
Strathmore 500 Series Charcoal

Paul is currently working on several oil paintings for an exhibition in 2014 and pieces for open exhibitions with the hope of further developing his artist profile.

To find out more about Paul Knight, please visit www.astarvinartist.com

Featured Product

SKILLS SERIES

Paper for Practice

NEW!

Practice is essential for artists to learn and progress, which is why we developed an **affordable, recycled line** that delivers key performance characteristics for specific media techniques.

The formats and features add **convenience, ease of use, and durability** for **frequent use** and lots of **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.**

Available in Sketch, Drawing, Mixed Media, and Watercolor, these pads are engineered with high sheet counts, a heavy-duty chip board backing, durable construction, and convenient formats so they can handle all the work and practice you put in. Did we also mention affordable and recycled? Each pad contains 30% post-consumer fiber, letting you feel guilt-free about going through lots of sheets as you develop your SKILLS.



Skills Sketch

50 lb. (74 g/m²)

A lightly textured paper that is ideal for quick, dry media sketches.

Pad sizes: 5.5" x 8.5",
9" x 12", 11" x 14", 18" x 24"



Skills Mixed Media

75 lb. (160 g/m²)

A medium weight paper in a sketching format. This versatile paper is a good choice for dry and light, wet media sketching.

Pad sizes: 5.5" x 8.5", 9" x 12",
11" x 14"



Skills Drawing

64 lb. (104 g/m²)

A soft ivory colored paper with a toothy surface for easy blending and shading. The strong surface provides clean erasure.

Pad sizes: 9" x 12", 11" x 14",
18" x 24"



Skills Watercolor

140 lb. (300 g/m²)

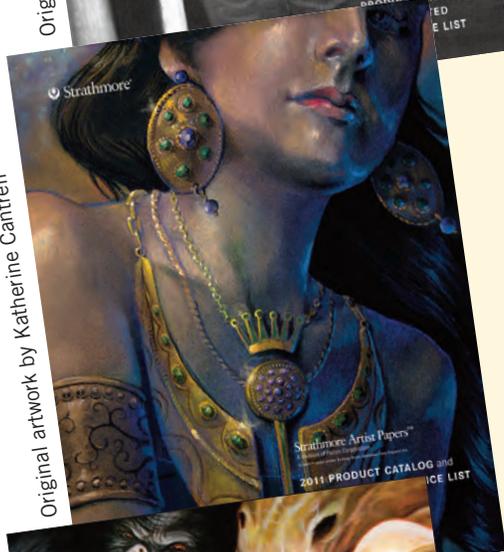
An economic heavyweight student-grade paper with a cold press surface. Provides even washes and good lifts when used with light, wet media techniques.

Pad sizes: 6" x 9", 9" x 12",
11" x 15", 18" x 24"

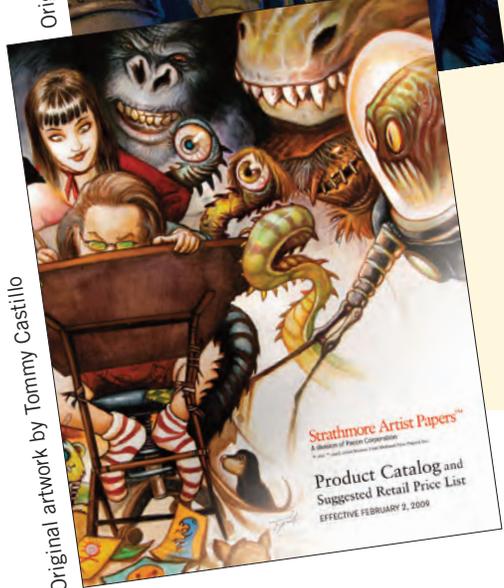
To learn more about Skills Series, visit: www.strathmoreartist.com



Original artwork by Scott Kiche



Original artwork by Katherine Cantrell



Original artwork by Tommy Castillo

ATTENTION ARTISTS!

We are looking for artwork submissions for our 2014 Product Catalog cover and our 2014 Facebook page cover image.

- The artist whose artwork is chosen for the 2014 Product Catalog cover will be awarded \$300.
- The artist whose artwork is chosen for our Facebook cover image will be awarded with \$100 worth of Strathmore® product!

Anyone is welcome and encouraged to submit their artwork. The style, subject matter, and mediums used is up to you. **We just ask that it's created on Strathmore paper!**

Submissions are due by Friday, November 15.

For more details and to submit your artwork, visit:
www.strathmoreartist.com/catalog-cover-contest.html

Questions From Our Website

What is the history of paper and the basic paper-making process?

The first writing surface was made in ancient Egypt from a plant called Papyrus, the royal plant of Egypt. The core of the papyrus plant was cut into tissue-thin strips, then laid across each other and pressed together under pressure. This turned the strips into a thin, smooth and durable laminated material that wasn't quite paper.



Paper and papyrus are not the same, but often get confused because the word paper is derived from the Egyptian word for Papyrus, "Pa-prro."

The true history of paper begins in China, where there was no access to the Papyrus plant. The Chinese began using woven textiles as their writing surfaces, and a pen & ink calligraphy style of writing. Books and scrolls were made by hand from woven cloth, which left a lot of scrap after being trimmed.

In 105AD, Ts'ai Lun developed the idea of beating the discarded cloth into fibers, suspending them in water, and matting them into sheets (creating the basic process for making paper).

News of the paper making process did not spread fast. It took over 1,000 years before the process reached Europe, and it wasn't until 1789 that Nicolas Louis Robert of France created the concept for the first paper-making machine. The French Revolution put Nicolas' plans of developing the machine on hold, so he sent his idea and design to his brother-in-law in England. It was here in 1803 that the first successful paper-making machine was developed. Henry and Sealy Fourdrinier were financial backers and

enthusiastic supporters of the project, giving way to the name of the machine, the Fourdrinier. This machine became the standard design for paper-making machines, which remain virtually the same today.

The basic principles involved in making and forming paper have not changed since Ts'ai Lun invented the process nearly 2,000 years ago. Wood or cotton fibers are beaten until they break down into small particles, and the fibers are diluted with water to make pulp and placed in a reservoir.



Pulp is then metered out in a continuous stream onto a moving wire screen. The moving wire is mechanically shaken side to side to distribute the pulp evenly across the screen and drain water. Suction boxes underneath the screen also help drain excess water.



The pulp is then transferred to a woven felt blanket and carries paper through a press roll which removes even more water. By varying the woven texture and the location of felts, the finished texture of the paper can be varied. Watercolor paper, for example, uses a very heavily textured felt, while the felts for drawing and sketch papers have less texture. At this point, the fibers have interlocked and the paper has dried enough to be passed through steam-heated cylinders for further drying.

Next, the paper is run through a “sizing” bath to enhance the working properties of the sheet. Without sizing, the paper would act like a blotter. The sizing seals the fibers individually and as a structure. The amount of sizing is adjusted based on the grade of the paper. For example, drawing papers have surface sizing to help with properties such as erasure, while watercolor papers require a different approach. There must be enough surface sizing to allow for color pick up with a lift while still allowing watercolor into the sheet to provide for an even wash.

After the sizing bath, the paper is re-dried. At this point, it will go through different finishing processes depending on the type of paper. A calendering stack, which is a large stack of rolls that the paper runs through, is located at the end of the paper machine or is a separate operation off the paper machine that determines the final smoothness of the sheet. The degree of calendering can be adjusted to change the smoothness of a sheet.

At Strathmore®, we can also produce an ultra-smooth sheet in our drawing and bristol line with a plate finish. The paper is layered between sheets of metal to form a book, and the book of paper is passed back and forth between pressure rollers in a process known as plating.

