

# Welcome to the World of Colored Pencil!



An introduction to a glorious medium that makes completed artworks resemble both a painting and a drawing

This resource has four sections:

- Exploring Colored Pencil Drawings
- Getting to Know Your Colored Pencils
- Getting to Know Your Tools
- Shopping List of Supplies

Before you begin a colored pencil drawing, your practical goals are to plan the composition, choose colors, and decide which techniques to use.

To achieve these goals you need:

- a repertoire of fundamental colored pencil techniques.
- a solid understanding of the unique characteristics of the colored pencil medium.
- an ability to see colors as values so you can create the illusion of form on a two-dimensional surface.

The real magic happens when you artistically interpret your reference material so you can expressively convey an idea or mood.



## ArtSpeak

**Color:** The visual qualities of objects based on individual perceptions of their hues and values. Basic colors include yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, and green.

**Colored pencils:** A dry medium created by combining various synthetic or organic pigments with binding agents and oil or wax. Colored pencils come in a wide variety of qualities, from recreational to professional. The permanency rating of the pigment helps determine the quality of the pencils. Colored pencils are relatively inexpensive, not messy, and portable. They work equally well for subjects that are soft and delicate or bold and bright.

**Hue:** Another word for a color (such as red, blue, or teal).

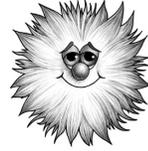
**Abstract:** A style of art that may not depict a person, place or thing. In some cases, the subject exists in reality but may be unrecognizable in the artwork. The subjects of abstract drawings are created with line, color, value, form, pattern, and/or shape.



### Challenge!

Artists can alter or completely change a subject to communicate an idea, generate a mood, or make an artwork more interesting.

For example, examine the photos in Figures 1 and 2. Did the exaggerated colors in Figure 2 grab your attention first?



### As an Aside

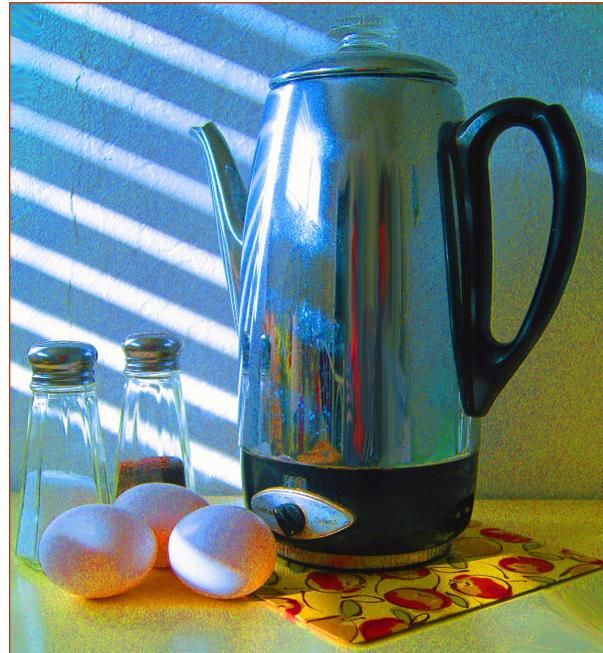
Manufacturers initially developed colored pencils for professional commercial artists and illustrators.

Over the past few decades, “painting” with colored pencils has gained new respect as a medium for fine art.

Figure 1



Figure 2



### ArtSpeak

**Realism:** A style of art in which living beings and objects are represented in an artwork as they appear in real life without stylization or distortion.

**Burnishing:** The process of applying one or more layers of a dry medium (such as colored pencils or graphite) over another to lighten, darken, remove imperfections, or blend the colors or values.

**Impressing:** (also called *indenting* and *incising*) The process of creating impressions, patterns, and/or textures by using a pointed, blunt object to apply pressure to a soft surface.

## Exploring Colored Pencil Drawings

Check out the gorgeous, brilliant colors used to create the colored pencil drawing titled “Pick a Peck of Peppers” (Figure 3).

The reds, oranges and greens almost seem to vibrate.

Figure 3



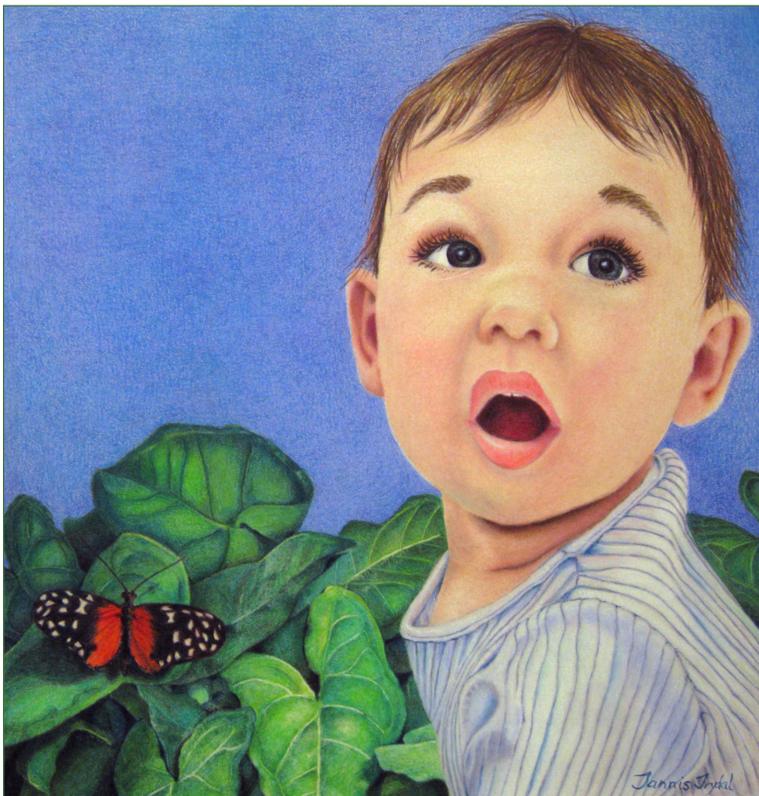
Colored pencil is an excellent medium for portraiture.

Check out the portrait of my granddaughter titled “Kara’s Butterfly” (Figure 4).

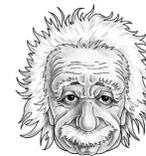
The gentle layering of colors makes her skin appear to glow.

When layered, the colors beneath shine through because the pigment is semi-transparent.

Figure 4



Many art styles can be adapted to the colored pencil medium. “Pick a Peck of Peppers” (Figure 3) is created in the style of realism.



### ArtSpeak

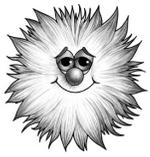
**Impressionism:** A style of painting and drawing that originated in France in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries and sought to capture a visual impression of a subject rather than its objective reality.

**Juxtaposition:** An aspect of composition that refers to the close placement of elements in order to compare or contrast their relationships and/or enhance the message or meaning of the artwork. For example, an artist might juxtapose two or more objects which have opposite associations or interpretations (such as putting something new and shiny beside something that is old and weathered).

**Kneaded eraser:** A soft, pliable type of eraser used to erase parts of a drawing or to gently pat a drawing medium to make a lighter value or line.

The drawing titled “A Tropical Bouquet” (Figure 5) is an example of an artwork created in the style of impressionism where the colors and shapes have been altered to convey a whimsical mood.

This drawing was created using techniques such as layering, juxtaposing, impressing, and color lifting.



### As an Aside

Many artists refer to the process of creating a colored pencil artwork as “painting in colored pencil”.

The non-representational geometric abstract drawing in Figure 6 uses a split complementary color scheme.

Layering and juxtaposing techniques helped transform basic colors and shapes into attention-grabbing colors and shapes.



### Caution!

Do not press hard with colored pencils – especially when dry mixing colors!

If you press too hard at the early stage of shading, the tooth of the paper will flatten and you won’t be able to mix in additional colors.

Figure 5



Figure 6



In Figure 7, the fun drawing titled “Boggle Eye Bob” was drawn using hard-edged areas of solid color to create an impressionistic style.

Realistic colors aren’t necessary, but the values of the colors chosen give the frog a three-dimensional presence.

Applying colored pigment using a sharpened pencil tip creates the effect of highly saturated colors and delicate textures.

“A Field of Tulips on a Hot Sunny Day” (Figure 8) is a fun interpretation of the Post-Impressionism style of Van Gogh and other great artists who used thick textural strokes in oil paint.

Colored pencils worked beautifully to create gestural, loose, expressive strokes of color that resemble the strokes of a paintbrush.

Figure 7



Figure 8



### ArtSpeak

**Wax-bloom:** A hazy coating of wax that may dull a drawing rendered with some wax-based colored pencils. Professional, oil-based colored pencils such as Faber-Castell Polychromos and Lyra Rembrandt are a better choice.

Children’s books are often illustrated using colored pencils. Imagine illustrating a children’s book with “Happy Chappy, the Purple Car” (Figure 9) as the main character.

A solvent (odorless mineral spirits) blended the gradations to bring this toy to life.

Figure 9



## Getting to Know Your Colored Pencils

Colored pencil artists adjust their colors by layering them. Rich, luminescent drawings colored with professional grade colored pencils are so smooth and saturated with color that they resemble paintings.

Colored pencils have many advantages: cleanliness, portability, availability and affordability.

In addition, the medium has no associated health risks and unlike painting, the pigment doesn't need time to dry.

Many different brands of colored pencils can be purchased in sets or as open stock. Buying pencils individually from open stock rather than a set can save money, as a set may include unwanted colors. As you become more experienced, you can add more colors and brands of colored pencils to your collection.



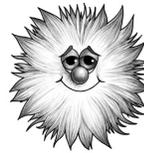
### Caution!

When shopping, don't mistake pastel pencils or watercolor pencils for colored pencils.

They look similar; however, the pigment is different.

The lead in a colored pencil is wax or oil-based, whereas the lead in a pastel pencil is chalky.

You can apply watercolor pencils with water and a brush.



### As an Aside

Colored pencils are a wonderful medium for drawing everything and anything.

They beautifully capture delicate subjects such as portraits and flowers, and also work very well for subjects that require a more vibrant approach.

Colored pencils are also relatively inexpensive, neat, and portable tools for "painting."

Consider purchasing the following open stock Prismacolor Premier colored pencils:

### Neutrals

- 935 Black
- 938 White

### Blue

- 901 Indigo Blue
- 903 True Blue

### Blue-Green

- 905 Aquamarine
- 907 Peacock Green
- 1006 Parrot Green

### Green

- 908 Dark Green
- 909 Grass Green
- 910 True Green

### Yellow-Green

- 911 Olive Green
- 913 Spring Green

### Yellow

- 916 Canary Yellow

### Yellow-Orange

- 917 Sunburst Yellow
- 1003 Spanish Orange

### Orange

- 918 Orange

### Red-Orange

- 922 Poppy Red
- 927 Light Peach
- 939 Peach

### Red

- 923 Scarlet Lake
- 924 Crimson Red
- 926 Carmine Red
- 937 Tuscan Red
- 929 Pink

### Red-Purple

- 931 Dark Purple
- 994 Process Red
- 996 Black Grape

### Purple

- 932 Violet
- 956 Lilac

### Blue-Purple

- 902 Ultramarine Blue (Ultramarine)
- 904 Light Cerulean Blue

### Earths

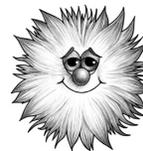
- 941 Light Umber
- 942 Yellow Ochre
- 943 Burnt Ochre
- 947 Burnt Umber (Dark Umber)
- 948 Sepia
- 1028 Bronze

## Getting to Know Your Tools

Second only to selecting quality colored pencils is choosing the right drawing paper.

While learning to draw with colored pencil, a quality, white drawing paper that is heavy and medium-grained is the best choice.

Rough, heavily textured papers cause a speckled and coarsely grained appearance because the colored pigment is unable to fill the tooth of the paper.



### As an Aside

Colored pencil drawings appear luminous because the pigment is semi-transparent. This effect is achieved when colors are applied overtop one another.



### Caution!

Avoid paper with a very smooth or glossy surface! If a paper's surface is too smooth, the pigment in the colored pencils simply won't stick because there's no tooth for them to grab hold of.

As your colored pencil skills advance, you may want to experiment with other types of drawing surfaces.

## Erasing and Color Lifting Tools

Specific tools and techniques can be used to correct small areas or erase entire portions rendered with colored pencil.

You can also refine an artwork using these same techniques and tools to create small highlights or reflected light areas as well as shapes for negative drawing.

Ordinary masking tape is also excellent for erasing colored pencil; however, Magic tape and Frisk Film are ideal for erasing small details because of their transparency.

A kneaded eraser is a fantastic choice to lighten areas rendered with colored pencil, and to create shapes for negative drawing.

## Burnishing Tools

Study Figure 10 to see a wide selection of tools used to color lift. The tool on the far right is an inexpensive wooden modeling tool with a wide nib – perfect for lifting large areas of color.

A double-balled stylus works well to create small highlights and impress lines.



### As an Aside

My favorite color lifting tool is Scotch brand Magic tape because it's transparent.

Small highlights are easy to create using this tape; the colored pencil is almost completely removed.

Figure 10



### Tip!

When drawing in color, values are more important than the chosen colors. If the values of a color ends up too dark in some sections, use a kneaded eraser.

Dab the sections with a kneaded eraser to pull out the colored pigment, rather than dragging the eraser through the shading.



### Tip!

Choose colored pencils with centered cores (the same thickness of wood all around the core).

Make sure that your sharpener blades are sharp so that there is less chance of the lead breaking.

## Odorless Mineral Spirits

Odorless Mineral Spirits (OMS) is a solvent used to soften and liquefy colored pencil pigment to create lovely smooth blends.

Apply it with care so that any delicate layering of colors remains intact.



### Caution!

Dropping your colored pencils on a hard surface causes the lead inside the pencil to weaken and break when sharpened.

## Sharpeners

Because the pencil point of a colored pencil needs to be sharp for a large portion of every drawing, sharpeners are crucial.

Electric, handheld and even sandpaper are all excellent options.

- **Electric:** an electric sharpener is beneficial if a lead is breaking often. Choose one that has at least two openings and stops automatically when the lead is sharp.
- **Handheld:** choose a handheld sharpener that sharpens at a 30-degree angle and has two holes, an oversized and a regular. Use the regular hole for most of your sharpening and the oversized hole if the lead has a tendency to break.
- **Sandpaper:** fantastic for reshaping the pencil tip between major sharpening sessions.

Figure 11



### Tip!

Clean the blades of your sharpener with a cotton bud or toothpick. Sharpening a regular graphite pencil also helps clean the blades.

## Fixative

When wax-based colored pencils are applied heavily, or dark colors are used, an excess of wax can cause a hazy appearance called wax bloom.

Spraying a finished artwork with a fixative can prevent this. Use a tissue or soft cloth to wipe the excess wax off first, then spray the artwork with several light coats of fixative.

A fixative isn't necessary if you used light wax-based colors or an oil-based brand such as Faber-Castell Polychromos.

## Shopping List of Supplies

1. Prismacolor Premier colored pencils
2. Quality drawing paper (white)
3. Kneaded eraser
4. Graphite HB pencil
5. Tracing paper
6. Masking tape
7. Various burnishing tools
8. Small handheld sharpener
9. Electric sharpener (optional)
10. Workable fixative
11. Frisk Film (pkg. of 8 sheets)
12. Odorless mineral spirits (OMS)

Figure 12

