Module 2

The COLORED PENCIL Course

Colored Pencil Basics

What is Explored in This Module?

In this module, we'll explore a few foundations essential for success with colored pencil drawing. We'll begin by looking at the compositional make up of a colored pencil. We'll also take a look at mark-making, how the surface affects marks, mixing blacks, and the "5" do's for better hues.

What Are Colored Pencils?

It's important for an artist to understand their medium. For this reason, let's take a quick peek at what makes up a colored pencil. (We'll explore the different properties of wax and oil-based pencils in detail later in the course through completed drawings.) Colored pencils are manufactured by a variety of companies. Each brand and type of colored pencil is different. The core material found in the pencil affects how it will behave on the surface and the marks that are possible. A colored pencil is simply a pigmented shaft of color held together by a binder that is usually encased in a wooden pencil.

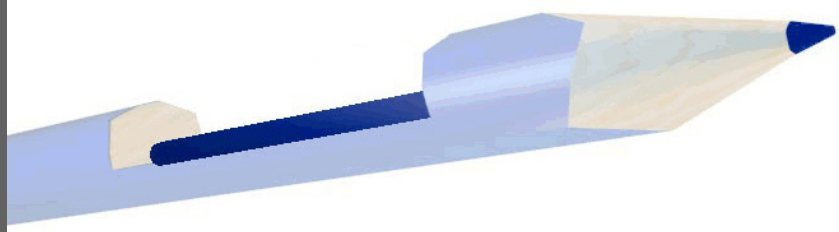
The Core

The binder that holds the pigment determines the type of pencil…

Wax based - most common type. Pigment is held by a waxy binder.

Oil based - pigment is held together by vegetable based oil binder.

Watercolor Pencils - pigment is held together by a gum binder allowing it to be activated with water.



The Casing

There are manufacturers that produce colored pencils that are “woodless”. Most pencils however, are encased in wood. The wood casing of the pencil will affect how it sharpens and protects the pigmented core from breakage. Higher quality pencils are typically encased in Cedar.

Pressure on the Pencil

The pressure placed on the pencil will greatly affect the marks that are made and the behavior of the medium on the surface.

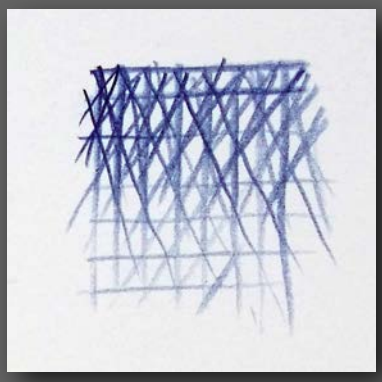
Light Pressure L

Medium Pressure M

Heavy Pressure H

Varying the pressure placed on the pencil will affect the value and intensity of the color that is applied. By varying the intensity, the artist has complete control over the marks and the color.

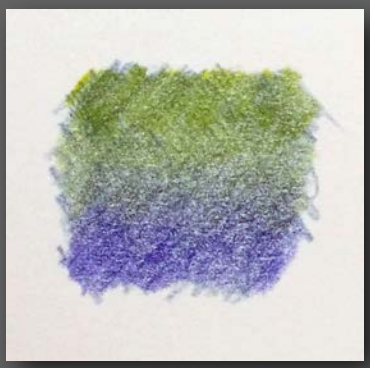
Hatching with varied pressure



Cross hatching with varied pressure

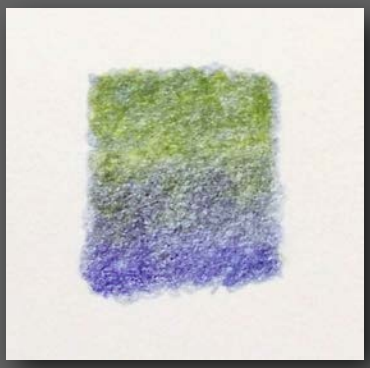
Application Techniques

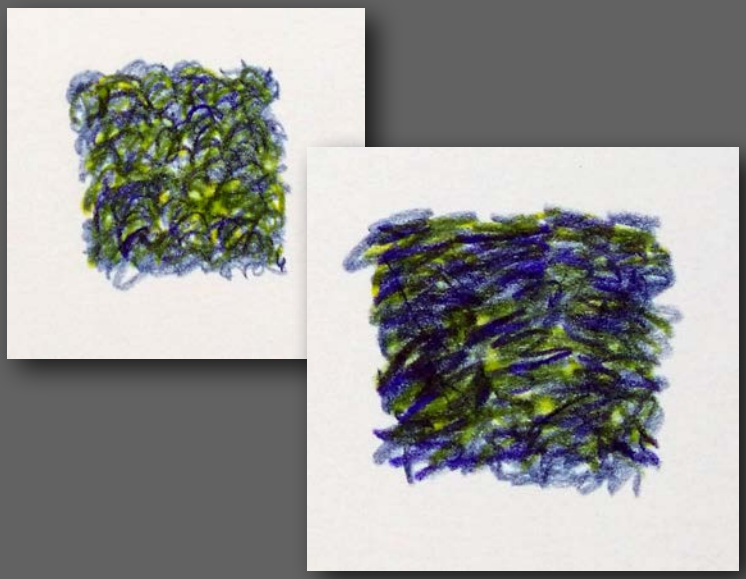
An infinite number of techniques can be used to apply colored pencils to a surface. The manner in which the medium is applied will affect the look that results.



Directional Lines
Light applications of colored pencil are built up using multiple layers of color that are applied with strokes that follow a uniform direction. By changing the direction with each layer, smooth gradations and transitions of color and value can be achieved.

Circling
Light applications of colored pencil are applied using small circles that overlap. Circling produces a very smooth application and is great for creating areas of gradual transition between colors and value.

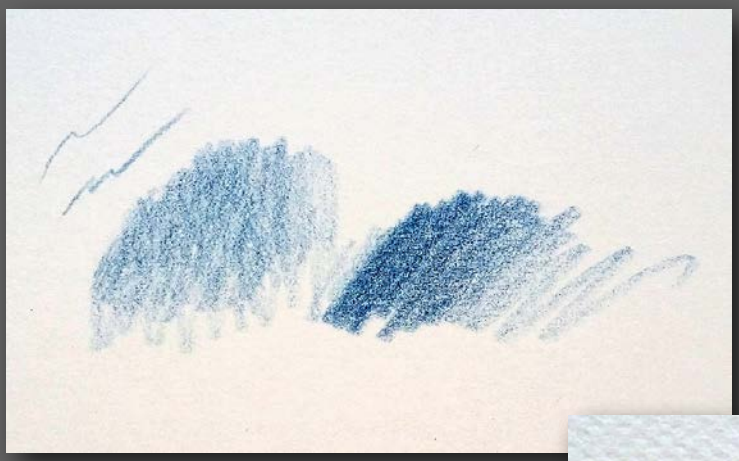




Creative Mark-Making
The artist is only limited by their imagination when it comes to mark-making and applying the material to the surface. Marks will often be made to mimic the textures that are observed in the subject. This requires the artist to be inventive with their marks in order to address the specific needs of the drawing.

Surface Textures

The surface of the paper will naturally affect the mark and the behavior of the colored pencil. The texture of the paper should be heavily considered before any drawing begins.



Smooth Surfaces
Smooth drawing surfaces will result in smoother transitions of color and value. Smooth surfaces will also require less material to be used. (Bristol paper provides a smooth surface for drawing.)

Rough Surfaces
Surfaces with a heavier "tooth" will produce "broken" applications and will potentially require more of the medium to cover areas. The texture that results may be desired for certain subjects. (Mi-Teintes paper provides a rough surface for drawing.)

Mixing Black

Black is a strong pigment and manufactured black can tend to look synthetic. To avoid creating a drawing that looks synthetic, it is advised to avoid the manufactured black and mix a natural black. To mix a natural black, use a combination of dark brown and blue. For this example, Prismacolor Premier colors Dark Umber PC947 and Indigo Blue PC901 are used to create black. Mixing black also allows for control over the color temperature. For cooler blacks, use more blue. For warmer blacks, use more brown.

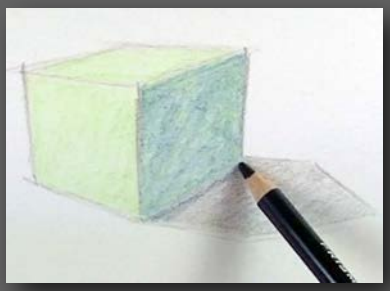
Manufactured Black

Mixed Black

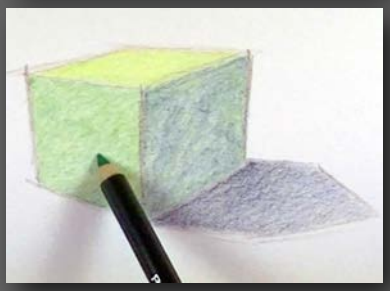
"5" Do's for Better Hues

There are five things to keep in mind when using colored pencils that will lead to higher quality results. We'll call these the "5" do's for better hues…

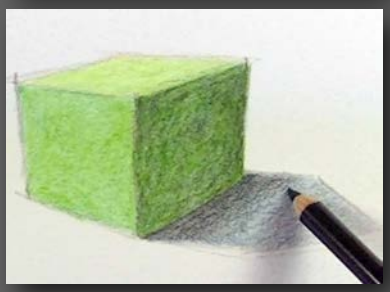
Layer Colors
A single layer of color will not lead to a representational result. Instead, several layers of applications will often be necessary to produce a realistic result.



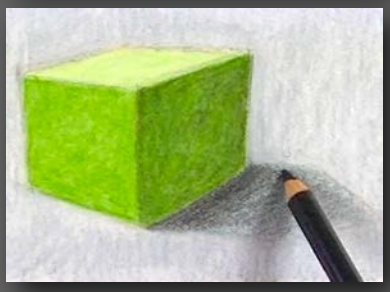
Mix Colors
Colors will naturally mix when they are layered. If light applications are made, colors on layers underneath will show through resulting in optical color mixing. With medium and heavy applications, the binder will move the pigment on the surface causing colors to mix. Mixed colors will almost always lead to more natural looking drawings.



Be Patient
Since many layers of color are often necessary for success, it may be easy to become impatient. Results are not immediate with colored pencils and patience is required for success.



Build Up a Heavy Application
As layers are developed, the end goal is to build up to a heavy application. This typically means that light applications are made in the early stages of the drawing and become progressively heavier as the drawing progresses.



Add Detail Last
Details can be easily added over layers of colored pencil and should be left to the latter stages of the drawing.