



“Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life.”
– Pablo Picasso

Creative Studio

Welcome to the studio, a place to relax, to be inspired and to develop your own creative potential. Here, we will explore ideas and create art with mediums and techniques that will have you achieving rewarding results with your own art.

In this lesson plan, we explore pet portraits in colored pencil, and how to transform a photo of your own dog or cat into a work of art.

Colored pencils are an exciting and versatile medium that offer the artist a large degree of control and ability to capture fine detail. Their rich color adds the depth and dimension that can really bring your pet portrait to life.

Materials:

FC Goldfaber Colored Pencils

Graphite Pencil

Hand-held Sharpener

FC Kneaded Eraser

Paint Thinner

Blending Pen, Colorless Pencil

Tissue

Strathmore Colored Pencil Paper 11 x 14

Drawing Area and Surface

Choose a well lit area to work in, and make sure that your drawing surface is smooth, so as to avoid any uneven marks from scratches or residue that could come through the paper you are drawing on.

Colored Pencil Techniques

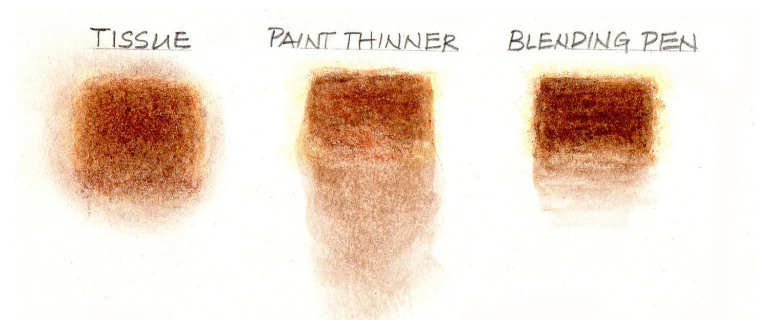
Scumbling – Gradually building color and texture by covering areas with small circular scribbles.



Burnishing – Blending colors by layering any type of mark making until surface appears smooth and waxy.



Blending – Wet and dry techniques to achieve a blended look.



Taking the Reference Photo of Your Dog

I took a picture of my dog, Rosie, against the dark background of our leather chair because it would provide a nice contrast behind her light color. After taking about a dozen quick photos with my phone, I chose this shot because it best captured her warm and gentle character with this expressive look.



A 3/4 profile shot always looks good, but drawing your pet directly facing the camera could be easier, and look good, as well.

TIP

You can enhance the quality of your photo by brightening and defining it a bit in editing on your phone.

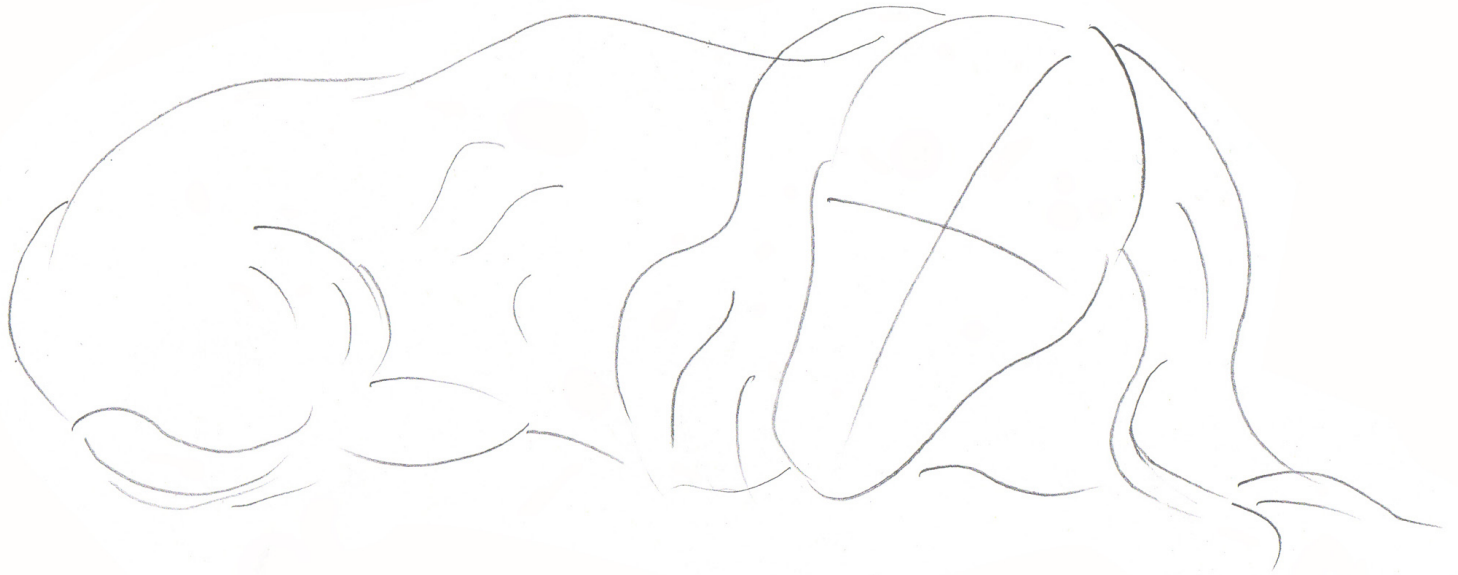
Print an 8-1/2x11 copy out to use as your reference.

Choose Colors and Make a Sample Reference

Choose pencil colors for your pet portrait. Look carefully at your reference photo and choose as many colors as possible; more colors will help add more depth and complexity to the artwork.

Experiment with the pencils by applying different amounts of pressure. Try layering colors to achieve a variety of blends.





1. Make a Gesture Drawing

Begin by lightly sketching two reference lines to indicate the middle of your pet's face for positioning the eyes and nose. Make sure the angles match your photo.

Continue with a loose gesture drawing of your pet's entire body. Capture the position with quick, simple and fluid lines. It is not about drawing perfect details, instead, it is about capturing the essence of your pet's image. This kind of drawing will give you a foundation for a natural and realistic portrait.

Re-draw the figure if necessary until you feel that you have it just right.



2. Continue With More Detail

At this point, choose a light to medium tone colored pencil to continue drawing. Begin with the center of the face and draw the eyes. Draw the nose. If your photo includes the mouth, sketch more detail there. Start defining the edges of the head and ears. Continue with the body. Suggest the detail in the fur with simple lines and shapes.

Carefully erase your graphite pencil gesture lines with a vinyl eraser.

TIP

Set yourself up with scratch paper at hand to confirm the colors you will be using, and to experiment with blending methods as you go.



3. Beginning with Colored Pencil

Begin with the center of the face, and create a light layer of warm foundation using a cream colored pencil. Use the Scumbling technique, slowly covering the area with small circular scribbles. This warm foundation makes sense for most any type or color of dog or cat.

TIP:

It is important throughout your drawing to keep your pencils sharp, so that you can capture detail and the color can get into the tooth (texture) of the paper. One way to do this is to rotate the angle of your pencil as you draw, to keep it evenly “sharpened” as you go. Have a hand-held sharpener available, as well.



Now just jump in with the rest of your pencils. Begin with the eyes, adding detail in the pupil. Create a good highlight by lightly sketching the highlight's shape, leaving the inside of the shape the white of the paper. Fill in with color around the highlight. Start coloring your way outward from the eyes, and make your way down to the nose using the Scumbling technique, and blending with your pencils by layering them from lightest to darkest over the warm foundation. Refer to your photo often for accuracy, using the best colors to portray your own pet's unique markings. Take your time. As the colors begin to build, you will see your pet slowly come to life.

Determine your background color if you do not intend on leaving it white. Lightly lay down the beginning of your few layers of color.

TIP

Almost never use black. Your darkest color should be made up of layers of your other colors, and/or dark brown.

TIP

Protect your unfinished drawing with a plain piece of paper as you work, so as to not smudge or dirty it with your drawing hand.



Drawing Hair and Fur

Examine your photo reference carefully, and draw the variety of textures you see. In this art, there is long silky hair on Rosie's ears and tail, short hair on her face, and soft waves on her back. Draw the hair and fur in the direction that it is growing using a combination of Scumbling and individual pencil strokes.

Here, I created a pleasing visual contrast between the sharp detail of Rosie's face and her foot, and the simplicity of the soft waves on her back. I simplified the amount of waves that I saw in the photo by picking out just the most defining shapes, and rendering/blending them in light and shadow. I left some shapes in the soft waves uncolored to suggest the most highlighted areas. Work slowly, and with a light hand; it is easier to add than to subtract.

TIP

Erasing—the best tip is to try not to erase, but if you must, kneaded erasers work best for lifting light layers of color. Gently dab and lift the area to be lightened as much as possible. Kneaded erasers can also be shaped to handle small areas and detail. This technique, or any type of erasing however, will not work once you have burnished. Always save burnishing for the final step.



Building Your Background

In this art, I created a richly toned dark background by gradually building up four or five layers of color by Scumbling and layering light to dark. I also gradated the background from dark to light, left to right for added interest. As the layers build, the surface gets softer as it becomes loaded with pigment.

As you can see here the white paper tooth is still showing through the color; it has yet to be burnished, as you will see in the following step.



Burnishing, Shadow, and Final Touches

For the final step, I chose a dry blending method with tissue to burnish the background. For this technique, simply fold a piece of tissue in quarters or smaller, and rub the area to be blended until the tooth of the paper is gone and an egg shell finish is achieved. This method is easy, and you can apply quite a bit of pressure with little risk to damaging the paper.

I subtly blended other smaller areas of Rosie's face, ears and body mostly with just the pencils themselves, but I also used a little bit of a colorless blending pencil and a Q-Tip. I achieved the leathery texture of a dog's nose by leaving it unblended. I worked at trying to achieve a softness on the fur edges where the highlighted fur meets the dark background by going back and forth between light pencil strokes, blending pencil and tissue blending.

I created a shadow under Rosie by lightly blending layers of color with just the pencils leaving a bit of a sketchy look.

For my final touches, I looked closely at my work. I adjusted the darkness of the right eye, and added white whiskers with a sharp pencil.

Finally, I signed the art with my initials using a color from my palette.