



Creative Studio

Welcome to the studio, a place to relax, 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.

Soft pastels are a unique medium unlike any other. Their incredible color, texture and ease of use offer an opportunity to expand your artistic abilities like you never thought possible.

In this lesson plan, we learn the steps for creating a floral landscape in soft pastel.

Materials:

FC Soft Pastels 72 count

A few other types of soft pastel (optional)

FC Pitt Pastel Pencils

UArt Premium Sanded Pastel Paper 9 x 12, 400 Grit, Beige

masking tape

clear gesso

rubbing alcohol

push pin

easel

cardboard backing (to fasten paper to on the easel)



***“Where
flowers bloom
so does hope.”***

– Lady Bird Johnson

Nothing says summer like the beautiful native flowers of Maine! This summer, I saw more lovely coneflowers or *echinacea* than ever before, and they were everywhere; springing up tall and strong above most other flowers in summer gardens, meadows, and even along country roads. Maybe it’s a sign from nature; after all, the coneflower is said to be a symbol of strength and healing. It is believed that carrying this blossom with us will keep our spirit strong during turbulent times.

The coneflower is a hardy, low maintenance plant that blooms continuously throughout the summer. A handful of these beauties picked on an early morning walk would make a thoughtful gift to others or maybe even just to yourself. Try them in an old flea market vase on your kitchen table as an encouraging reminder that life is most always good.

Fun fact:

Echinacea is a widely used medicinal plant all over the world for all kinds of illnesses and conditions. Its been used as a painkiller, and to combat a variety of ailments including toothache, coughs, colds, sore throats, and snake bites.



The underpainting

I first draw a 9 x 12 in. area on a larger piece of sanded UArt paper and tape the corners to my easel board.

Using the sides of the Faber Castell pastel sticks, I now begin creating the underpainting by blocking in a thin layer of the darkest colors of the background.



The alcohol wash

Next, I paint a wash of rubbing alcohol over the pastel. This liquefies the pastel creating a dark foundation on which several layers of more pastel will be applied. Drips and unusual wet effects are desirable in an underpainting, and can add a unique look to the finished piece.

I lightly sketch the flower centers into position.

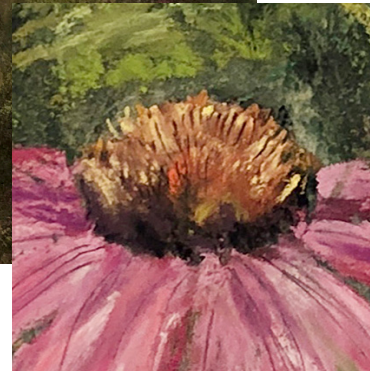


Adding gesso

In this step, I use a clear gesso to add a texture to the background and flower centers. I begin by brushing the gesso onto what will be the grassy area in a loose, painterly manner, with strokes going in all directions, much like how wild grasses would grow naturally. I dab gesso onto the flower centers. While still wet, I use the other end of the brush to loosely draw in stems and sketchy leaves. I let it dry.

I paint the sky with a warm light in the center, and gradate color outward with shades of blue/lavender, getting darker as I reach the upper edges of the paper.

I begin to lightly scumble a combination of warm and cool green over the now textured surface to create the effect of a beautiful tangle of grasses.



Flowers

I paint the coneflower's spiky centers by using a dark purple/brownish color at the base, and then I add orange and yellow in short vertical marks.

I use a push pin tip to scratch in individual spikes to the centers, and lines in the flower petals.



Here, I continue by painting the dark pink petals, followed with lighter pink highlights. I give the petals a more painterly, spontaneous feel by painting them without trying to copy any reference material. I use sweeping, single strokes.

Instead of trying to paint additional small, detailed flowers, I simply “suggest” them hiding in the brush and fading in the distance by using light, single, strokes with a very short piece of pastel stick.



Refine

I use Pitt Pastel Pencils to lightly sketch flower stems and additional tall grasses.

I then add some horizontal strokes of warm and cool green contrasting grasses to add interest and movement.

I add a few small bits of bright contrasting accents here and there, and finally consider the piece done.