**Pastel Supplies for Artists Starting Out in Soft Pastel Painting with a Lindy Severns Workshop**

HI—I hope you leap in and LOVE pastels! So I want to start you out right. Here’s I *recommend*— along with some insights into the medium.

With pastels, more colors are always desirable. If, however, you’re not sure you’ll like pastels, or if you’re unsure of what you most want to paint, don’t waste your art supply money on a large set of soft pastels in a pretty box filled with dozens of colors you won’t use.

Okay. So, what colors *do* you need?

Wish there was an easy answer, but there’s not. You really don’t know until you are painting—*you don’t know you need it until you don’t have it!*

*Most pastel manufacturers offer affordable starter sets of basic colors, as well as their full sets (which can be quite pricey!).* I suggest you begin with a small to medium-sized set of basic colors.

Do you know what you’ll be painting most?

*IF YOU ALREADY LOVE TO PAINT THE SAME SUBJECT i.e. portraits, landscapes, florals… cityscapes…oceans and beaches…(oh! You only paint John Deere tractors? That would make this color selection soooo easy!)*  then shop for a specialty set specific to that subject.

Specialty sets come in themes such as sunset colors, shades of autumn, colors of water, portrait tones, tropical flowers, arid landscapes… the colors are curated to painting that specific subject.

If you have a preferred subject in mind, you could add a specialty set to a starter set of basic colors and be deliriously happy for quite awhile. (FYI: I began with 12 colors, and for several years, that’s all I had, but that’s TOO small to maintain delirious happiness.)

Pastelists, even more than other painters, are addicted to color. If you take to pastels, and I hope you do, you will inevitably want to add colors. That’s an easy thing to do. You can purchase individual sticks in different brands online or in large art supply houses, adding a few sticks at a time to your palette as you see you need them.

When I teach a workshop, I always offer a small, unscientific assortment of colors I use a lot. These are available for purchase by the stick—handy if you get to painting and find you desperately need an adobe color that very moment, or covet a special blue. Buying a few loose sticks is a good way to get a feel for the way different brands handle, and with soft pastels, there are big differences in handling. You will develop strong personal preferences for some brands over others!

With pastels, much more than with other painting mediums, brands vary greatly, and you get what you pay for. I strongly advise getting a smaller set of pro-artist quality pigments than buying a large set of colors in a cheap, student-grade brand.

TIP: “Half-stick” sets give you double the color for the price. And though they look small, the half-sticks will last through lots of paintings—then replace your favorite colors with full-sized sticks later. I use half-sized sticks in my plein air paint box so I can pack more colors in a small space.

I’m not an art supply dealer, so I don’t make a bundle of money on any of the supplies I offer, but sometimes I buy in bulk and can pass on savings. Paper is an example of that. And paper matters tremendously.

I will have assorted papers in varied sizes available for purchase at the workshop. I strongly suggest you wait and pick up paper during class. We’ll talk about the characteristics of different papers, and you can try varioust papers without having to purchase large sheets or pads.

Jim and I will also bring foam board\* cut into different sizes. Foam board makes an awesome surface mount your paper on. Besides using foam board as a backing for your painting, you can then store your finished pastel paintings in protective foam board “sandwiches”. (I’ll show you how to make these.)

**Where to find Pastel Supplies?**

Dakota Art Pastels and Dick Blick Art Materials are great, reliable online sources for quality supplies, usually at the lowest price. Online prices vary monthly; cost at an art supply store or hobby store may be double the online price, but hobby stores do have those great promos and sales. Comparison shop!

<https://www.dickblick.com/>

<https://www.dakotapastels.com/>

So. Enough advice. Here are some specifics:

*Remember, this is only a suggestion for the minimum supplies you will need—certainly buy more if you wish, but this will get you started.*

These first colors you buy will become your core palette. You don’t “mix” or blend pastels like you do other paints – or you won’t, after taking my class! Pure colors are always preferable to smudgy ones.

You will need 3 types: soft pastels, hard pastels and pastel pencils. The soft pastels are the most vibrant, and will be the most expensive. They will also be what you use to paint with 90% of the time. The hard pastels and pencils are useful for underpainting (more on that in class) and drawing, plus dragging colors into one another without muddying anybody. A broad color assortment of these harder sticks and pencils is nice, but not nearly as necessary as with your soft sticks.

(And NO oil pastels. That’s a different medium entirely.)

Here’s a bare-bones **beginning kit** in brands I’ve used for decades:

**REMBRANDT\* SOFT PASTELS**

**Set of 60, Half Sticks about $80**

**Prismacolor NuPastels HARD PASTELS**

**Set of 24 about $ 19**

**Stabilo CARB-OTHELLO PASTEL PENCILS (PASTEL Pencils -----NOT colored pencils!!!)**

**Set of 24 about $30**

\* I recommend **Rembrandt** soft pastels for beginners, because

(1) they are workhorses that lay on color without breaking, chipping or scratching your paper

(2) they are relatively hard (as soft pastels go) and thus, don’t get you in much trouble in the way of making mud and messes on your paper

(3) they are affordable

(4) they are a reliable, high quality brand of artist grade pastel sticks with rich color and are a good size to hold

That said, my all-time favorite brand of soft pastels is **Terry Ludwig**, and that’s what *I* have the most of. So why don’t I recommend Ludwigs as your base set?

(1) They are quite soft and thus subject to chips and breaks

(2) They are so soft, you’re in danger of blending muddy messes on your paper without meaning to

(3) The soft pigment will fill your paper much faster than you might want to fill it --I’ll be teaching you how to layer color upon color onto your paper—using Ludwigs requires a lighter, more practiced touch

(4) They are expensive, and prone to make you cry when you drop one

I will have some individual Ludwig sticks in my art supply offerings at the workshop. If you have a light touch, or if you do want to jump right in and start with Ludwigs, they come in lovely sets, but no half-sticks.

**Terry Ludwig Basic Landscape Colors set of 30 about $145**

Or look at other Ludwig sets—there are many!

***In addition to your paints, please bring:***

A pencil sharpener (or borrow mine)

A roll of paper towels to keep your hands clean (or swipe the gallery’s)

A roll of artists’ tape (not the same as masking tape; if you can’t find this, I will have rolls available for purchase)

A plastic bottle of cheap rubbing alcohol (not single malt, although that does sound good after a day of painting….)

A 2” cheap painter’s brush, nylon or bristle

Photo references to paint\* from—or your phone photos! (I often paint from my iPad, but not my laptop because of the dust.) Bring an assortment of pics because you may change your mind about what you want to paint after the lectures and demos each day.

A sketchbook that you can do quick exercises in or use to take notes..

*We will provide each artist with an easel, a table and a chair. And lots of information and inspiration!!!*

Feel free to email me with any questions. My wifi is erratic and I don’t always answer promptly, but I don’t bite.

**Lindy@LindyCSeverns.com**

Now:

I’m looking forward to introducing you to pastel painting !!!

My best,

Lindy