

Ten Top Tips using Artists Pencils

by Malcolm Cudmore

- 1 Make test charts of all the colours in your set. Keep them in a sketchbook for regular reference. Experiment with multiple layers of the same colour, layers of complimentary colours or modifying the basic 'temperature' of a colour by adding a light layer of blue, yellow or red.
- 2 For subtle and evenly graduated areas of colour, work with a light, even pressure and create layers of light colour.
- 3 Experiment with a range of marks; you can make large/small, random/regular, circular/directional etc.
- 4 Invest in a good quality battery or electric sharpener for regular even points on your pencils. If using small hand sharpeners, replace them or change the blade regularly to avoid damage to the wood casing or breaking the coloured core.
- 5 Keep a sandpaper block handy so that you can tidy up a dull point that isn't ready for full sharpening.
- 6 Marks or areas of tone made with pencils can be lightened and sometimes completely removed with a battery or kneadable eraser. Shape the tip of your eraser for removing precise areas. Keep an eraser pencil handy and use the brush end to remove eraser debris from your work.
- 7 Establish the basic tonal range of your picture with an overall light under-drawing in a neutral colour (e.g. Burnt Umber and/or Ultramarine or Indigo) before worrying too early about colour accuracy.
- 8 Use the side of the pencil to cover larger areas of work.
- 9 Artists Pencils are not water-soluble. However, they can be softened or blended with a solvent or odourless thinners applied sparingly with a cotton bud.
- 10 Use a Derwent blender and burnisher pencil for increasing the evenness and blending layered colour mixes.

