



artist daily
presents

COLORED PENCIL TECHNIQUES:

Create Faster, Richer
Effects in Your Colored
Pencil Drawings



Variation(s)
2001, colored pencil, 12 x 16.
Private collection.

Faster, Richer, Effects IN COLORED PENCIL

JANIE GILDOW TEACHES TECHNIQUES OF LAYERING COLORED PENCIL OVER WATERCOLOR WASHES AND APPLYING THE WAX-BASED PENCILS ON BLACK BOARD. BOTH TECHNIQUES HELP ARTISTS CREATE RICHER DRAWINGS IN LESS TIME. **by M. Stephen Doherty**

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hen Janie Gildow demonstrates techniques for drawing with colored pencil during the Art Methods & Materials Show (www.artmethods.com), she will be revealing some

of the methods that sparked her interest in the wax-based pencils more than 10 years ago. “Something clicked with me when I completed my very first drawing of Queen Anne’s lace sitting in a jar filled with water,” she recalls. “I remember saying to myself, I think I’ll do this forever. There was something about the process of recording my observations with colored pencil that was very satisfying.”

When Gildow retired in 1995 after more than 30 years of teaching, she was already winning awards and developing a following among collectors with her drawings of animals, people, boats, and still-life arrangements; and she was also establishing herself as an authority on the medium with two books she either wrote or co-authored, *Colored Pencil Solution Book* and *Colored Pencil Explorations* (both North Light Books, Cincinnati, Ohio). During the process of working with the artists who contributed to those books, Gildow became acquainted with techniques that expanded her creative options.

“I interviewed a number of artists about their techniques and tried some of them so I could write informatively about their processes,” Gildow explains. “One of the artists, Kristy Kutch, recommended techniques that solved one of the common complaints about colored pencil: that it requires an extraordinary amount of time to complete a drawing. Kristy suggested the “poor man’s airbrush” technique of spattering watercolor from a toothbrush and

Day Lily With Spatter
2005, watercolor and colored pencil, 4¾ x 5¾. Collection the artist.



then applying the colored pencil over the watercolor. Drawings created in that manner seemed complete without every square inch of paper being covered in strokes of the colored pencil.

“The technique I developed after receiving that advice is spattering watercolor on the drawing surface by flicking it off the bristles of a toothbrush,” Gildow explains. “I dip the toothbrush into a pool of watercolor on my palette, blot away some of the larger droplets, and then flick the bristles so the paint spatters. Sometimes I lay stencils or cut sheets of frisket on the drawing surface to confine the spatters to specific shapes, and other times I just let the droplets create random patterns. It’s hard to exercise a lot of control over the toothbrush, but I can formulate patterns that will work well with the subjects I have in mind.

“I’ve used an airbrush to apply controlled mists of watercolor on the board,” Gildow adds. “In those situations I use frisket and masking fluid to establish the boundaries of the spatters. The air-



brush is a great tool, but it does require more time for creating the stencil patterns and applying the paint.”

Another mixed-media technique Gildow employs is building up the surface of the paper with layers of pastel, spraying a light mist of fixative, and then drawing with colored pencil. “Layers of pastel can create a slightly rougher texture once they are sealed with fixative,” she explains. “One could also use casein or acrylic for a variation on the density and texture of the underpainting. The choice of medium depends on the kind of surface one prefers.”

In her exploration of colored pencil, Gildow also became interested in working on colored papers and boards. “My first drawing of Queen Anne’s lace was done on a sheet of green paper, and I really liked the way the green became integrated into the image when it appeared between the strokes of the pencil,” she explains. “Later I experimented with other types of colored board and paper. Some of the surfaces were too thin or too textured to work well with colored pencil, and some of the colors weren’t

Apricots and
Cherries
2005, colored
pencil, 5 x 7¾.
Collection the artist.

GILDOW’S MATERIALS

Gildow recommends her students bring the following supplies to a workshop:

MEDIA

- PrismaColor colored pencils (48 color set or larger)
- water-soluble colored pencils
- a few soft pastel sticks
- watercolor set (a basic set of tubes or pan colors)
- HB graphite pencil
- black extra-fine permanent marker

BRUSHES

- No. 6 round watercolor brush

PAPER

- Saral graphite transfer paper

OTHER

- plastic palette
- battery-powered pencil sharpener
- kneaded eraser or poster putty (for lifting color)
- blending stump
- paper towels
- toothbrush
- scissors
- dust brush
- soft white eraser
- water container
- masking tape



as appealing, but the toned surface helped unify the composition and reduce the amount of time required to complete a satisfying drawing. White surfaces just look incomplete if they aren't sufficiently covered.

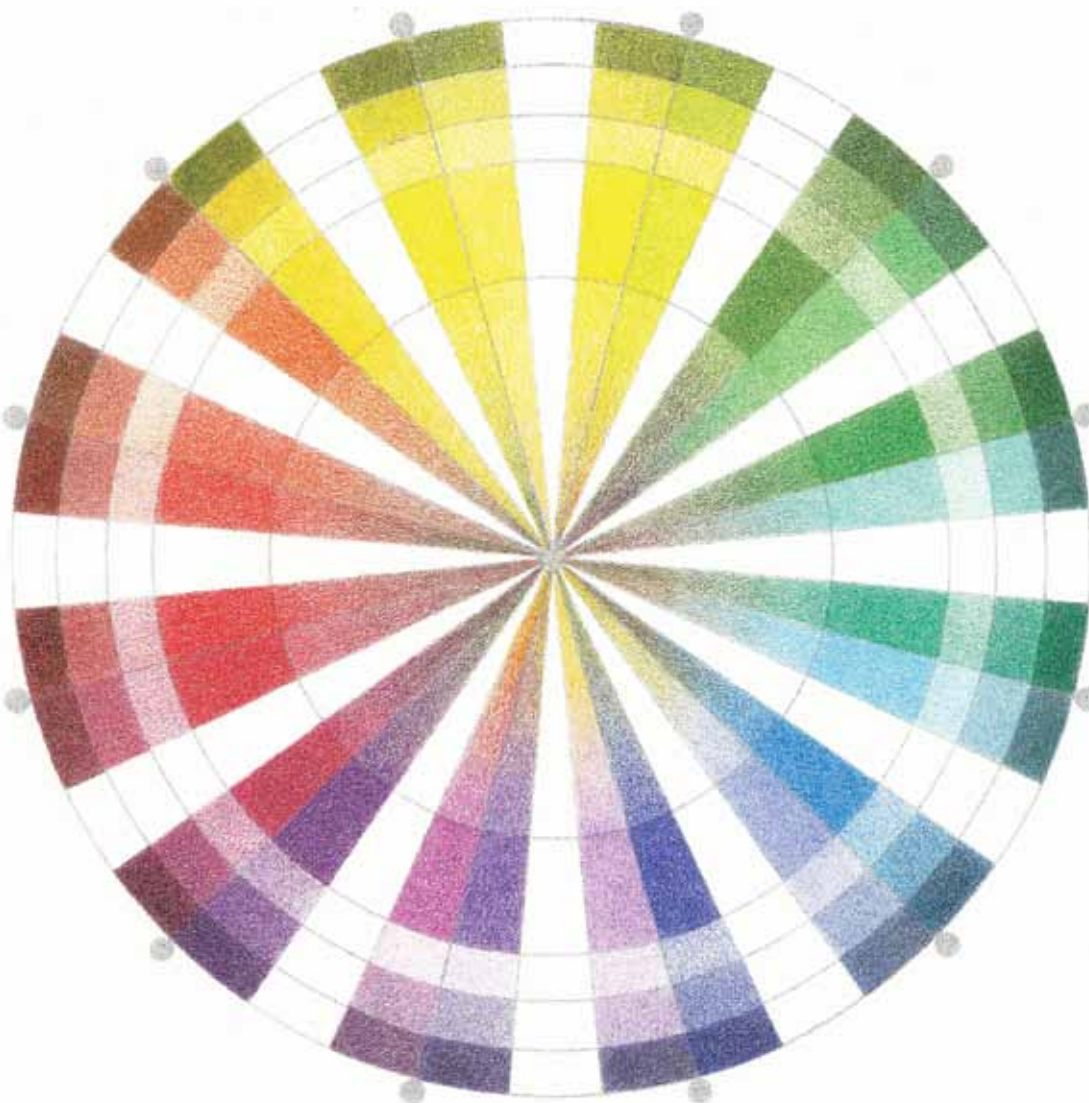
"Among the surfaces that really worked well was black Crescent board," Gildow adds. "It has a hard, smooth surface that makes it an ideal ground, and the black adds drama and sparkle to certain images—particularly reflective surfaces such as crystal, water, or metal. I'm especially fond of drawing water in a glass, droplets of water on flower petals, or refracted light coming through crystal. Students are often dazzled by drawings of those subjects and want to know my secrets, and I show them that it's a relatively simple process of looking carefully and analyzing ways of capturing those images."

Although Gildow does some of these intricate

drawings from life, most of them are created from her own photographs. "I once tried doing a drawing of sliced onions from life and I kept having to slice up more and more onions every time I sat down to work," she explains. "The air in my studio became saturated with the smell of onion, and after a few hours the shriveled objects no longer looked like sliced onions. I realized it takes so long to develop a colored pencil drawing of any size and one can't count on a living subject remaining static for that long. Besides, it is much easier to re-create the appearance of a two-dimensional subject on a two-dimensional surface."

Like many artists, Gildow has a digital camera that allows her to preview her photographs and easily adjust the values and contrast. "I don't get involved in manipulating the images in my computer, but I do take advantage of the easy process of cropping images, making them lighter or darker,

Silver and
Velvet
2002, colored
pencil, 11 x 16.
Collection the artist



or reducing the contrast. When I'm satisfied with the photographs I make prints and refer to those while I'm drawing."

Because of the amount of time that it takes Gildow to complete a drawing, even when working from photographs on toned surfaces, she writes notes to herself about the specific pencils and sequence of application used in each section of the drawing. "I have an ability to figure out the best combination of colors before I begin a drawing and remember them while I'm working, but it still helps me to write things down so I don't waste time when I return to a drawing after several days," she explains. "I encourage my students to do the same

thing, in part because it is a helpful procedure, and in part because beginners have a tougher time figuring out a plan for layering colors.

"For example, it sometimes makes sense to draw shadow patterns with the complement of the local color," Gildow continues. "It might help to first draw the shades on a red apple with the complement—green—and then layer various shadows of red. Or, the best plan might be to draw the bright shapes and gradually build toward the darks so that the highlights really stand out. It takes some experience in working with the medium to know how to judge which will be the best approach to realizing one's intentions. That's why I developed the Color Predictor

The Color Predictor
This is the color wheel Gildow developed to help her students produce tints, tones, shades, and complements.



Secrets
2001, colored
pencil, 8 x 11.
Private collection.

for my students to help them understand what happens when you combine colors in specific ways.

“If a student hasn’t been using the pencil for very long, they may not have established the instinctive color-mixing trait that more experienced artists have,” Gildow explains. “Without that sense, one may have difficulty choosing the colors they’ll need for layering local color, highlighting colors, forming shadow colors, and punching in cast shadows. The Color Predictor explains how to develop tints, tones, shades, and complements. The formulas contained in the Predictor help students select colors and combine them by showing exactly what happens when two or more colors are layered over each other. I find it helps to go through all these exercises, no matter how much experience or natural ability one might have.” ■

ABOUT THE ARTIST

JANIE GILDOW is an accomplished artist, author, and workshop instructor. She has been featured in many art magazines and books, and has authored and co-authored two books on colored pencil. She is an award-winning, signature member of the Colored Pencil Society of America (www.cpsa.org) with five-year recognition. For more information on the artist, visit her website: www.janiegildow.com.

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