

Demonstration

October 3, 2022 Meeting

Stefanie Verish, “Playing with Pastels - Pushing the Limits”

We thank artist **Stefanie Verish** for her enjoyable and informative demonstration on **Pastels** at our October meeting. There were 29 members in attendance, many of whom we hadn't seen in a long while. Lee's audio visual set up was perfect and ready to go long before the formal business meeting started. Stefanie took that time to start working on the under layer of her pastel painting, which she reviewed at the start of her demo. We thank Bernie Russ, who volunteered to assist our program director, Joan Milligan (now residing in Nebraska), for introducing Stefanie to the group.



Stefanie graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University with a Bachelor's Degree in studio art and minors in botany and zoology. Her aspiration was to become a wildlife artist, inspired by the work of Robert Bateman and the artists of the Hudson River School. Her education in biology led to a career as a naturalist-artist with Cleveland Metroparks and now she works as a horticulturist with the Cleveland Botanical Garden.



Pastels were invented in 16th century Italy, initially only available in red, black, and white. That's a far cry from today, as now there are more than 1600 different hues and shades available. It can all be quite overwhelming. It's very hard to know where to start – color, price, function. Pastel is not really a chalk but pure powdered pigments mixed with enough gum Arabic, fish or animal glue to bind them. Stefanie uses both hard pastels and soft pastels, in lots of colors. *(Soft pastels are composed of pigment, water and a smaller amount of chalk or artificial binder. The soft texture of these pastels can create smooth,*

smudgy lines and intense color. Hard pastels are drawing sticks made of pigment, water and chalk, which create sharp, bright lines on light and dark papers.) Soft pastels are expensive and “I go through them fast...it's not uncommon to pay \$200 a set.” She uses different brands, like Sennelier and several others. She always wears gloves since oils from her hands can affect the medium. Other supplies include: blending stumps, pastel pencils for starting sketch, foil tray underneath to catch dust. Use paper with “tooth” like Canson or rough watercolor paper, if using more water.



Working vertically on an easel, Stefanie explained the underpainting that she started earlier. She added color on the paper and then used a cheap watercolor brush with water to tint the entire surface. She likes using her own photos as references. For this demo, she selected a photo of an orchid. Flowers like orchids are “forgiving” in terms of color and structure. Starting from the background to foreground, she works on whole picture at once. She works from the bigger picture down to the smaller details. Pastels are a fast medium. That is, you don't need to wait for them to dry and you know when you've reached the point of saturation, because the chalk dust will start

falling off the page. “I go through darks a lot – they pop!” “At some point you just have to say, I’m going to leave it alone.” At the end, she adds a little bit of contrasting color. “Anyone who takes an art class with me knows I can’t resist putting purple in the shadow.” Near the end, her photo reference long since ignored, is where she has fun playing by adding little bits of deeper color. She adds color accents, leaving a mark and not blending it. Now she says, “I’m going to leave it alone.”

Tips for handling pastels:

1. Don’t use fixative. It can prevent dust but reduce vibrancy.
2. Use a space in framing with glass.
3. Take care in handling; if turned, the dust will get on the glass.
4. To transport pastels, tape parchment paper or waxed paper to the top.

Stefanie uses other mediums too, like watercolor, oil pastel and mixed media, depending on the subject she wants to paint. She even does wood carving and resin casting. She goes from one medium to another. “You’re here to experiment. Use your brain. I find I like to look for the next challenge a lot. I’m not attached to the things I do. On vacation, I even gave a painting to a little girl watching me paint.” Thanks again to Stefanie! Everyone enjoyed her demonstration. She was informative and very enthusiastic about her work. We learned a lot...a ‘gold-star’ demo! The blank piece of paper in the beginning ended up a beautiful finished orchid pastel, which she then donated to Euclid Art.



The hostesses, Rozenia Cunningham, Cynthia Beacham & Deborah Johnson were great. Hot apple cider was a big hit...as were all the other goodies - pound cake, cookies, fruit/veggie cups, chicken wings. Ellen said that she was overwhelmed by all the food and needed a stronger, larger plate to carry everything! Rozenia quipped “we didn’t expect everyone to take everything!” And “why not!”



Also, members loved looking through the binder with “EAA Art of the Envelope: 2016-2021 Newsletter Envelopes” which board members decorated and sent to our webmaster, Kirk Ramsey in NH each month. They had questions and comments about the creative process that produced the collection.