

VIVID COLOR

INTRODUCTION BY JOHN O'HERN

Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo drew with natural chalks in the late 15th century, usually in red, white and black. In the early 16th century powdered color pigments were mixed with a binder such as gum Arabic, fish or animal glue and formed into sticks to provide a wide variety of colors.

John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) was the first American painter to work in pastels. He created 55 pastel portraits before leaving for England in 1774. Several of them are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art which notes they are “a rare achievement for a colonial painter in such a costly, rare, and painstaking medium.”

Pastels have gone in and out of favor over the years but today are considered a worthy medium, no longer costly and rare, but still painstaking.

The Pastel Society of America (PSA) was founded in 1972 to serve “the pastel artist, her/his public, and the artistic community through education, example, and activism for the medium.”

Liz Haywood-Sullivan is a master pastelist with PSA and, from 2013 to 2017, was president of the International Association of Pastel Societies (IAPS). She says, simply, “Light is my muse, landscape my choice, pastel my passion.” Her landscapes are often scenes along the south shore of Boston where she lives.

The ever-changing saltmarshes are depicted in their warm fall beauty in *Turning Tides*, its title a reminder that not only are there seasonal changes in the marsh but twice daily changes as the sea floods and ebbs. Over the years, her approach to using the medium has changed as well. The trees in the distance, rendered as silhouettes and the suggestion of the verticality of the grasses in the foreground would have been rendered with more detail in the past. The painting is a testament to the versatility of





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1. Anne Kindl, *Pétales Gloire du Matin*, pastel on paper, 5 x 7" 2. Valley House Gallery, *Low Tide, Venice*, pastel on Strathmore illustration board, 19½ x 29", by Brian Cobble.
3. Vose Galleries, *Turning Tides*, pastel on paper on panel, 16 x 20", by Liz Haywood-Sullivan. 4. Christine Obers, *Hope the Rescue Horse*, pastel on paper, 14 x 11"

the medium and her skill in mastering it.

Anne Kindl's *Pétales Gloire du Matin* is from her ongoing series of abstract florals, *Petals*. She is a signature member of PSA and a member of the IAPS master circle. In

Pétales, she evokes an emotional response to color with broad areas of intense color outlined in sinuous contrasting lines. The intense, nearly pure pigment recalls the work of the French surrealist Odilon Redon

(1840–1916), who wrote, "True art lies in a reality that is felt."

Kindl says, "Nature has been a constant healing force throughout my life and allows my soul to breathe in this often crazy world.

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS PASTELS



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5. Anna Lisa Leal, *Serpentine Verdigris*, pastel on board, 32 x 32" 6. Jim Hallenbeck, *Pines at Umstead*, soft pastel on UArt paper board, 16 x 20" 7. Smokey Thomas, *Mt. Taylor Sunset*, chalk pastel on black paper, 44.37 x 30" 8. Jim Hallenbeck, *Late Spring, Eno River*, soft pastel on UArt paper board, 12 x 16" 9. Susan Dunker, *Weaver Bird Nests, Tanzania*, pastel, 18 x 21½" 10. Anna Lisa Leal, *And Unto Dust Shalt Thou Return*, pastel on board, 32 x 40" 11. Anna Lisa Leal, *Duenna*, pastel on board, 27 x 48"

The elements of nature are the pillars on which my art is developed. My intent is to bring the essence of a moment to the canvas using vibrant hues and beautiful marks. My ultimate hope is to continue to share this journey of learning with others who have found the courage and creativity to express themselves through art."

Brian Cobble began painting in oil and now works primarily in pastel. He is a PSA master pastelist. He controls the medium to create nearly photorealistic scenes. The strict rectilinearity of the shadowed structures in his *Low Tide, Venice*, is relieved by the ripples of the reflected sunlight on the canal.

He explains, "Although photography plays an important role in my work, I've

always thought the ultimate goal is not realism, but believability. The photos provide a starting point—sketches in effect—to be manipulated, exaggerated, added to or subtracted from, or blended with subject matter from other sources—or simply invented—to create an image that (hopefully) speaks to the viewer but exists only in my imagination."

Read on to explore more works of art rendered in the pastel medium and hear from the artists who created them.

California-based artist Christine Obers' specialty is commissioned portraits of horses, every one of which has its own unique character. "This is what I capture in my artwork," she says. "As I work, I go

deeper into the personality of my subject. I capture the minute details that resonate on an emotional level, subtle things like an expression, a whorl of hair on the neck, a tuft by the ears. I love the pastel medium for allowing me the range of textures and colors that make my portraits come alive." Obers teaches art to groups, one-on-one, online and in person.

The creative mission of Anna Lisa Leal is to convey the beauty of "botanical beasts—the frequently maligned group of spikey and spiny specimens—cactus, agave, succulents and their flowers," she says. Her piece *And Unto Dust Shalt Thou Return*, for instance, is a representation of a downed, dead agave in the Fort Davis mountains of Texas. "The



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agave had pronounced withering in the leaves, which appear as wrinkles mimicking a wood grain-like pattern. In the agave leaves where the outer 'skin' breaks down, you can see the fibers exposed in some areas. This led me to the question: are these agave markings simply the marks of death or is it the marks of a life lived? I choose to believe it's the latter. I now look for these well-worn specimens...In a world where youth and beauty are venerated, I enjoy exploring the alternative view," she says.

The foundation of **Jim Hallenbeck's** artwork was built during his early college

years and, most recently, the instruction he received in numerous workshops—most notably with his teacher, mentor and friend Albert Handell. "I am on a journey, a road to discovery of the artist that I am and will become. I paint what I want to paint—what excites me, what motivates me and what challenges me," he says. "As an artist, I seek beauty in the ordinary scene and bring it to life with color. In turn, I seek a narrative in my paintings, which I hope sparks an emotion or memory that is meaningful to my collectors."

Travel photos inspire the art of **Susan**

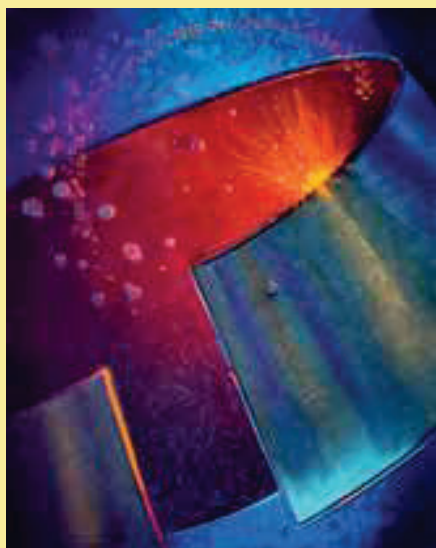
Dunker. "I employ pure vivid color, used for its expressive qualities, similar to the Fauvist movement of the early 1900s," says the artist. "I use pastels for their immediacy and pure color. Sometimes I enjoy using 'open' or arbitrary color, making the painting more impactful and exciting visually."

"Inspiration is a feeling," says New Mexico artist **Smokey Thomas.** "It's a captured moment I must immediately bring to life on paper, canvas or whatever may be available. In order to complete my art, I must have a clear mind with no distractions." The artist's inspiration comes

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS PASTELS



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12. Laura Pollak, *A DROP OF LIGHT*, pastel, 20 x 16" 13. Laura Pollak, *EMBRACING THE LIGHT*, pastel, 20 x 16"
14. Laura Pollak, *EXCITING NEWS*, pastel, 16 x 20"

from life itself. "The beauty, the ugly, the abstract, the memories, the ideas, the techniques, the real and unreal is what drives me. Being an artist is who I am and I cannot live without it."

Laura Pollak's abstract works have gained global attention and are featured in exhibitions, museums and private collections across the world. Her ability to create visual drama and mystery have garnered her top awards. Pollak's paintings

are best known for their unique characteristic: "they glow." She says, "When I began painting years ago, my goal was to achieve some semblance of the landscape. I was just chasing light. Now, I make my own light!" Her works use familiar emotions and events to capture and share a feeling with the viewer. "Abstract art is like a great work of fiction—some reality mixed with imagination that allows you, the viewer, to engage and finish the story." ●

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