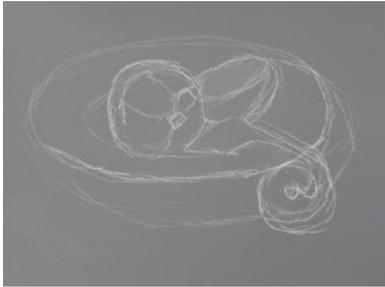


DEVELOPING A PASTEL PAINTING OR DRAWING

by Gainor Roberts

1



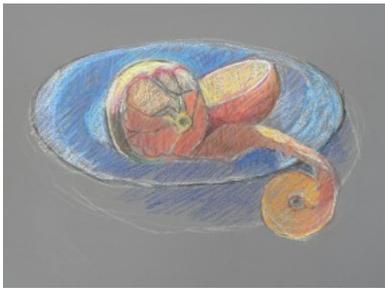
The start of any work of art is the most important part. If it is not OK now it will not be OK later! You should be thinking of how the objects in your painting are placed on the paper. It is also very handy to think in advance about framing and matting; a simple adjustment in size can make a huge difference in the price and type of mat and frame in the end. Here you can select a contrasting color pastel stick or pastel pencil and lightly start to draw in the subject.

2



On a toned paper I start with the lights first and work into the darks. I often try to leave the paper as the middle value. In this demonstration the whole background is left unworked and is the middle tone of the entire piece. I am working on ArtSpectrum paper which is a very nice sanded paper that picks up plenty of pigment but not too much. I lightly indicate where the highest lights are and start to work into color where I see it.

3



Working around the whole painting I establish the darks and begin to develop more accurate color. Pastel gets its luminosity by layering color over color. I do not ever smudge or smear the pastels to “blend” them. This will make a muddy mess unless you really know what you are doing. You will find that the colors will blend naturally when one color is worked over another. You can lighten an area by adding a layer of pale color, adjust it with stronger hues, and keep adding rich color until you have what you want. The darks will sing with excitement if they are filled with color.

4



I continue working the painting, adding more and more color. Now I am unhappy with the drawing of the plate and feel it must have some attention. I spend some time reconstructing all the forms in the painting and make sure that some details are enhanced. The plate seems to be so crooked, but it is not hard to make adjustments to it. I add more color and depth to the shadow under the plate and add more strong color to the orange skin and punch up the lights again with pale colors and white.

5



Notice how I have avoided working into the details until the end. I am now ready to put in the reflections on the plate and pay attention to other details of the orange itself. Now I am trying to get the feel and character of that juicy part of the orange and the dryness of the peel. It is best to leave all those details until the very end. Adding them will not make a better painting! Once it is done I can spray it lightly with a fixative, or leave it unsprayed. Fixative can change the appearance of the surface of the pastel, and so most often I leave my work unsprayed.