

Getting Ready for the Mixed Media Show?

If you haven't started your mixed media and pastel masterwork(s) yet, it's time to get crackin' – the deadline to enter is **July 22!** Former MPS President, Deborah Maklowski, has been having a whole lot of fun playing around with acrylics, looking for ways to combine acrylic mediums, gels, and colors with pastels on various surfaces for interesting results. Looking for ideas? Deborah shares her multimedia journey to help inspire your creativity:

DEBORAH writes:

I was primarily interested in getting a lot of obvious texture on the surface of the mixed media pieces I was planning, since that is often the quality that pastel lacks. So in early June, I picked up acrylic fiber paste, glass bead gel, and a gel with teeny white chips in it, along with some mixed media books, to get me started. Being the methodical sort, I set all this out on my worktable, along with acrylic materials I already had on hand: pumice gel, gloss and matte mediums, and an assortment of fluid acrylic colors. These included metallics (gold, copper, silver, micaceous iron oxide, etc.) and interference acrylics, which are pearly, with a complementary a color shift. And my pastels, of course!

I also set out a variety of surfaces, including Wallis and UArt sanded papers, white MultiMedia Pastel Board, gray Ampersand PastelBord, Richeson gatorboard pastel surface in a variety of colors, and Yupo, a bright white plasticized painting surface made for watermedia that gives some truly wild results.

Then I just started to play. Here's a photo of all my test swatches:



Deborah experimented with several surfaces and media.

I documented each swatch (so that if something turned out well, I would know how I did it!) and kept thorough notes. Some stuff did not really work (fiber paste, for instance, is just too lumpy to take pastel well), but other materials were a lot of fun. The boards worked best: the unmounted papers – Wallis and UArt – buckled under the very wet washes I started with, even though they were taped down, and never really recovered. Yupo was very interesting. Since it isn't paper, it doesn't buckle at all, and the

acrylic washes look like marble when they dry. I dropped salt, dripped lots of paint, and sprayed alcohol into the wet acrylic washes; I painted on glass bead gel, which dries transparent, and added color to the flake gel and painted that on. I cut up some copper-colored netting and ribbon and used acrylic medium to adhere them to the surface of some pieces. I peeled some of the dried acrylic “skins” off the aluminum pans I used for palette and adhered them, too. As Charlie Hunter would say, I “made Big Mess, had Big Fun.”

When the first layers were dry, I layered clear pumice gel over the places where I wanted pastel and let it dry. I discovered that, when adding pastel to the pumiced areas, I liked the look of it better when I used a Q-tip to first rub the pastel stick and then daub the color onto the surface. I also liked adding a layer of clear gel medium and then using a craft knife to scrape pastel dust into it, letting it dry. I used fixative to darken and blend some areas, and gesso to drop a semi-opaque veil over other areas. Gesso can also be brushed over pastel, which creates an opaque color layer where the pastel supplies the pigment.

When I thought I had a pretty good repertoire of techniques, I started six abstracts. These were based on a series of notans I’d made earlier, and were sized 9 x 12 and 11 x 14. Surprisingly, five of them survived the creative process. I’m currently working on a seventh. I also really liked some of the little abstracts that were generated during the materials tests: these will be cropped and matted for my gallery’s bins.

Considering the vast array of surfaces and media available to us, you shouldn’t have any trouble finding some combination(s) that meet your needs and fit your style: just spend a happy play day in the studio trying things out and you will be amazed at what’s possible!

Thank you Deborah for sharing your adventure with pastels and mixed media!

Members, please click [here](#) for the prospectus and entry information for our mixed media show, "Pastel Unleashed".

If *you* want to share your story, please email MPS at mdpastels@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you!

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