

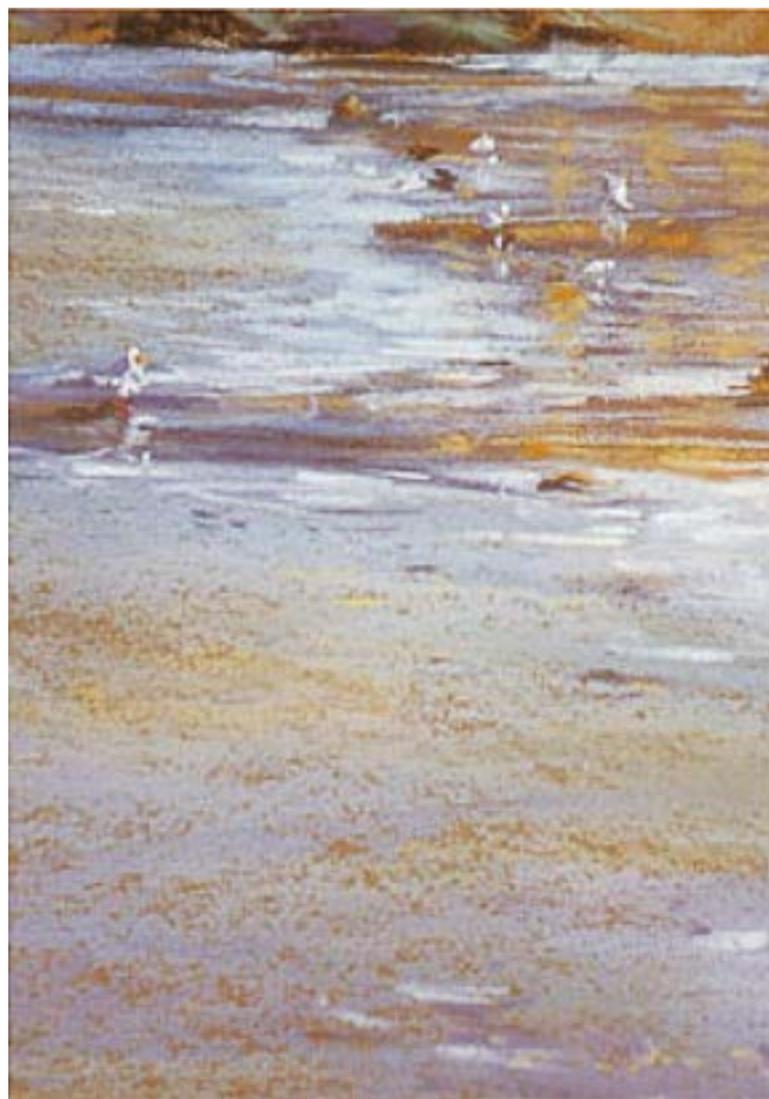


PASTEL Make coloured backgrounds

Regina Hona gives us the lowdown on coloured papers



Reflections, Anglesea,
50 x 70cm (19" x 27")
Beige coloured paper



Reflections, Anglesea,
Detail

A Dilemma often faced by pastelists, and not necessarily just the beginner, is the type and colour of paper to use. There are no set rules, and eventually you will discover the paper textures and colours that work best for your subject matter.

Here I will tell you the benefits of choosing different colours and the techniques that can be used on different textured paper surfaces. The types of acid free paper or board specifically made for pastelists may vary from country to country, but here are some pointers.

1. Lighter weight papers with a smooth and a rough side.

The rough side of this type of paper will give a dimpled, honeycomb texture to your work. Although the paper has been manufactured for use on this side, I believe that like me, the majority of artists in Australia prefer to use the smoother side.

However if you have never used the rough side I encourage you to give it a try because there is always the possibility that you may like that better. At least familiarise yourself with the effects and techniques that can be used on the rough side.

2 Heavier weight paper with a course texture like sandpaper

This type of paper allows artists to apply more layers, which is ...

work for you



Dry Creek Bed, Arkapena, 40 x 50cm (15½" x 20¼") — Aubergine coloured paper

particularly great for heavy handed artists. As well the artists work often appears richer, because the layers of pastel seem more creamy due to the extra pigment applied. There are similar, finer textured papers that are also quite nice to use.

3. Mounting your paper

All of these types of paper can be glued to acid free boards either before beginning a painting or after it is completed. Mounting adds rigidity to the work and can assist with framing. Some coloured pastel papers can be purchased

already mounted to a board, but many of them are produced with the rough side the working surface.

4. Priming your boards

More recently I have primed my own boards using pastel primer which I find especially useful for larger

How to choose coloured pastel paper

First of all, will your work be a pastel drawing or a painting? In general a pastel work is considered to be a painting when the majority of the paper is covered.

If large areas of the paper are left exposed, then it is a drawing.

If you are leaving much of your paper showing, then you should consider either using a paper in a hue and tone that is complementary to your subject or one that is an extension of the dominant colour or warmth of your subject.

For example, for a beach scene you may wish to use a warm orange hue that is a complementary colour to the blue of the water. The paper can be left relatively untouched near the bottom of your painting to represent the colour and tone of sand.

This method can be very effective, but it has one drawback. You need to be sure that the paper you use or tint, will not fade.

In some cases this may not be critical because the work may still hold together if the paper colour fades, but in most cases, fading could effect the overall tonal balance of the work.

A long time ago I discovered this by accident, and for this reason I prefer to paint over the whole paper and not leave largish areas of paper bare. The quality of the materials is constantly improving so this may no longer be a problem, but you can't be too careful. If in doubt test the paper.

Testing paper for Lightfastness

Just as you can test for colourfastness of pastels, you can also test paper the same way. Simply cover part of an off-cut of your paper and leave it in direct sunlight for two to six months and check if there are any changes.



River Gum Splendour, 50 x 40cm (19¾ x 15½")
— Aubergine coloured paper

paintings, or to create a rough texture as an underpainting. Pastel primer even allows the artist to create a smoother texture at the top, say for the sky, and a rough texture with more obvious brushstrokes at the bottom. This could be useful for grass and rocks. This method also allows me to create my own colours by mixing different pastel primer colours together, or by adding acrylic or gouche colour to white primer or other pale colours creating special colours.

5. Tinting watercolour paper

Some artists tint watercolour paper with a preliminary wash of their choice then apply pastel over this.

6. Ask if the support will stand the test of time

When you are choosing your painting surface you should know if the paper or board is acid free and will stand the test of time. (If in doubt check with your supplier.)

One of the biggest advantages pastel has over all...



Summer Glory, Flinders Ranges, 48 x 54cm (19 x 21") — Aubergine coloured paper

the other mediums, is its longevity. Provided good quality materials are used, and the work is framed under glass and hung the same conditions as other mediums, the work will look the same in 200 - 300 years, unlike other mediums, which will probably have had major restoration work done in that time.

Pastels deserve the same respect as oils or watercolours, when you understand that oils darken with age and watercolours fade.

Try the show-through method

I like to use my paper to benefit my subject in other ways. A method I often use, especially when painting seascapes is to let the paper colour show through beneath lightly applied areas of pastel. This is where the colour you choose can be of great benefit.

The option works particularly well for me with seascapes, where I use the side of my pastel just like a brush, applying light layers, to achieve the colour and tone that I want and leaving specks of paper still showing through.

This method produces a more atmospheric effect because my colours are scumbled over in soft layers using very light pressure. When working like this I choose the smooth side of lighter weight paper.

Art in the making • Allowing coloured paper to show through

My demonstration painting is a pastel seascape on the southern coastline near Dover, Tasmania. Notice how the sandy colour of my paper shows through under light application of pastel in some areas.



Pastel Technique Hints

- 1** Decide on your paper colour and relate other colours to it.
- 2** Apply the side of your pastel using light pressure to mix the layers of subtle colours underneath and allow the paper to show through.
- 3** Remember to make shadows cooler and enhance the warm colours.
- 4** If you overwork an area and would like to correct this so there is more paper showing through, brush it back with a stiff bristle brush and lift off any blended areas with a kneadable rubber before reapplying pastel. In a worst case scenario you might be better off applying the same colour pastel as your paper to provide better fusion of the adjoining painted areas.

The scene

For composition reasons I decided to move the focal mass of the rocks and trees further over for better balance

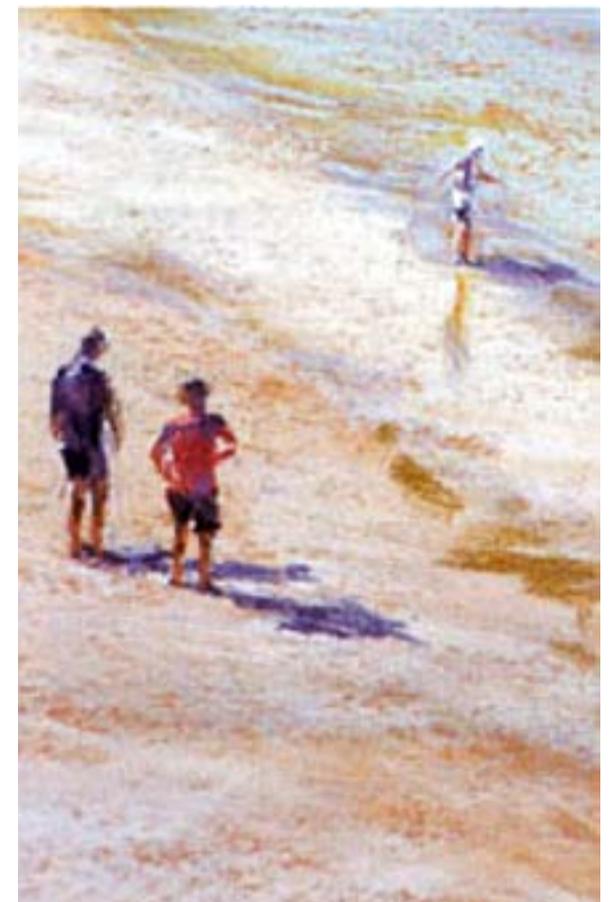


Detail

This close up shows that there are many areas in my subject where the paper hue comes through.

Making a simple outline

I generally make a simple outline of my subject in charcoal using either a quick "colour note" done on site, or a photo or both. If I were constructing a painting using a number of different source materials, I would make a preliminary sketch first to see if the composition worked.



Detail

The colour of the paper peeps through to add vibrancy to the water, which is its complementary colour.

a light application of pastel



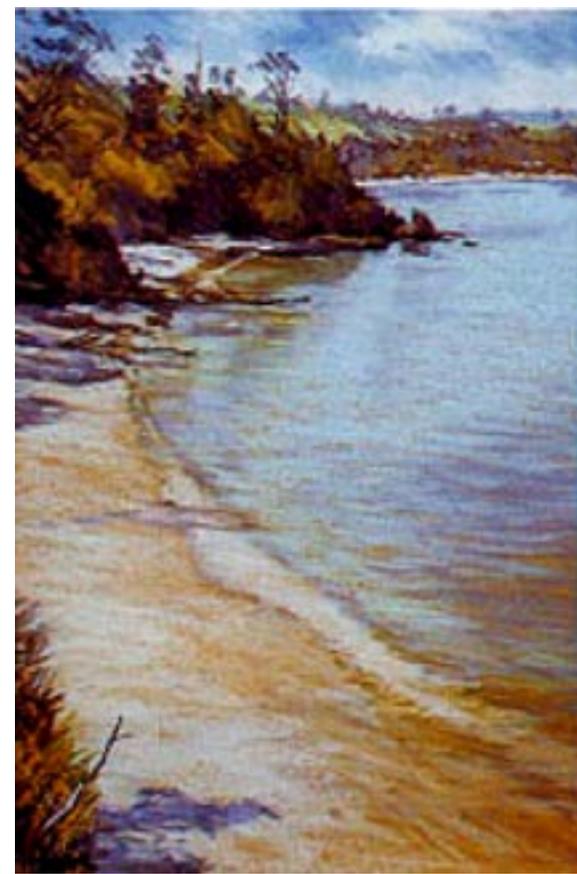
Blocking in

At the blocking in stage I was more concerned with capturing the correct tonal balance than necessarily having the right colour.



Getting the sky right first

Before I put too much detail into the darker cliff mass, I wanted to get the sky near enough to completion. Then I added the darks in the cliff and built up the foreground slightly. Whenever possible, I prefer to build up my painting all over so that I can stop at any point that I feel happy with it.



Developing the foreground

Next, I worked more on the water and foreground and began to apply my pastel more heavily building up the detail in some areas. Notice how the paper colour works to add warmth to the subject, especially compared to my photo.



Finishing off

Lastly, I add the figures, which help to balance the painting and to put in some final touches. Notice how the focal point is the area of strongest contrast - dark against light. Sunny Afternoon, Tasmania, 53 x 73cm (21 x 29") finished.

KEY POINT

When working with coloured paper, try not to overwork your painting as this reduces the effects of the paper showing through.

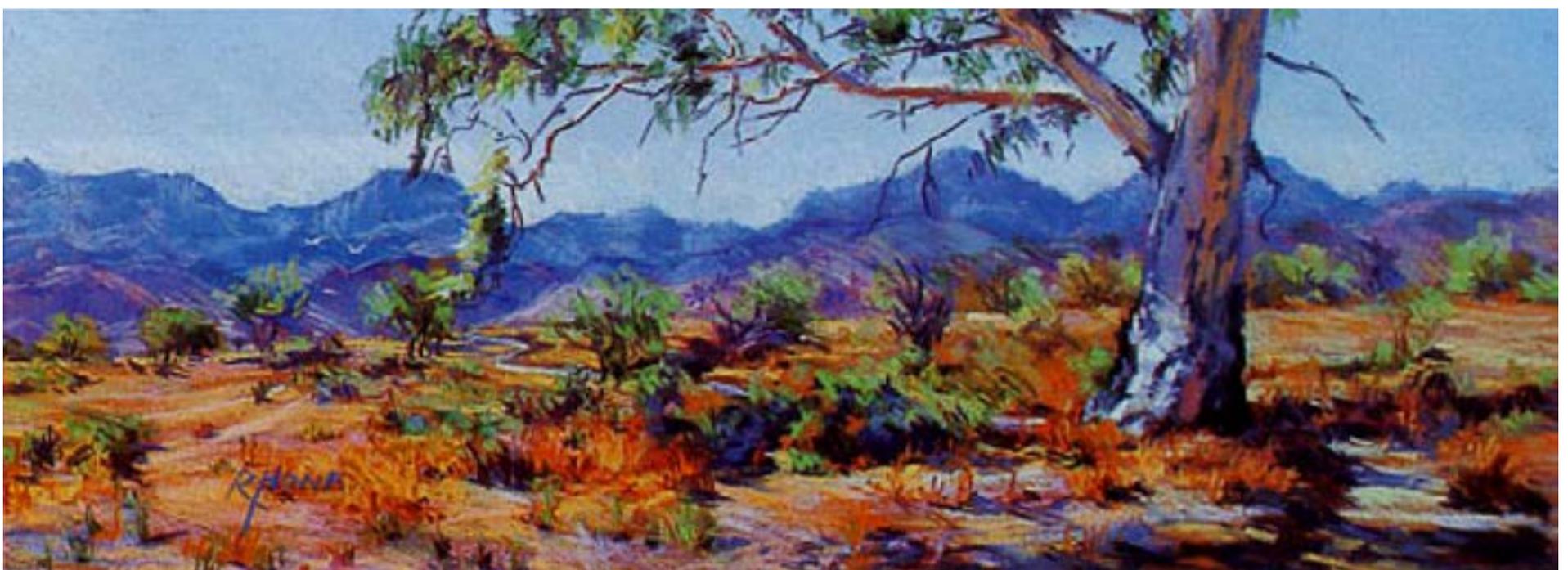
Complimentary coloured paper for vibrancy

Subject	Paper colour to use
For green landscapes	Red coloured paper
for seascapes	Orange/brown paper
For dominant yellow/orange subject	Purple toned paper
Warm subjects	Warm coloured paper
Cool subjects	Cool coloured paper

Beware of Black or White

Avoid using black or white paper. Instead opt for colours in the mid-tone range because they offer greater flexibility, and they assist you to capture your subject more easily, especially when you are painting outdoors, where speed is of the essence.

After all, if you work on a mid-tone right in front of you, you can then concentrate mainly on the lights and darks.



Along Morolana, Flinders Ranges, 26 x 70 cm (26 x 27½") — Red paper

Coloured paper and darks

You can use strong paper tones to assist with your darks.

- For example, if you plan to include a large body of water in your painting, you could use a strong dark blue paper to enhance soft water ripples or reflections which have the same underlying tone in your darks.
- If you plan to use a lot of mauve shadows in your subject, you might use a dusty purple colour.

**Airey's Inlet, 32 x 45 cm (12½ x 17¼")
— Orange-brown paper**





Rawnsley's Bluff, Wilpena Pound, 27 x 70 cm (10¼ x 27½") — paper with pastel primed surface



By the Sea, pastel primer on mattboard, 30 x 80 cm (19¼ x 27½") — Dark blue paper



About the Artist

Australian artist, Regina Hona lives in Glen Iris, Victoria. After studying at Caulfield Institute of Technology she began her career as a private secretary and although she had an interest in drawing and painting at an early age, it was not until 1980 that she began painting.

She was tutored in the classical tonal method using oils by Helga Ivanyl and Walter Magilton. Her painting took a back seat for a number of years due to moves overseas and interstate, however ten years ago she discovered the delights of soft pastels and has painted predominantly in the medium.

Regina is the current President of The Pastel Society of Victoria; she is a member of The Australian Guild of Realist Artists and The Malvern Artists' Society.

Regina conducts demonstrations and workshops and holds weekly pastel and oil classes in Heidelberg and Malvern Artists' Societies.

Her work can be seen in Victoria at Ecliptic Gallery, Armadale, Original Oz Gallery, Mt Martha, Whitehill Gallery, Dromana and at Arts on Burgundy in Heidelberg.
Email : reginahona@gmail.com