Painting with Soft Pastels October 20, 2025

Beth Olson 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Pastels have an incredible history. They are the same pigments that are in oil paints and watercolors. What makes them so unique is that they are pigment with minimum binder and allow us to paint without the use of oil or water making them one of the most accessible painting mediums. They have been used by many incredible artists such as Degas (over 700 paintings), Mary Cassatt, Picasso, Renoir, Chardin, and so on. Modern artists include Zaria Forman, Aaron Schuerr, Deborah Stewart, and Vera Kavura to name just a few.

Pastels offer us bright saturated colors that are relatively easy to work with, making them an accessible medium for beginners and experienced artists. In both the morning and afternoon session we will work with pastels experimenting with different textures and blending methods. Pastels also give us the ability to adaptively use layers of color for effect and composition.

**In the morning session** we will cover basic information on pastels and pastel paper and explore the following:

* Color Vibrancy
* Texture and Blending
* Layering
* Ease of Use

After exploring and practicing different techniques, we will begin with a Notan to define composition and values and then using pastel paper of your choice we will execute a painting using a reference photo that you bring with you.

**For the afternoon session** we will be doing something a bit different.We all have paintings that we have put aside for one reason or another. They don’t resonate, they’re not quite what we want our paintings to be. Whether it’s watercolor, gouache, or acrylic, how can we take it and improve it? By using pastels to emphasize color, values, and composition we can take those paintings that we’ve put aside and emphasize or change the original picture producing a painting that we can be proud of.

You will need to bring in a painting that you are willing to use pastel on. If it is a watercolor, the paper will take the pastel easily unless the texture of the paper has been flattened. You will need to use a fixative to allow the pastel to grip onto the painting. I highly recommend ***Lascaux Fixative***. If you are bringing in a gouache or acrylic painting, you will need a pumice gel to put over your painting for the pastel to have something to attach to. ***Golden Pumice Gel*** is recommended by artists who use both mediums together.

I look forward to sharing with you and seeing you.