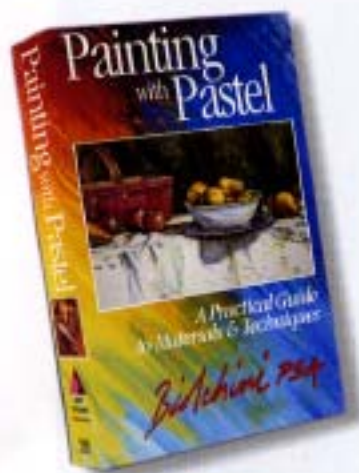


Information-packed video offers practical advice for painting with pastel



PAINTING WITH PASTEL

*A Practical Guide to
Materials & Techniques*
by Greg Biolchini, PSA

80 minute video/ \$29.95/ order at
www.biolchini.com or call 239-334-6088

Greg Biolchini's video claims to be a practical guide to the basics of working in pastel, and it is just that. The video is well-produced, with no unnecessary frills or complications, and Greg gets right to the point, offering a steady stream of information in a down-to-earth, easy to understand manner.

While the subject he paints for the two demonstrations on the video is a still life, Greg quickly points out that the purpose of his demonstration is not to teach how to paint a still life. Rather, he uses the subject as a vehicle to teach the fundamentals of using pastel.

Greg begins with a summary of the surfaces he uses, explaining the characteristics of each. After a quick discussion of how he lights the still life setup and his pastel tray, he moves to drawing the image in charcoal.

One of the best things about this video is the attention he gives to drawing. As he works, he offers tips about drawing, some of which may be familiar to artists but which certainly bear repetition. "Shadows are shapes, too, and just as important as apples or pears," he says. "Drawing and painting are the same thing. You'll never paint any better than you can draw, so practice your drawing."

Greg's preliminary drawing uses what he calls "mapping points." These are points he uses to check the relationships of objects; they are usually edges of shapes, and provide accurate horizontal and vertical guidelines to ensure proper placement of each object.

After spending a fair amount of time getting his drawing blocked in correctly, Greg moves to applying pastel. Beginning with the darkest local colors,

"darker and more intense than I actually see them," he applies the first of many layers of pastel.

In his first demonstration, Greg blocks in local color and takes one object, a pear, to completion to demonstrate the application of layers, working dark to light and carefully explaining the process.

Then he moves to preparation of a pumice board. He gives his recipe for the pumice/gesso/water mix, and shows how to apply it to a surface. After it's dry, he demonstrates his acrylic wash underpainting technique.

The second demonstration involves painting the same still life setup on the prepared board. Greg takes this painting to completion, explaining things like varying the pressure on the pastel stick to make opaque or more transparent layers, and the characteristics and importance of shadows.

Throughout both demonstrations, he discusses materials, explaining what he uses and why, and what other options there are for the pastel artist. He offers excellent procedural advice, on such matters as developing powers of observation and working the entire surface of the painting.

He then moves to a demonstration showing the effects of fixative on pastel, and a quick lesson in framing.

This video is an excellent choice for anyone who is fairly new to pastel, but even an experienced pastel artist will likely find tidbits of valuable information, and reminders of important principles. And while it's primarily educational, it's always a pleasure to watch a master like Greg Biolchini produce a painting in pastel.