

**Her Generous
Regard**

2004, colored pencil,
14 1/4 x 16 1/2. All artwork
this article collection
the artist.





Exploring Texture

With Colored Pencil

Concentrating on close-up views of my subjects, I capture texture with a variety of expressive marks and strokes.

—
by Do Mi Stauber

I call my paintings “intimate landscapes” because they pull the viewer in close, to wander in shapes and spaces that may have gone unnoticed. Rather than hearing viewers say, “Look at that interesting elephant over there,” I want them to sink into the landscape of the elephant. Whether I am exploring a rock face, a living tree, or the wrinkles and planes of an animal’s face, I want to convey the deep sense of mystery, awe, and connection I feel for the natural world.

I am always watching the world around me to find my subjects, noticing the scenes, textures, and patterns of light and dark that evoke an emotional response. Recently, I’ve been fascinated by animals. I visit zoos wherever I travel to gather reference material of elephants, gorillas, and

bears. I also continue to envision paintings of tree bark, rock surfaces, foliage, and water. I find inspiration in small things: a tiny rock crevice or the wrinkles of an elephant’s curved trunk. My extreme near-sightedness has likely contributed to my interest in close-up views. I’ve come to realize that texture is extremely important to me: it is the tender surface of the world, the boundary where I connect with the natural world.

Composition

I spend a lot of time preparing for each painting. I work from photographs, usually taking many photos of the same subject from different angles and distances so that I can capture as much information as possible. When I can, I sketch from nature as well. At the beginning of a project I make extensive

DEMONSTRATION: THE LANDSCAPE OF PATIENCE



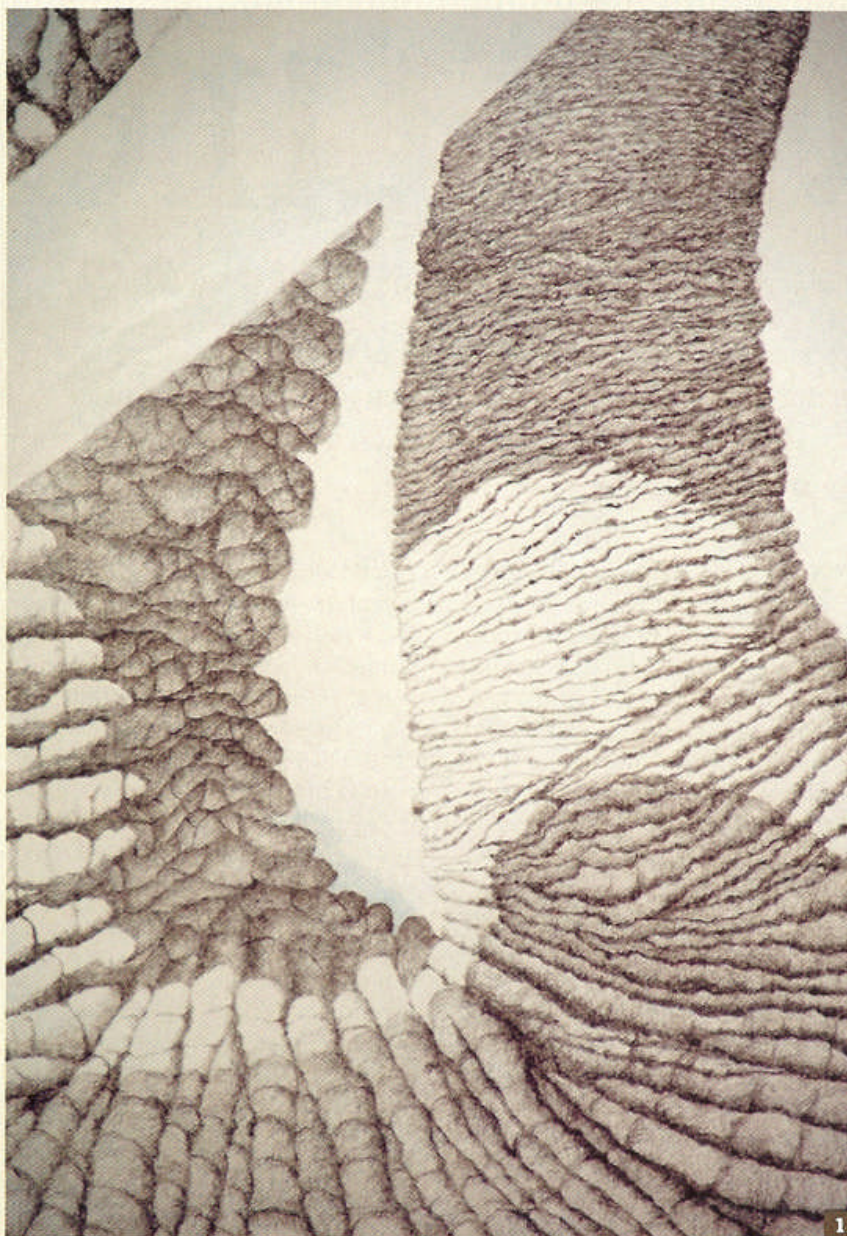
Reference photo



Color study



Graphite sketch





Step 1

Using photos as references, I began with many small graphite sketches, then made this half-size charcoal study. I traced and enlarged the study to produce a full-size, detailed line drawing. I also made color studies at this stage, which helped me find the glowing orange-brown effect I wanted.

Step 2

I started the grisaille by laying in the darkest color (dark umber). I made some changes as I laid in the dark values, including adding more wrinkles. I worked all over the piece. Even though I was just using one color at this point, there were few areas of flat color. Gradations and textures were beginning to define the structure of the elephant already.

Step 3

I continued to develop the grisaille. In a few places I added a bit of blue background color so that I could see how it interacted with the colors on the elephant. I drew the eyelashes in French Grey 10% and filled in around the individual hairs with dark umber and indigo blue.

Step 4

After I completed the dark umber grisaille, I added another layer of dark umber in the darkest shadows, bringing those areas close to their final values. In the rough areas, I applied color in random squiggles with pencils that were slightly less sharp, which made the colors seem to vibrate. In the smooth areas, I applied the color in tiny circles with an extremely sharp pencil. I also added sienna brown to many of the edges and areas of reflected light. At this point I assessed the composition and decided to emphasize the lines that curve away from the edge of the paper, because I wanted to control the path of the viewer's eye.

Step 5

I continued to add sienna brown in medium-value areas such as the top-right corner. I also added the final layer of dark umber in the deepest shadows and wrinkles. I removed my glasses for this part of the process so that I could see the individual flecks of pigment as they combined and filled the valleys of the paper.



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For another step-by-step demonstration by Do Mi Stauber, visit the Online Exclusive section of the American Artist website.

DEMONSTRATION: THE LANDSCAPE OF PATIENCE, CONT'D



Step 6

I applied light umber to the lightest areas and brought them to completion. I added Mediterranean blue to the background. Finally, I adjusted the color in the background by adding peacock green, which contrasted better with the golden browns. Other adjustments included using mineral orange in the highlights and cream and bistre in the light part of the tusk.

THE COMPLETED DRAWING:

The Landscape of Patience

2004, colored pencil,
35 x 20.

composition, value, and color sketches. Sometimes I even make a clay model of the subject so that I can see how many design changes will affect the light and shadows. Next, I do a half- or full-size freehand value sketch in charcoal. In charcoal I can lay in and erase masses of dark and light, changing shapes easily until I am satisfied with the value composition, which I find most important. Once I've completed the charcoal sketch, I trace it (and enlarge it if necessary) to make a full-size, detailed line drawing. I then trans-



fer the line drawing with faint graphite onto a sheet of Stonehenge paper using a light box, and erase the graphite as I add color. More of the composition process takes place at the grisaille stage, as I repeatedly step back and adjust the values that are the scaffold of the piece. The grisaille then guides me as I fill in the other colors.

I work with a limited palette for each piece, choosing colors before I start the painting in an exploration process that is part intellectual and part intuitive. I always use a rich dark, such as indigo blue, black cherry, black grape, dark green, or dark umber. I use complementary colors in shadows; adding indigo blue to a dark-brown shadow, for instance, yields indescribable richness. From those beginnings explored with the colored pencils, I look for interesting color combinations. My colors do not necessarily reflect the local color of



the subject; I strive for a balance between realism and expressiveness.

Process and Materials

I work on Rising Stonehenge paper, a soft printmaking paper that will take many layers of pigment. I work with Stanford Prismacolor and Faber-Castell Polychromo colored pencils and use only pencils tested as lightfast by the Colored Pencil Society of America.

With very sharp points, I work slowly, gradually building up many layers of color. I usually start with a grisaille of my darkest color or colors, laying in the values before adding other colors. I often change the composition as I add color and therefore start with very light layers even in the darkest places.

I vary small strokes, depending on the texture I want. In very smooth areas, I use a tiny circular movement of the

pencil point so that no lines are visible. In very dark areas, this stroke fills in the valleys of the paper so that no white shows through. In rougher areas, such as the lighter parts of an elephant's skin or an uneven rock surface, I use a small "squiggle" stroke. Colors overlap and fill in next to one another so that new colors are achieved both by blending and juxtaposing pigments. Even at the smallest level, I am always making expressive marks, feeling the curve of a plane toward the light, the roughness or smoothness, softness or hardness of the surface.

I often find myself sinking into the texture of the paper, with my attention focused on my pencil point, marveling at the beauty of the flecks of color as they combine. And every once in a while a wonderful thing happens: I feel as if I am stroking the elephant's skin or the tree bark with my pencil. ■

ABOVE

To Find the Stone-Encircled Place
2002, colored pencil,
10½ x 14.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Toward Haven
2001, colored pencil,
18 x 15.

About the Artist

Do Mi Stauber, of Eugene, Oregon, has studied with Barbara Benedetti Newton and Pat Averill, among other colored pencil artists. A member of the Colored Pencil Society of America, she has participated in numerous shows and won many awards, including the Stabulo Fine Art Pencil Award for Excellence at the Colored Pencil Society of America Annual International Exhibition in 2003. Stauber teaches classes and workshops. For more information, visit www.domistauberart.com or send e-mail to Dstaub11@aol.com.