

## Edges Lost & Found in Soft Pastel

*Pastel artist Jackie Simmonds shows you how to transform an outline drawing and build strong composition*

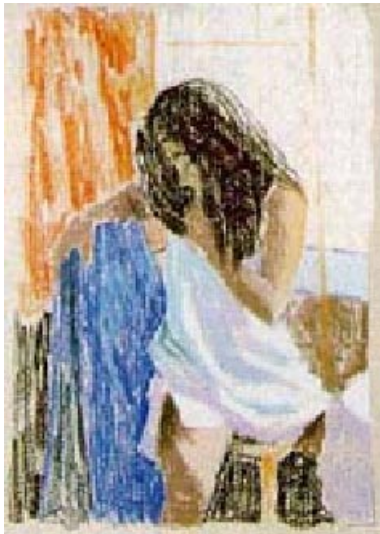


Figure 1



Figure 2

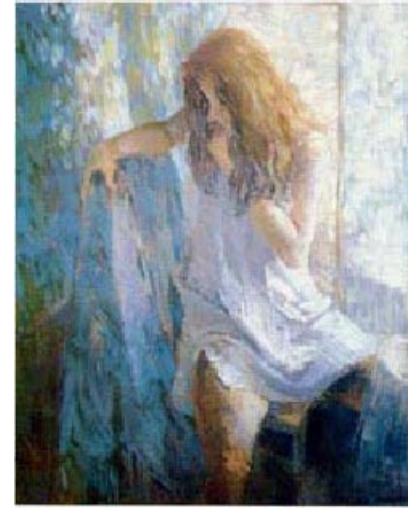


Figure 3

### Figure 1

In this figure study, every edge is given equal importance, and the figure is quite separate from her surroundings and looks a little stiff, and cut out.

### Figure 2

The colour choices have been reconsidered and edges are under rather than over stated in places. This effectively knits the figure into the picture and the atmosphere is altogether softer.

### Figure 3

The finished picture has a much more painterly look to it.

When we begin to draw the outlines, the edges we see tend to be our starting point. But lines as such seldom exist at the boundaries of objects. The edges often simply represent the disappearance from view of the outside plane of the object.

Imagine an apple, and a cube of sugar. The lines used to describe the sugar cube will, of course, represent actual edges—but what about the apple? Does the circle that we draw represent the edge of the apple?

Once you have grasped the idea that an outline is not necessarily the same thing as a sharp edge, you will begin to understand that a drawing or painting where every edge is defined with equal clarity is very likely to look stiff and wooden. Any sense of three dimensions will be affected adversely. A hard line at a so-called edge of a gently curving form can easily be misread.

We need to let go of the idea that every object must automatically be enclosed, or boxed in, by a line. We need to learn to be selective about the boundaries of our subjects, and become aware of the differences between hard and soft edges.

Soft edges will help to connect adjacent objects, thus avoiding a paper cut-out look. Another way of describing this is lost and found. This is, arguably, a slightly better term to use, since you can also make adjoining areas in an image similar in colour and tone, which will visually lose the edges and will subtly knit those areas together.

# PRACTICAL *Projects*

taken from the Daler-Rowney Web Site

You can decide which edges are hard, and which are softer, by squinting through half closed eyes. Only the obvious edges will remain in your vision.

Sensitivity to lost and found edges within an image will not only help to render three dimensional form, but will also add to the quality of atmosphere within the image, and can help to improve the composition .

Emphasizing some edges, and subduing or losing others, will help to build stronger compositions.

Adjusting edge qualities gives artists the opportunity to introduce a fascinating element of now-you-see-it, now-you-don't ambiguity to their work. Attention can be directed to selected areas, and other areas can then be more simply suggested, or even lost in shadow.

## **SUGGESTED** *Materials*

Sheets of cartridge paper or sketch book.

6B pencil or piece of charcoal.

Daler-Rowney Ingres pastel paper. I suggest you choose a neutral colour such as warm grey or blue grey, but if you prefer a little more drama and impact try slate grey.

A drawing board and bulldog clips.

A torchon of tissues for softening edges.

Daler-Rowney Perfix low odour fixative (optional).

Daler-Rowney Artists' Soft Pastels in colours of your choice.

## **EXERCISES** *To Practice*

❶ Take an old painting or drawing that you have discarded and you feel has a hard quality. Study the edges within it. Where you feel you can usefully lose some edges, work over them again with your pastels, loosening up by either blurring with fingers, or feathering with small strokes of pastel, breaking across the outline.

❷ Set up a still life and select a black pastel, a white pastel and grey paper. Keep line work to a minimum by using the sides of the pastels. Use the white pastel for areas where the light strikes the objects and creates positive edges. Define only the darkest areas with the black pastel and leave all other intermediate tones uncovered. The grey of the paper will knit the image together, without the use of hard lines or edges.

*Practical Projects are extracts taken from The Artist Magazine*

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