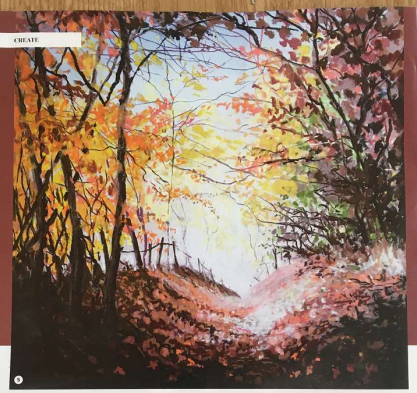

Valley of light

Lynda Kettle paints this colourful autumnal scene using a combination of PanPastels, Unison pastels and SAA pastels

One of the most defining characteristics of autumn is the new colour that fills the landscape, with falling leaves turning to red, yellow and orange. My painting of Harpford Woods, Tipton St John, Sidmouth in East Devon, captures such a scene.

I begin by doing a sketch on location, using willow charcoal. I like this medium for sketching because of the variety of marks and textures one can make. As I sketch, I carefully consider the lighter and darker areas of the composition and work out the focal point for the painting.

Back in the studio, I decide to use a ½ Imperial sheet of Bockingford Not (140lb) paper. To make the paper suitable to use for a pastel painting, I first paint the surface with Schmincke Pastel Primer. This gives me a rough sand-like finish, providing a suitable tooth to hold the soft pastel.

1 Now I determine the focal point, which in this composition is in the lower third. Then I begin by painting in the background, building up from light to dark. I use PanPastels to establish my

Artist • Lynda Kettle

Materials • Pastels

Materials

Willow charcoal

Paper - Bockingford Not 140lb ½ Imperial

Schmincke Pastel Primer

PanPastels: Light Blue T5208, Titanium White 1005, Light Brown T7408, Burnt Sienna D7401

Unison Soft Pastels: Light Brown (Additional Colours 21), Black (Grey 36), Burnt Umber (Dark Set 04), Light Green (Green 05)

SAA Artists' Soft Pastels: Light Yellow, Cadmium Yellow Pale, Orange, Light Red, White

Winsor & Newton Fixative

↑ Charcoal sketch

base colour. These layer well and are easy to blend, either with a hard sponge or with your fingers, leaving no obvious lines. Blending in from the top of the picture downwards, I start with a light blue for the sky, with the tone becoming lighter and lighter going down the picture until I reach the horizon, which will be almost white.

Continuing from the horizon, I blend a very pale brown through to Burnt Sienna in the foreground. This gives depth and perspective to the image. A light spray of fixative is added to set the base so that I can overlay other colours on the surface.

2 I now start to work from light to dark on top of the base colour. Using a selection of SAA Artists' Soft Pastels, I start painting over the sky and work the palest yellow of autumn leaves first in the centre, above the focal point. The rest of the autumn colours range from Light Yellow, Cadmium Yellow Pale and Orange, to Light Red. I do not blend these, but use a dotting technique, leaving gaps for the blue of the sky to show through the foliage.

3 I am now ready to establish the composition. Using a Unison Light Brown, I draw in the skeleton of the painting, showing the position of the trees and the fence posts. The fence posts lead the eye to the focal point of the walk through the trees. Adding a few strokes of this same shade into the foreground will help link the colours together. I decide to add some foliage with Green to the right-hand side for variety and added interest.

4 Fine detail added to the foreground will give the impression that the viewer is looking through the trees. On the left of the painting, I begin to add Black (which is actually Unison Grey 36) and Burnt Umber to the trees, leaving some of the Light Brown behind for light and texture. On the right of the composition, I add more trees and foliage in Black and use the edge of the pastel to draw thin lines for branches and foliage. Still using Black, I put a few strokes for the foreground fence and some to the right foreground. Marks in autumn colours are added onto the ground at the front and more leaves are added to the trees above. I use White in the foreground to the right, to suggest the sun shining through the foliage and also add a few thin strokes of White indicating branches over the darker areas on the right.

5 To complete the painting, I focus on adding fine detail to the front of the image: the closer to the front, the more precise the detail. I use all the pastel colours of autumn leaves that I used elsewhere to build up the ground at the front of my painting; the colours chosen becoming brighter and crisper - the shapes becoming more defined and leaf-like against the dark foreground. I hope the effect that I have achieved in this pastel painting gives a restful glimpse of light at the end of a gentle afternoon stroll through the woods in autumn.

For more information on Lynda and her work, visit: saa.co.uk/lyndakettle www.lynda-kettle.com