

# Techniques for Removing Pastel from Art Spectrum Colourfix® Papers

## Whether you need to

- lift off only a small speck or stroke of errant pastel,
- remove an entire area of colour down to the very paper surface,
- simply take away the top layer or two where you have too much pigment built up
- or expunge an entire failed painting, you will find many useful solutions in this list.

## Brush

The brush is a tool many people use for removing pastel and while it can be fairly effective, there are a number of drawbacks which make it a poor choice for many situations:

1. it tends to get the dust airborne—something we always need to avoid!
  - a. wearing a mask would be wise when using the brush
  - b. you need to devise an appropriate way of disposing of the dust you are brushing off the painting
2.
  - a. it leaves the edges of the removal area rough and smudgy
  - b. the paper surface can be filled with some usually non-descript colour, where before there may have been fresh paper colour showing through, which is important in many styles of pastel painting
  - c. and if you are removing colour in the middle of the painting, you will likely have to ruin a portion of the successful colour around the problem area getting the pile of unwanted colour off the painting surface
  - d. you can't control the layers you are removing and may destroy useful underpainting colour or drawing.

## Transparent Packing Tape

Thin transparent 48mm wide packing tape is an excellent way to remove unwanted pastel:

1. layer by layer—letting you go down essentially to the bare paper if you need to
2. taking only the top layer of pastel, leaving the pastel below fresh and undisturbed.

You will need a burnisher such as a curved wooden sculpture tool or even an old teaspoon, though that will be harder to let you remove pastel precisely. A gentle point will let you focus pressure in very detailed areas. Flatter, broader surfaces will let you remove larger areas of pastel.

To use: cut a length of tape 75mm to 203mm. You will need several passes with fresh tape if you have built up many layers. However, you can control how much you remove by the amount of pressure used when rubbing the tape into the pastel and by

how many times you repeat the action with fresh pieces of tape. You can preserve the underpainting colour of the drawing, leaving the paper colour showing through in places, if that is an important aspect of your work.

## Advantages of Tape:

1. completely captures all pastel being removed for safe and easy disposal
2. you can see through the tape, putting pressure only on the area you want to remove, allowing for some precision where important
3. retains clean, undisturbed surrounding edges
4. can leave in place the drawing or undercolour and part of the early painting, removing the top layers of colour applied if required.

## Erasers

Erasers are often at their best removing only thinner layers and, like the brush, can leave unpleasant edges and smear neighboring areas you may want to leave intact.

### White Eraser:

1. can be used with a light touch or pressed on very hard to erase quite vigorously
2. some types may leave scattered 'crumbs' on the paper
3. can build up colour on their surface, becoming slick, making it difficult to remove heavy areas of colour. Clean off or cut a fresh edge to revive.

### Kneaded Eraser:

1. can be shaped into points or edges or use broadly
2. leaves no 'crumbs'
3. knead often to find fresh surface
4. can smudge softer, thicker areas and not remove unwanted pastel.

### As a painting technique:

Lay down a little colour smooth it in, then pulling out portions of the colour with the edge of the eraser to leave straight lines or other accents of the paper showing through.

## Colour Shapers – The Angle Chisel:

The Colour Shaper tool can serve as that tiny finger tip, you sometimes wish you had, to pick up a slight bit of colour. This can become an indispensable tool in the pastelist's studio. Whether very loose, bold painting style or finest detail, this can lift off small specks quite precisely or nudge a piece of color into compliance – or lightly "mellow down" a stroke or spot that is too prominent. Experiment with your needs and style of work to discover the many other possibilities.

## Chamois

Little pieces of chamois can be quite useful. First in the earlier stages of the painting when sketching in the composition or roughing in underpainting colour or when working in a style that has a loose, rubbed quality. With most styles of pastel painting the chamois wrapped once around a finger tip can wipe out considerable amounts of pigment. Keep finding a fresh area with which to pick up the colour. You can actually scrub down nearly to the paper surface, always leaving at least

a bit of smudged colour behind with blurred edges.

Wash the chamois often to clean it and keep dust under control. After drying, it will be necessary to 'work' the chamois between your fingers to soften it again. The more you stretch it back and forth, the softer it becomes again. Have several small pieces on hand.

## Damp Cloth

A soft damp cloth can be used to wipe off areas of pastel. In most cases you will want to wait until the surface dries. The dampness could slightly darken some of the surrounding pastel. Particularly useful for wiping off substantial amounts of colour where you wish to repaint. The dampness keeps the pastel dust from becoming airborne. The thicker the layers of pastel, the wetter you may want the cloth to be.

## Kitchen Sink

Then there's "The Kitchen Sink" (or the shower with a scrub brush) if you utterly dislike what you painted and want to begin afresh. Being reusable makes Colourfix Papers a practical investment in addition to its other qualities. You can continue to make fresh beginnings until you like the painting you've created. You can do anything and know the paper will not be sacrificed. Some staining of certain pigments may remain, but the grain of the paper is open and accepting. If the paper gets saturated, be sure to wet evenly, press it between many layers of newspaper or blotters and weight down completely flat to dry, (as you would with other fine watercolour or etching papers).

## Colourfix Primer to the Rescue

If you get an unsatisfactory or unworkable surface situation, for example, when fixative has built up with irregular layers of pastel and won't be budged by any of the above methods,

1. use a bit of medium-fine sandpaper to take down the offending collections of pastel/fixative to achieve a flat surface again
2. then apply a light coat of the Colourfix Primer over the area to make it completely fresh again. Use a soft, flat brush or a small, fine-pored sponge roller or combination in above order

Colourfix Primer dries quickly so you can proceed within 5 to 15 minutes with your painting. Keep a container of water handy for your brush or roller.

1. Use the same colour primer as the paper if you are letting the paper show throughout your work.
2. Otherwise, use the Clear or any other colour to create the original texture and you are off and running again, the painting saved.

**Note:** Before using any of these techniques for removing pastel from your Art Spectrum Colourfix paper, be sure to experiment on a test piece to get the feel for how this will respond to your particular touch.

## The Art Spectrum Colourfix Papers and Primers offer the artist many additional advantages including:

1. being able to splice additional paper on to a painting when the composition needs more space.
2. sanding down the Colourfix surface slightly to soften the texture. Further sanding to create a velvety surface, letting you achieve many of the effects of velour papers. However in this case, the coloured surface remains light-fast, durable, scrub able, waterproof, and washable
3. adding variation in texture to the surface in the same Primer colour; or contrasting or analogous colour(s)
4. mix Colourfix Primers or tint one (White or Clear) to create a particular colour
5. paint Primer on your own choice of archival support
  - 100% rag watercolor or etching papers
  - 100% rag board
  - sanded, untempered masonite
  - wood
  - endless possibilities!
6. use the various colors of Colourfix Primer to lay down a quick underpainting of the composition work quickly and briskly since it will be dry within minutes
7. excellent surface for watercolour, oil, coloured pencil, graphite, charcoal and perhaps something no one has thought about yet but You!

Colourfix takes a tremendous amount of punishment from artists who like to work their paintings heavily, or for those experimenting with their imagery or technique, making constant major and minor changes. Early stage artists will also appreciate the economy of this paper since they can wash off unsatisfactory beginnings and continue to make new paintings until they have a "keeper."



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