

Flowers with Texture

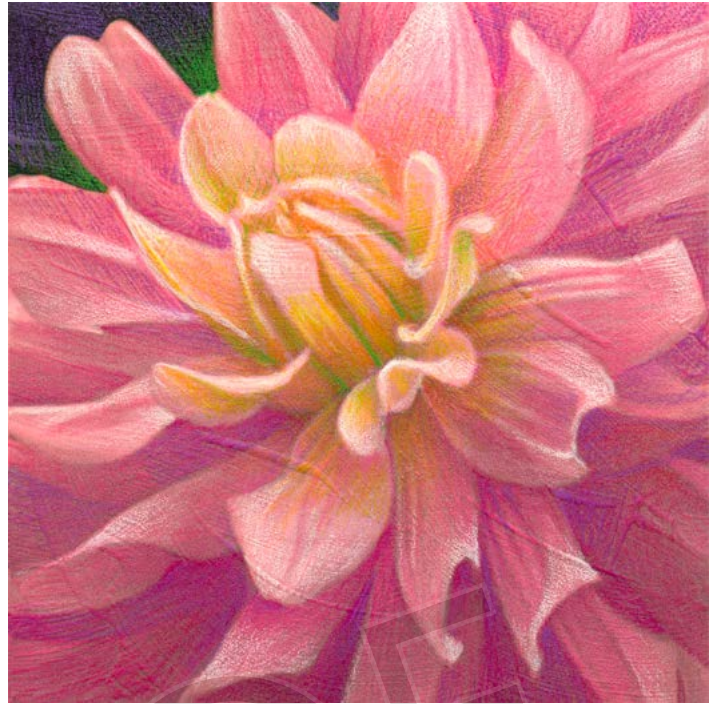
Preserving Backyard Memories

by Joel Armstrong



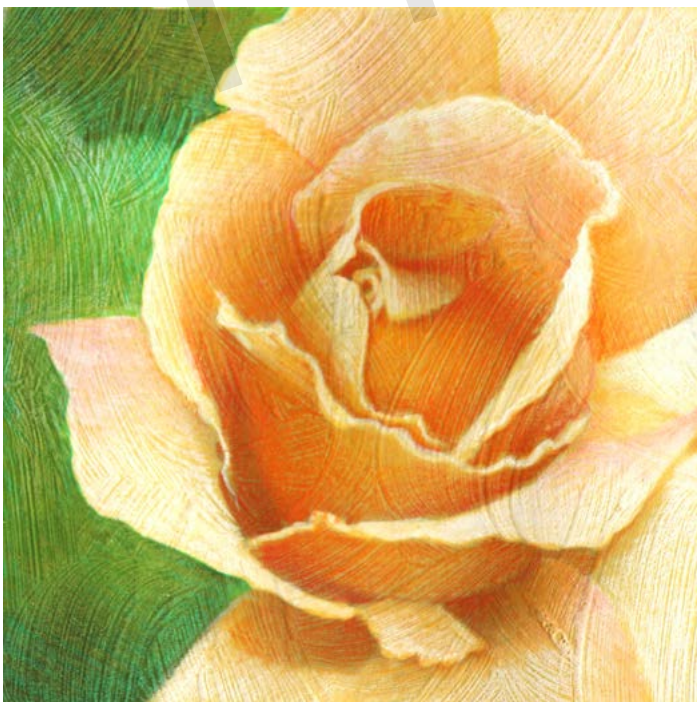
I spent the '80s and '90s as an illustrator using specifically colored pencil and graphite when the job called for black and white. My first job was a poster for the Dallas Opera, and I was able to distribute the posters around town to art directors who posted them on their walls.

That was the start of my career, which has spanned many genres. I have done editorial cartoons, architectural rendering, hotel graphic design, and greeting cards, to name a few. I continued to do illustration thru the 1990s. I had always kept my fine art career flourishing even as I began doing art direction and teaching at the university level, which I did for 14 years.



After the 2021 deep freeze in Texas, my old high school friends had lost many flowering plants, mainly roses. I told them that I would be happy to draw them if they would send me photos. I had some frames with mats that I had not used, which dictated the size (3.5 x 3.5). It also started me on a long COVID diversion.

I began looking for flower images, which I cropped tightly. So many different flowers brought back sweet memories that I became obsessed and began drawing a flower a day to lift my own and other people's spirits. Working so small created an issue of detail. After years as an illustrator and needing accurate rendering, I used an Artograph to help take my rough layouts to a base for drawing the originals. These floral drawings' images were so small that I wouldn't be able to use it.





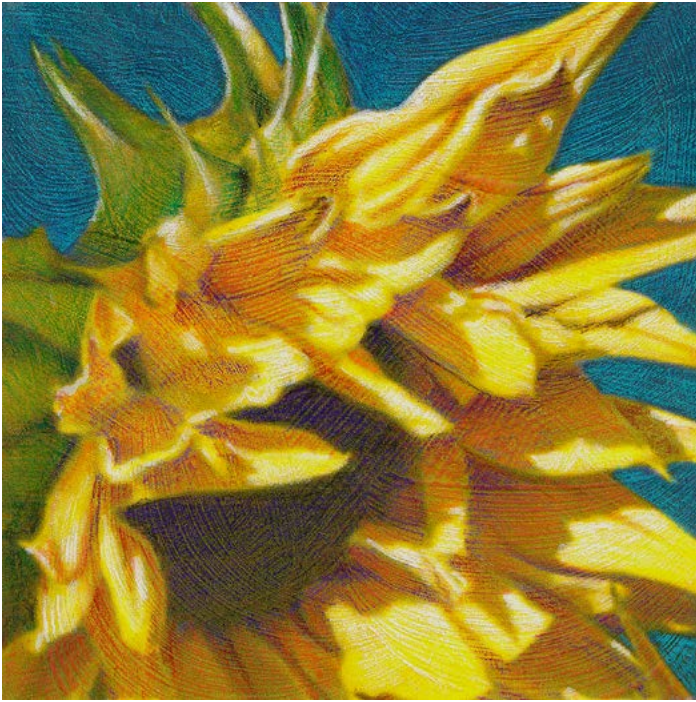
I taught illustration and drawing for John Brown University in Arkansas for 14 years. One of my assignments was to recreate the look and feel of the cover illustrations of the old Andy Warhol magazine, Interview. The style had the artist working on top of photos with pastels. For this project, I chose to take the images, turn them to greyscale, and decrease the value to be almost negligible. I printed them on matte cardstock.

My next step was to take colored alcohol markers and cover the areas appropriately to match the colors. I used several different brands: Chartpak, Arteza, and Prismacolor. My next step was creating a surface for the drawing. I used a matte acrylic gel medium that I brushed on with a large acrylic brush for the perfect texture. I used spray fixative consistently on built-up layers of Prismacolor pencils. The whole process would take about six hours from start to finish.

After I finished, I waited for bright morning sunlight, laid the drawings on the sidewalk, and photographed them. The low, horizontal light would highlight the texture with light and shadows. The surface gave a painted feel to the drawings.

I took the images into photoshop and saved them at 600 dpi, 300 dpi, and as a .png file. The different resolutions would give me 5" high resolution, 10" lower resolution, and an image to use to post on social media. I could use the 300 dpi for canvas prints from 8-24", allowing me the ability to sell the originals as well as cheaper reproductions.





Since I was on a roll, I followed up the floral series with a cloud series. Being outside in the morning to photograph the flowers allowed me to photograph beautiful New Mexico sunrises over the mountains. I am now doing a figurative series for a show in March of 2022. You can find most of the floral images on my website.

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