Coloring Notes

Shading: Always work from light to dark when using colored pencils, slowly going over an area to darken it. Remember to always begin filling in your area with light pressure first and slowly add more layers or increase the pressure you are using (not too much as you do not want to break your pencil!). Coloring too dark in the beginning is a mistake I have made many times! and means you have less control when you want to add detail.

Layering: Layering means going over the same area again and again. You can use layers to give a deeper shade to an area or to alter the color or blend two colors together. When you put down too much pigment by pressing hard, you are really laying down wax and a heavy layer of wax will tend to resist another layer on top of it. Build your layers up slowly with light pressure on your pencil. Take your time.

Blending: Blending is a way to smooth out and soften a colored area. You can soften a single color or blend different colors together. Use a blender pen or a cotton swab dampened in alcohol. The alcohol will partially dissolve the wax and let the color sink into the paper. It is difficult to erase an area that has been blended.

Burnishing: Burnishing softens an area like blending does but without dissolving the wax. I like to use a dull-pointed white colored pencil (shown in the video). This should be done as the last step for your section, as it is sometimes difficult to layer more color on top of the burnished area. The white pencil will lighten the color slightly. It does blend colors together and soften the look. You can also use a burnishing tool or, in a large area, rubbing your finger over the wax can burnish it, but this can be rather messy.

Variegate: It is always more interesting to vary the shade, color and intensity of an area you are coloring rather than simply filling in the whole space with one hue. This is especially true when coloring a larger area. An example of variegating a flower petal in a mandala would be to color the part closest to the center in a light pink and then gradually deepen the color to red as you move out toward the tip. Altering color and intensity within a field will give interest to your work.

Filling: This is the most used technique. Work your pencil up and down within a space without taking the pencil off the paper. The direction of the stroke makes a difference in the effect. Stroking all on one direction gives a smooth, controlled look. Stroking in one direction for a bit and then changing direction looks choppy, which may or may not be what you want. Sometimes patches of strokes in alternate directions can produce a textured look which may work for something like tree bark.

Scumbling: Moving your instrument around and around in a circular motion to fill in an area is called scumbling. This produces a rich, textured look and tends to fill in all the white on the page fully when done densely. Leaving distance between strokes is good for a loose, uncontrolled effect.
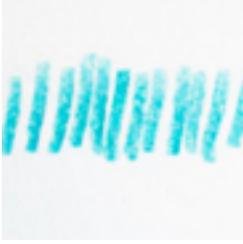
Hatching: Short strokes side by side in one direction is hatching. After each small stroke, you lift the pencil off the page. It looks like you've made a line of "I" letters. This is a very controlled stroke and useful when you intend to layer colors over each other. The effect can change when you vary the distance between strokes.
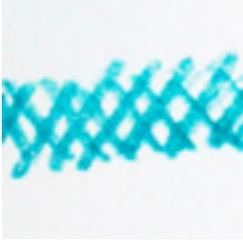
Cross-Hatching: This is a common way of layering colors or deepening a color gradually. Cross-hatching is achieved by hatching strokes in one direction to fill an area and then going back over the same area in another direction with more hatching strokes.
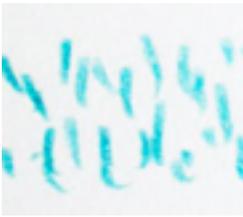
Stippling: Filling an area with little staccato strokes (dots) is called stippling. Some artists create entire paintings with this technique. Using a single color, you can vary the lightness or darkness (value) of an area by increasing or decreasing the distance between dots. You can create new colors by stippling with one color and then stippling in the adjacent spaces with another color. Your eye will blend the two colors together to make a third color. For example, filling an area with blue dots and red dots will look purple.

I would recommend practicing all the above techniques on a blank sheet of paper to become familiar and see which you prefer. These techniques will then add some interest to your coloring. Have fun!

Thanks
Louise x

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