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The Re-Emergence of American Pastels

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THE RE-EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN PASTELS

by

Mary Beth Drabiszczak

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
in Art History

at

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ABSTRACT

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN PASTELS

by

Mary Beth Drabiszczak

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2023
Under the Supervision of Professor Sarah Schaefer

This thesis examines the production, exhibition, and reception of American pastels as both a process and product in conjunction with artist groups, societies, and institutions. The growing field of illustration influenced pastelists to produce work for print reproductions through commercial publications and advertisements. Despite this, a shift back to the fine arts developed later in the twentieth century with the rise of television and digital media, reducing the need for hand-illustrated ads. While pastel has been historically marginalized as a secondary medium reserved for preliminary work or sketching, recent scholarship by technical art historians like Thea Burns and Marjorie Shelly bring more attention to this medium. Differing from aqueous painting media like watercolor which was also associated with preparatory study, pastel straddled the practices of both drawing and painting as a dry medium. Despite its origins as a European-based practice, the formation of pastel societies in America predates that of any comparable organization in Europe. The Society of Painters in Pastel (1882-1890) and the Pastelists (1910-1915) were short-lived groups which predated the Pastel Society of America in 1972 (the oldest pastel society in the United States and still operating today).

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To my mother,
the first artist I ever looked up to.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
AWS	American Watercolor Society
IAPS	International Association of Pastel Societies
MESDA	Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts
MFA	Master of Fine Arts (Degree)
NYWCC	New York Water Color Club
PSA	Pastel Society of America

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My admiration for pastel first began when I took a pre-college class at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (MIAD) in 2016, “The Figure in Color” with Rosalie Beck. I owe my reinvigorated interest to Maria Teicher at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), as her art forger assignment led me to begin research on Mary Cassatt’s pastel process, directing me to an article through the Metropolitan Museum of Art by conservator Marjorie Shelley. Little did I know, I would return back to this article and many other publications by Shelley only a couple years later during this thesis research.

As a practicing pastelist myself, I am an active member of the very institutions I have researched: the Pastel Society of America (PSA) and the International Association of Pastel Societies (IAPS). Under IAPS, I am a part of regional societies including the Wisconsin Pastel Artists (WPA) and the Chicago Pastel Painters (CPP). There are too many individuals to name to properly thank for their support and encouragement of my involvement within these communities of pastel painters.

I am incredibly thankful to not only have had a portrait juried into the IAPS biennial in Albuquerque, NM, but also be able to attend the convention in June of 2022. There, I was able to meet and converse with PSA President Jimmy Wright and IAPS President Richard McKinley about my research interests. My thesis ideation was incredibly well-received, and I developed lasting connections which continue to expand upon beyond the scope of this project.

This pastel project spanned the entirety of my time at UWM, which first began as a historiography on the reception of Degas’s pastels in Proseminar during the fall of 2021 under Dr. Tanya Tiffany. I then continued to explore the contemporary exhibition of pastels in my research on the Giffuni Gallery at the Butler Museum of Art in Dr. Jennifer Johung’s Museum

Studies class in the spring of 2022. Dr. Kay Wells's colloquium proved to be an integral part of this project, as my term paper *Facing Whiteness: Racializing the Recto and Verso of a Pastel by James McNeill Whistler* was awarded the Hoey Prize. This research served as a smaller case study of this thesis to examine commodification through both process and subject matter. Additionally, I had the pleasure of presenting this research at the 2023 Midwest Art History Conference in Milwaukee under the panel of my wonderful mentor, Dr. Sarah Schaefer.

I especially want to thank my thesis advisor Sarah, whom I had the pleasure of getting to know over the past two years, as she was the first professor I worked with under my TA appointment. Thank you for your thoughtful feedback and constant support during the many draft revisions for this initial project, which I hope to continue to expand upon in the near future.

Introduction

In this thesis, I examine how artists working in soft pastel separated from other institutions to legitimize the practice of pastel painting through their own endeavors. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century saw the emergences of pastel-specific societies, such as the Society of Painters in Pastel (1882-1890) and the Pastelists (1910-1915), but these were relatively short-lived. The Pastel Society of America (PSA) was founded in 1972, more than half a century after the dissolution of the earlier groups. Currently functioning today, the PSA traces its history to these earlier organizations, yet no scholarship has presented a comprehensive timeline to fill in this fifty-seven-year gap.

Pastel presents ambiguities surrounding categorization and identity, prompting further discourse in art historical scholarship. Straddling the practices of drawing and painting, pastel is a modern medium which challenges materiality through its variation in application and coverage. Linear constructions evoke *disegno*, while the use of this medium strictly as a colorant emphasize *colorito*. These established disciplines underscore color as a secondary addition, serving as a decorative adornment. This acknowledgement of pastel as synonymous with color results in the marginalization of the medium. Therefore, pastels and pastelists were feminized, creating a gendered identity to both the object and the maker. Despite these problematic assertions, women artists in America utilizing pastel have especially challenged these notions, embracing this medium as a commercialized practice.

While this thesis only begins to address these missing links during the twentieth century, existing scholarship regarding medium-specific societies for Americans working in watercolor overlaps with the development of pastel-exclusive organizations. In her 2017 publication *American Watercolor in the Age of Homer and Sargent*, Kathleen A. Foster outlines the

“Chronology of the American Watercolor Movement” in Appendix C.¹ This timeline spanning from 1850-1941 outlines the emergence of regional and national watercolor societies, but also hints at the formation of pastel-specific groups separate from direct affiliations with watercolor. Geographically grounded institutions and artist-centered societies saw overlaps with participants, resulting in competition for membership and affiliation. Despite Foster’s comparable case-study for the progression of watercolor in America, an equivalent for pastel exclusively does not yet exist.

The closest overview on American pastels appears in a 1989 publication which accompanied the exhibition *Revivals and Revitalization: American Pastels in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*; however, this scholarship does not engage with American pastel practices during the latter part of the twentieth century.² The first section in this publication, “American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival and Revitalization” includes contributions from seven scholars in abbreviated, thematic sections.³ As a collaborative introduction, this historical preface lacks a degree of homogeneity due to sections featuring as little as one contributor or as many as three.⁴ This historical basis prefaces Shelley’s contribution, which presents a technical overview to the

¹ Kathleen A. Foster, “Chronology of the American Watercolor Movement” in *American Watercolor in the Age of Homer and Sargent*, pp. 392-93. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2017.

² Doreen Bolger, Mary Wayne Fritzsche, Jacqueline Hazzi, Marjorie Shelley, Gail Stavitsky, Mary L. Sullivan, Marc Vincent, and Elizabeth Wylie, *American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989).

³ Bolger, Fritzsche, Hazzi, Stavitsky, Sullivan, Vincent, and Wylie, “American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival and Revitalization,” 1-32.

⁴ The sections and corresponding initials following are listed chronologically as: “The Revival of Secondary Mediums” M.L.S., “American Expatriates and the Use of Pastel: Whistler and Cassatt” M.V., “The Society of Painters in Pastel and the International Revival of the Medium” M.L.S., “The Widening Exhibition of Pastels” M.W.F / J.H. / G.S., “Illustrators, the Eight, and Pastel” E.W., “The Pastelists, 1910-15” D.B., “Pastel and the American Modernists” M.W.F. / G.S.

materiality of pastel.⁵ The degree of fragmentation evident in the historical overview of this exhibition catalogue further demonstrates how the materiality of pastel is prioritized over a streamlined historical timeline. Technical art history presented by conservators dominates scholarship regarding pastel, as both Thea Burns and Marjorie Shelley are leading authorities on pastel as well as practicing conservators.⁶ The historical timeline of pastel in America is integral because medium-based societies greatly affected the public reception of pastel, influencing the degree to which the medium was adapted for professional and amateur use.

The generalized timeline between the “end” of the Pastelists in 1915 and the “start” of the Pastel Society of America in 1972 are affected by a number of international factors during wartime periods. The recent nature of these events which have occurred in the last one hundred years could account for the lack of scholarship. In addition, the long standing 156-year history of the American Watercolor Society (AWS) legitimizes art historical scholarship centered around this organization, compared to the 51-year history of the Pastel Society of America. While pastel-exclusive societies in America were lacking up until 1972, academic institutions presented a means for artists in close proximity to engage with classical modes of artistic schooling, providing lasting skills in technical rendering through observation. I address not only these academic institutions, but also commercial institutions, both of which are modified and

⁵ Shelley, “American Pastels of the Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Centuries: Materials and Techniques,” 33-51. Shelley additionally notes in this 1989 publication on page 45 that her present contribution was sourced from a larger project in progress, “Painting in the Dry Manner: A Technical History of the Art of Pastel.” The *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* from 2011 included a contribution by Shelley titled “Painting in the Dry Manner: The Flourishing of Pastel in 18th-Century Europe,” an adaptation appearing 22 years later.

⁶ Technical art history is an interdisciplinary practice which seeks to combine both art and science. For more information, see Jehane Ragai and Tamer Shoeib, *Technical Art History: A Journey Through Active Learning*, (London: World Scientific Publishing Europe Ltd., 2021).

challenged by artist-centered societies and organizations, such as those which championed pastel.

Section 1 begins with an introduction to pastel through colonial America, foregrounded by the work of Henrietta Johnston. In contextualizing Johnston's available access to institutional and material resources, I discuss pastel as a physical, manufactured product, which was imported internationally to the colonies. This emphasis on material categorization addresses the differences between "pastel" and "chalk" in discussion with other dry, friable media often affiliated with "drawing" practices. Section 2 outlines the emergence of the first pastel society in relation to other medium-specific and regional artist societies, demonstrating the exhibitionary ambiguities of pastel and watercolor. Section 3 examines the rising field of commercial illustration and the commodification of pastel portraits as collectable magazine covers through the work of Neysa McMein. Section 4 addresses the shift from commercial motivation back towards pastel-specific societies through the re-emergence of pastel by the establishment of the Pastel Society of America (PSA) in 1972 by Flora Giffuni.

Section 1: Inventing the Pastel Artist

Soft pastels (sometimes referred to as chalk pastels) are manufactured pigment sticks, which began to be commercially produced in late-seventeenth-century Europe.⁷ Sets were specifically tailored to suit the genre of portraiture for both professionals and amateurs.⁸ The use

⁷ Thea Burns, "Painting with Pastel," *The Invention of Pastel Painting*, (London: Archetype Publications Ltd., 2007), 20.

⁸ Burns, 17-20.

of these fabricated sticks to create pastels (artistic products utilizing this medium) in America is first dated to the eighteenth century with the work of Henrietta Johnston (1674-1729).⁹

While recognized as the first woman pastelist in America, scholarship has categorized Johnston as both a professional and an amateur.¹⁰ Burns and Saunier discuss this ambiguity by specifying that Johnston “was an amateur artist in the sense that, apparently, she was not trained academically but self-taught.”¹¹ Nevertheless, Johnston accepted a number of portrait commissions and made money to support her family.¹² This notion of distinguishing professional versus amateur in relation to women artists is especially problematic, as the contributions of these career women throughout history are often under-valued.¹³ It appears that two important distinctions appear when understanding the threshold of professionalism: formal or academic artistic training and monetary profit. There is no question that Johnston did earn income, but a historical overview of her artistic training is presented as uncertain. Forsyth Alexander in the 1991 exhibition catalogue *Henrietta Johnston: “Who greatly helped...by drawing pictures”* comments on this lack of information by also remarking that Johnston’s pictures were different from the work of other colonial artists.¹⁴

⁹ Dianne H. Pilgrim, “The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth-Century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel,” *American Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1978): 43.

¹⁰ See also Margaret Simons Middleton, *Henrietta Johnston of Charles Town, South Carolina: America’s First Pastelist*, (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1966).

¹¹ Burns and Philippe Saunier, “10. Pastel in the British Periphery: Ireland, Scotland, and America,” *The Art of the Pastel*, (New York and London: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2014), 152.

¹² Forsyth Alexander, *Henrietta Johnston: “Who greatly helped...by drawing pictures”*, (Charlotte: Old Salem, Inc., 1991), 10-11. Cites Frank J. Klingberg, ed., *Carolina Chronicle: The Papers of Commissary Gideon Johnston, 1707-1716* (Berkeley, CA., 1946), 19-30.

¹³ See Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2021).

¹⁴ Alexander, 1-2.

John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) was a slightly later American artist who also worked in pastels. Following the entry on Johnston, Burns and Saunier remark that Copley was “largely self-taught, learning to compose pictures from studying prints of Old Master and English portraits collected by his stepfather, the printmaker Peter Pelham (1695-1751).”¹⁵ This visual “difference” proposed by Alexander in Johnston’s portraits compared to Copley’s appears to be a result of surface coverage and the degree to which pastel emulated the mimetic effects of oil painting. While Johnston’s pastel portrait included by Burns and Saunier, *Portrait of Henrietta Charlotte Chastaigner* from 1711 (Figure 1) showcases complete coverage of a substrate, Copley’s *Portrait of Mrs. Joseph Barrell (Hannah Fitch)* from 1771 (Figure 2) demonstrates opaque surface coverage and modulated blending. These differences are especially evident in how each artist renders the hair of their sitters. The degree of finish within the voluminous curls by Johnston showcase striated marks of pastel rather than hiding this material trace, like Copley. Alexander does refer to Johnston’s pastel work as “drawings” in the 1991 exhibition catalogue rather than “paintings,” perhaps making note of the examples as works on paper.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Copley’s pastel is also on paper, but is additionally mounted to canvas, evoking a substrate often reserved for the dominant medium of oil painting.¹⁷ While Johnston did begin her work in pastel in Ireland (1704-1705), her pastels between 1708-1726 are representative of her earlier experiences within the American colonies.¹⁸ Copley left America in 1774 to seek out established artistic training in Europe, but Johnston continued her professional practice within the colonies

¹⁵ Burns and Saunier, 152.

¹⁶ Alexander, “Introduction,” v.

¹⁷ Burns and Saunier, 154-155. See also “Mrs. Joseph Barrell (Hannah Fitch),” Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accessed April 14, 2023, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/33486>.

¹⁸ Alexander, 2-3.

despite this lack of both pastel materials and institutional foundations in America.¹⁹ These limited resources for early colonial pastelists correlates to the lack of documentary information and art historical attention.

While Johnston is included in larger museum collections like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the inclusion of three pastels by Johnston (Figures 3-5) in the collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) speaks to gendered nature of pastel as a feminine medium, compounded through creation by a woman artist. These pastels by Johnston in this institutional collection date to 1715-16, which is contemporaneous to the work of Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757). Often dubbed the “Queen of Pastel,” Carriera’s work was part of what Thea Burns calls the “golden age of pastel painting” during the eighteenth century in Europe and correlates to the onset of the Rococo period.²⁰ While Johnston is included in both *The Invention of Pastel Painting* (2007) and *The Art of The Pastel* (2014), accounts on Carriera are more comprehensive.²¹ This is in part due to the greater availability of extant work by Carriera as opposed to Johnston. A pastel by Carriera even flanks the cover of Burns’s 2007 publication, presenting the invention of painting in pastel as synonymous with the work of Carriera.

Due to Carriera’s affiliations with the development of painting with pastel, scholarship has prioritized her artistic contributions. Contrasting with Johnston’s unidealized portraits of real individuals, the newness of America was exoticized in a pastel by Carriera from 1730 titled, *America* (Figure 6) in the National Museum of Women in the Arts.²² This personification of America by a European artist is presented with more artistic authority in Western art history due

¹⁹ Burns and Saunier, 156.

²⁰ Angela Oberer, *The Life and Work of Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757): The Queen of Pastel*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press B.V., 2020). Burns, “Introduction,” xv-xvi.

²¹ While Johnston is featured only on a few pages, entire chapters are dedicated to Carriera.

²² “America: Artwork,” NMWA, August 20, 2020, <https://nmwa.org/art/collection/america/>.

to Carriera's connections with the classical history of Europe, demonstrated by her technical aptitude. While arguably more feminized due to the degree of ornamentation and decoration, Carriera's portrait is more naturalized in skin tone and anatomical exactness. Demonstration of these technical elements are often reflective of what constitutes formal training, but Carriera had greater access to institutional supports and material supply compared to Johnston. Therefore, these fundamental resources are a reflection of an artist's time, but should not negatively impact their reception or hinder how scholars evaluate their skill or professionalism. As pastels were imported to America, this reality no doubt affected the development of Johnston's career work. As the Revolutionary War impacted the growth of pastel practice in America, so too would later international conflicts influence pastel growth in America during the twentieth century. America's reliance on the international import of pastels as a commercial product for artists to buy and collect spanned nearly two hundred years.

Despite the universality of pastel ingredients across hundreds of years, binders and exact recipes are often kept secret by manufacturers for proprietary concerns, although historic treatises influence modern-day manufacturing. Traditions involving hand-rolled pastels create minute but unique inconsistencies, characteristic of the artisan's hand in the creation of each stick. Extruders and molds are also used to create a more consistent look in production methods, reinforcing the order of standardized, industrial assembly.

La Maison du Pastel in Paris, France (now branded under Henri Roché) began manufacturing pastels during the early eighteenth century, and proclaims itself to be the oldest pastel manufacturer in the world.²³ Arguably, these pastels could have very well been imported

²³ "La Maison Du Pastel: 300 Years of History," La Maison du Pastel, accessed March 7, 2023, <http://lamaisondupastel.com/history.php>. Felicia Craddock, "Centuries of Creating a Rainbow in

to the Americas and used by colonial artists; however, Alexander has identified the popularity of pastels in Ireland.²⁴ More scholarship on the history of name-brand art materials is necessary to properly situate the distribution of art materials and their product availability to artists in other countries. The integration of these material considerations under the auspice of technical art history can help to further clarify confusion regarding the physical properties of pastel and chalk.

While lacking specifics, broader categorizations identifying “colored chalks” acknowledge physical materiality from observed textures. Visual differentiation between pastel and colored chalk stems from the variation of both coverage and usage by artists; however, discerning the two more concretely would require scientific analysis. Conservators like Thea Burns recognize the difficulty in distinguishing certain artistic media with the naked eye alone, emphasizing the need for magnification and imaging technologies. Unfortunately, these resources are inaccessible for many paper conservation labs due to logistical and economic concerns.²⁵ Nevertheless, observation regarding material coverage can prompt associations with either drawing or painting practices. Transparent marks and the optimization of negative space can achieve indirect coloration, which often reference drawing practices. Despite the applications of indirect drawing practices using paper substrates as a tone, pastel became more equated with a finished product when the entirety of a substrate was covered through layering, emulating the effects of oil painting, like in the pastels of Carriera.²⁶

While the pastel medium shares visual similarities to other kinds of “drawing” media, it is important to be critical of terminology. Vague associations identifying collective materials as

Pastels,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, November 14, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/14/fashion/craftsmanship-la-maison-du-pastel.html>.

²⁴ Alexander, 1.

²⁵ Burns, “Chalk and Pastel,” 2-3.

²⁶ Burns, “Introduction,” xiii-xvi.

“chalk” or “mixed media” can over-generalize; however, pastel is often layered and used in conjunction with other “friable” materials such as graphite, charcoal, conté, and other natural or fabricated chalks.²⁷ What makes pastel distinctive as a dry, artistic medium is its dependency on manufacturing, contrasting to other natural pigments and mineral compounds which exist in both natural and fabricated states. The hybrid nature of “chalk” as an ingredient and an independent artistic medium in both fabricated and natural states contributes to this question of terminology. As a naturally-occurring substance, chalk can include deposits of calcium carbonate microfossils and silica (flints), but these materials are inherently white.²⁸ Despite its natural occurrence as a white material, calcium carbonate is a “neutral filler” (like kaolin and gypsum) which can be incorporated into the production of pastels.²⁹ In addition to fillers, pastels contain a gum binder and colorants in the form of natural or synthetic pigments.³⁰ Common binders include tragacanth gum and methyl cellulose.³¹ Consistency is essential for a pastel mixture, as this colored paste has to hold in a solid, cured mass, rather than a viscous paint body. Unlike oil paint which permanently suspends pigment particles into a medium, friable materials like pastel do not chemically cure as a part of the artistic process as compared to oil paint, making this a quicker and more accessible endeavor for both professionals and amateurs.³² This immediacy also serves

²⁷ Thea Burns refers to the term “friable” along with other technical art historians and conservators to refer to materials which are susceptible to crumbling.

²⁸ Nicholas Eastaugh, Valentine Walsh, Tracey Chaplin, and Ruth Siddall, “Chalk,” *Pigment Compendium, A Dictionary and Optical Microscopy of Historical Pigments*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 98.

²⁹ Drawing Materials, accessed March 3, 2023, [https://www.clarkart.edu/microsites/lines-from-life/about/exhibition-\(1\)](https://www.clarkart.edu/microsites/lines-from-life/about/exhibition-(1)).

³⁰ “Pastel,” in *Pigment Compendium*, 299.

³¹ “About Diane Townsend Artists’ Pastels,” Diane Townsend Artist Pastels, accessed March 15, 2023, <https://www.townsendpastels.com/about-diane-townsend-pastels/>. Anne F. Maheux, “4. Degas’s Colours,” in *Degas Pastels*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988), 41.

³² Burns, “Chalk and Pastel,” in *The Invention of Pastel Painting*, 2-3.

valuable in the later usage of pastel in commercial illustration in twentieth century America, as photographing the work could be done without needing to account for visual change of the surface during the process of a wet paint medium curing or drying. While the physical materiality of pastel products have remained virtually unchanged throughout history, the reception of the term “pastel” has had variable connotations and associations.

The evolution of the term “pastel” itself explains why there is still confusion today regarding assumed nomenclature surrounding terms. As chalk is often casually referenced as synonymous to white, the use of the term “pastel” also exists as a colloquialism. “Pastel” as an adjective often makes reference to pale or soft coloration in hues, rather than the direct use of the medium itself. These descriptive observations separate the term itself from the physical, artistic medium.

Industrialization aided in material invention, but further complicated artistic terminology identifying various tools and media. While the porte-crayon was utilized by pastelists during the seventeenth century to hold pastel sticks, its versatile functionality complicated material considerations as it could hold lead, charcoal, or chalk.³³ The porte-crayon, or pencil holder, further confirms the variation of the term “crayon” as synonymous with pencil. While “crayon” prompts associations today with waxy media, fabricated “pastel” sticks were referred to as crayons in the seventeenth century, distinguishing these products from medicinal or confectionary powders distributed by pharmacists.³⁴ This inherent objecthood distinguishing soft

³³ Burns, “Painting With Pastel,” 25. “The Artist's Porte-Crayon,” The artist's porte-crayon - National Portrait Gallery, accessed January 26, 2023, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/research/programmes/artists-their-materials-and-suppliers/the-artists-porte-crayon.php>.

³⁴ Burns, “Chalk and Pastel,” 7.

pastels as a unique commercial product reinforces the role in which artistic supplies served as material commodities for artists to buy.

Oil pastels are a newer innovation which emerged during the twentieth century following World War I, during the interwar period. The Sakura company was founded in Japan in 1921, and Cray-pas oil pastels were invented and globally patented in 1925.³⁵ The name of “Cray-pas,” combining both ‘crayon’ and ‘pastel’ underscores the hybrid nature of this medium. While oil pastels are often grouped under the general category of “pastel,” their materiality is vastly different than that of soft pastels using gum binders, as both oil and wax are used. Because of this material difference, oil pastel will not factor into this case study. Nevertheless, the degree to which these products were popularized was a direct reflection of their reception in respective artistic societies and institutions. Pastel in America did not become popularized until the nineteenth century, which was in part a reflection of social organization among artists rebelling against academic institutions.

Section 2: Early Exhibition Societies

In the late nineteenth-century, the first pastel society emerged in America, known as the Society of Painters in Pastel (1882-1890); however, artists could have multiple affiliations between other artist groups and academic institutions. Representation in artist organizations often manifested in regional or medium-specific offshoots, resulting in competition. These differences in either physical location or artistic medium were hybridized through the New York Water Color Club (NYWCC). The very title of the group itself implies a combination of medium specificity with an emphasis on a geographical place. This society was formed in 1890 after the

³⁵ “About Sakura | Sakura Color Products Corp.,” Sakura Color Products Corp., accessed January 27, 2023, <https://www.craypas.com/global/about-sakura>.

first pastel-specific group, The Society of Painters in Pastel, but arguably was in direct competition with this earlier society, as the NYWCC also exhibited pastels. The ambiguity between watercolor and pastels in their exhibitionary history further contributes to the competitive development of medium-specific groups, specifically those which championed “painting” practices or “finished” works.

While pastel had already been established as a painterly medium through the work of eighteenth century artists like Carriera, the frivolity of Rococo decoration and ornamentation gave way to Neoclassical structure. Academic modes of artistic instruction emphasized *disegno*, especially prioritizing anatomy and structure. The reinvigoration of drawing practices during the late-nineteenth century championed media often utilized for preparatory studies, such as pastel and watercolor. Known as the “paper century,” this era embraced drawings as an accessible commodity due to their smaller scale and affordable price, which contrasted with large-scale history paintings.³⁶ In addition, drawings also socially engaged the public through an increased participation in viewing exhibitions, made possible by a rise in both dealers and galleries. The identification of “works on paper” reflect an intersection between prints and original artwork on paper substrates, yet all of these manifestations exist as circulated commodities to buy and sell.

Pastel specifically drew artists who sought to challenge conventional academic practices through spontaneity and color, who then capitalized on these efforts through public exhibition, as their work was available for purchase.³⁷ The formation of pastel societies in America predates

³⁶ See Richard R. Brettell, “The Paper Century: French Drawing in the 1800s,” *Color, Line, Light: French Drawings, Watercolors, and Pastels from Delacroix to Signac*, (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2012), 1-15. Cited in Debra DeWitte, “The Display and Dispersal of Drawings in 19th-Century France,” *Nineteenth-Century French Drawings*, edited by Britany Salsbury, (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2023), 32-41.

³⁷ Doreen Bolger, Mary Wayne Fritzsche, Jacqueline Hazzi, Gail Stavitsky, Mary L. Sullivan, Marc Vincent, and Elizabeth Wylie, “American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival and Revitalization,”

that of any comparable organization in Europe, despite America's reliance on imported artistic materials. The Society of Painters in Pastel was founded in 1882 by William Merritt Chase, Robert Blum, J. Carroll Beckwith, H. Bolton Jones, and Edwin H. Blashfield, and held its first exhibition two years later in New York.³⁸ While this short-lived society only had four exhibitions during its existence, it had significant international impact on the eventual establishment of similar pastel-specific societies in Europe, like the Société de Pastellistes (1885) and the London Pastel Society (1898).³⁹

Overlapping memberships in multiple organizations and societies resulted in the balancing of artistic priorities for individuals. Ultimately, this competition influenced the continuation of societies based on their relative popularity among artists and the general public. The Society of Painters in Pastel had a two-year delay to their first exhibition in 1884, and a four-year gap until the second exhibition in 1888, which could be signs of organizational or economic challenges for the group.⁴⁰ Limited profit margins meant members in the 1884 exhibition had to cover expenses from their own personal funds.⁴¹ The inclusion of guest exhibitors within exhibitions allowed members to bypass formally joining the organization by paying dues, meaning artists could come and go. Membership participation fluctuated, resulting in an unreliable revenue stream of member dues. Most poignant was the lack of accountability, as failure to exhibit with the Society of Painters in Pastel during the membership cycle did not

American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 1-3.

³⁸ Bolger, et al., 6-7.

³⁹ Bolger, et al., 11-12.

⁴⁰ For discussion on economic and financial problems, see Pilgrim "The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth-Century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel," 61, and Bolger, et al. "American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival and Revitalization," 9.

⁴¹ Bolger, et al., 9.

have the same consequences as did failure to participate in the exhibitions of the National Academy of Design or the Society of American Artists. This lack of participation in these societies with greater seniority was a greater hindrance to an artist's professional reputation.⁴²

Original membership rosters changed when artists broke away from previous societies to establish new organizations, yet these continued efforts promoted these marginalized arts as a collective group effort. Rather than just focusing on individual artistic education through academic training, artist societies aimed to champion collective exhibitions which emphasized a communal organization among like-minded artists. Childe Hassam and Charles Warren Eaton exhibited in the fourth exhibition of the Society of Painters in Pastel in 1890, but were co-founders of the New York Water Color Club (NYWCC), which also exhibited pastels, that same year.⁴³ The final exhibition of the Society of Painters in Pastel group occurred in May of 1890 at H. Wunderlich & Company," with planning for the NYWCC in March 26, 1890.⁴⁴ These dates clearly indicate that this new society was well underway before the formal dissolution of the Society of Painters in Pastel after their fourth and final exhibition. While David Cleveland indicates that there does not appear to be a direct correlation between these two events in his article on the NYWCC, the presented evidence certainly suggests that Hassam and Eaton had wavering confidence regarding the continuation of the already established pastel-specific group.⁴⁵

⁴² Bolger, et al., 11.

⁴³ David A. Cleveland, "The New York Water Color Club," *The Magazine Antiques*, (November 2005): 118.

⁴⁴ Bolger, et al., 11. Minutes of the New York Water Color Club in the American Watercolor Society records (Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C., microfilm reel N68-10) cited in Cleveland, 118.

⁴⁵ Cleveland, 118.

In contrast with the all-male roster of the Society of Painters in Pastel, an additional founding member of the NYWCC alongside Hassam and Eaton was Rhoda Holmes Nicholls.⁴⁶ While the American Watercolor Society (AWS), formerly known as the American Society of Painters in Water Colors, was founded prior to the NYWCC in 1866, this latter organization included a large number of women artists as members.⁴⁷ This difference in membership representation was significant, as the organization initially demonstrated resistance to the prospect of women joining the group; therefore, the NYWCC championed the inclusion of women artists.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the artistic achievements of women were still diminished even at the turn of the twentieth century. The “Associate” category for the AWS served to identify nonresident professionals between 1874-78, yet was adapted to distinguish women members between 1898-1922.⁴⁹ Coinciding with the ratification of the nineteenth amendment giving women the right to vote, the 1920s inspired social change which sought to rectify this isolation and ostracization of women in communal organizations. Despite competing with more “fine art societies” like the AWS and NYWCC, the New York Society of Illustrators was closed off to women for full membership until the 1920s.⁵⁰ The onset of World War I in 1914 further influenced change in the United States, as artists became increasingly involved in the world of illustration and commercialized arts, something that will be discussed in greater depth below.

⁴⁶ Cleveland, 115.

⁴⁷ Ralph Fabri, “Founding of the Society,” and “Emergence of New York Water Color Club... World War I,” *The History of the American Watercolor Society: The First Hundred Years*, (United States of America: The Guinn Co., Inc, 1969), 12, 29.

⁴⁸ Fabri, “Emergence of New York Water Color Club... World War I,” 29.

⁴⁹ Foster, 392.

⁵⁰ “History of the Society,” Society of Illustrators, accessed February 7, 2023, <https://societyillustrators.org/about/history-of-the-society/>.

Ralph Fabri's accounts of the first hundred years of the American Watercolor Society prove useful in examining pre-, inter-, and post-war considerations on medium-specific artistic organization and display. While this 1966 publication is focused on watercolor rather than pastel, the psychological, social, and economic concerns Fabri discussed were likely also impacting those societies which prioritized pastel. Fabri reiterates that leading up to World War I, wage increases were "connected with war production, and of fast-increasing expenditures for the whole population...[therefore] commercial arts...attained an important position in the American way of life."⁵¹ While media like watercolor and pastel were understood to be preparatory, these characteristics became valuable in quickly producing art for commercial publications and advertisements.

In addition to competition from the commercial realm, twentieth century societies were competing with each other and the emerging avant-garde movement in America. While short lived, the Pastelists organized four exhibitions between 1910 and 1915. Information on the group's activity is limited, as Bolger reports that "only the catalogues for the first and fourth exhibitions have survived."⁵² Similar to the overlap of competing endeavors evident in the formation of the New York Water Color Club, the Pastelists also had original members diverging their attention and efforts from the group.⁵³ The Armory show possibly overlapped with the Pastelists third exhibition in 1912 or 1913, and included organizational efforts from active members of the pastel group such as Walt Kuhn, Elmer MacRae, Jerome Myers, and Arthur B.

⁵¹ Fabri, "Emergence of New York Water Color Club... World War I," 28.

⁵² Doreen Bolger, "The Pastelists, 1910-15, American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival and Revitalization," 20.

⁵³ Cleveland, 118.

Davies.⁵⁴ While the official organization of pastel-specific groups dissipated in 1915, illustrators utilized pastel to document twentieth century American attitudes resulting from increased technological and social advancements. These efforts were increasingly modernized, as the reproduction of these images in mass media made American visual culture more accessible to a wider, commercialized, American audience.

Section 3: Commercial Illustration

While the Pastelists disbanded in the early twentieth century, pastel was adopted by commercial illustrators around this time, especially for color portraits. The inclusion of pastel as a colorant to accessorize illustrations demonstrates the cannon of *disegno* from classic academic training. The evolution of pastel-exclusive illustrations still presented visual similarities to that of more typical painting media like oil or watercolor when reproduced; however, this difference of isolated usage further legitimized pastel as a full-coverage medium, accessible to a broader audience when front-and-center on feature magazine covers. As Mary F. Holahan has noted, the emergence of magazines correlated with the increase of literacy rates, focusing on “the quality of their illustrations, often reproducing examples of American painting important to an emerging national cultural identity.”⁵⁵ These printed constructions reiterated a hierarchy of importance to the American readership, which presented feature illustrations with prominent placement and full color. Competing with photojournalism, pastel illustration allowed for an artist’s individual style and expression to emerge through the tactile medium with quick artistic rendering. Photography

⁵⁴ Bolger, 21. Mary Wayne Fritzsche and Gail Stavitsky, “Pastel and the American Modernists, American Pastels, 1880-1930: Revival and Revitalization,” 24, citing the minutes of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors.

⁵⁵ Mary F. Holahan, “Chapter 18: American Narratives: Periodical Illustration, 1840-1930,” *History of Illustration*, 285.

was still limited in its ability to capture fast motion, but the gestural approaches to pastel allowed artists to construct life and energy into their images.⁵⁶ The readability of these illustrations emulated a degree of photo-realism, presenting the work of the illustrator to be of the same clarity as a photograph. While illustrators often found photographic references to be helpful tools in more complex compositions, the use of live models gave an element of time exposure which presented the artist's lived experience with a model. This integration of portrait cover girls as popular imagery in publicized media became collectable consumerist objects themselves.

The reproduction of these cover illustrations was collaborative in nature, making these idealizations a hybrid construction which incorporated traditional artmaking and design. While a "mimetic" translation was idealized in illustration due to the traditions enforced by observational drawing skills prioritized in traditional academic institutions, a direct mimesis from artwork to print reproduction was not identical.⁵⁷ At the discretion of the editor, an illustration could be manipulated and cropped to best suit a compositional arrangement in conjunction with headings and secondary text. Artist signatures are missing in some instances, which eliminate their personal branding (unless they are explicitly listed as the illustrator in adjacent text). This editorial process of company branding by the publisher complicates efforts to provide attributions for original illustrations, as an artist's identity could be lost in these translations. Extant examples of original illustrations alongside their commercial productions provide valuable insights to how cover images were arranged and edited from an artist's original rendering; however, few examples exist today, and many of these original source illustrations are

⁵⁶ Brian M. Kane and Page Knox, "Chapter 14: Illustration in Graphic Journalism and Magazine Fiction in Europe and North America, 1830-1900," *History of Illustration*, 230.

⁵⁷ Holahan, 286.

in private collections.⁵⁸ The transparency of technical specifics can also be a mystery, as the original size and medium are not provided in conjunction with a work's later photomechanical reproduction. Early endeavors of graphic design before the digital age incorporated physical cutting and pasting, known as "paste-up" which involved collaging images and printed text to become translated into a photocopy.⁵⁹ Artists were aware of these translations, as notable illustrators took effort to compose their signatures so that this personal stamp would still be a visible accessory within the image.

Introduced around 1900, the illustrated magazine cover gave artists additional creative freedom, as the illustrations were not as dependent on promoting specific narratives or brands.⁶⁰ According to Brian M. Kane and Page Knox, publication covers were closely related to the appeal of print collecting, as they "were often saved and framed."⁶¹ Commercial reproduction gave a wider degree of access with high quality facsimiles due to the innovations of photomechanical reproduction. While commercial illustration also included more traditional painting practices like oil, the integration of pastel in advertising further reiterated object-based consumerism. As color with pastel could not be mixed as with viscous paints, artists were required to collect colors as commodities – paralleling the constant push of consumption through domestic advertisements. Bright chromatic additions of pastel in colors akin to makeup presented cosmetic detailing and emphasis, which further painted these ad women as ideal constructions.

⁵⁸ For example, a pastel by Neysa McMein was sold in 2012 through Heritage Auctions alongside the 1922 magazine "Neysa Moran McMein (American, 1888-1949) Portrait of a Young Woman, Saturday Evening Post Cover, March 11, 1922," accessed March 24, 2023, <https://fineart.ha.com/itm/paintings/neysa-moran-mcmein-american-1888-1949-portrait-of-a-young-woman-saturday-evening-post-cover-march-11-/a/5090-78209.s>.

⁵⁹ For more information on this process, see Rod Van Uchelen, *Paste-up: Production Techniques and New Applications*, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1976).

⁶⁰ Kane and Knox, 303.

⁶¹ Kane and Knox, 303.

While a number of publications relating to domestic life surfaced due to both growing demand resulting in increased competition, notable titles for twentieth-century American women included *Delineator*, *McCall's*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Modern Priscilla*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Pictorial Review*.⁶² This emphasis on women as consumers problematized the male-dominated profession of illustration, as men often were active agents in the representation of women. The gendered association of pastel in relation to portraiture was often adapted by male artists to promote and advertise the changing identity of the American woman during the twentieth century. Despite this, a number of women took on positions as illustrators, often projecting a more “authentic” version of this new American woman.

Working almost exclusively in pastel, Neysa McMein (1888-1949) embodied this idea of the modern American woman not only in her illustrations, but also in her active participation in the fight for women's equality during the first-wave feminist movement.⁶³ While McMein was popular for her portraits of women, these depictions transcended the other idealized “pretty-girl” motifs often presented by her male contemporaries in their renditions of cover girls.⁶⁴ Coined the “McMein girl,” these depictions rivaled the earlier “Gibson girl” model.⁶⁵ Gallagher remarks in his 1987 biography of the artist that the McMein girl was an attainable beauty type, contrasting with the almost caricatured nature of the Gibson girl.⁶⁶ As many illustrators were trained through

⁶² Holahan, 302.

⁶³ David Apatoff, “The Art of the Post: The Fabulous Neysa McMein,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2019/05/post-artists-neysa-mcmein/>.

⁶⁴ Roger Reed, accompanying caption for Figure 20.4 of a cover by Neysa McMein, “Chapter 20: Diverse American Illustration Trends, 1915-1940,” *History of Illustration*, 325.

⁶⁵ Brian Gallagher, “Chapter 6: Neysa and the Pretty Girl,” *Anything Goes: The Jazz Age Adventures of Neysa McMein and Her Extravagant Circle of Friends*, (New York: Times Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1987), 90.

⁶⁶ Gallagher, 90.

academic schooling or other institutional curricula, McMein's technical proficiency is further legitimized by her studies at the Art Students' League of New York.⁶⁷

Two notable examples of McMein's cover girls appear as active participants promoting the social and political agency of women at the beginning of the interwar period in America: *Woman Making Bandages* from 1917 (Figure 7) and *Women Voter* from 1920 (Figure 8). McMein was actively involved in supporting the war effort through her creations, both at home and abroad.⁶⁸ In addition, McMein was an outspoken supporter of women's suffrage. Her cover illustration *Women Voter* was published in March of 1920, five months before the ratification of the nineteenth amendment, giving women the right to vote.⁶⁹ While both depictions are characteristic of McMein's unidealized women, their coloration is decorative as they emphasize the color red as a primary visual component. Additionally, the overall color scheme is primarily gradations of red, black, and white, evoking the early histories of colored chalks. The woman debating her vote for Congress holds her pencil to her lip, further calling attention to her prominent blush and red lips despite the overarching message of political agency. While progressively forward-thinking in her socio-political beliefs, McMein's cover illustrations reinforced the "typical" American consumer of ads in the twentieth century: a white woman.

Some diversification among community came about through McMein's participation in the Algonquin Round Table, and her studio was a popular place for individuals to casually meet

⁶⁷ "Neysa McMein," Illustration History: An educational resource and archive (Norman Rockwell Museum), accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.illustrationhistory.org/artists/neysa-mcmein>.

⁶⁸ David Apatoff, "The Art of the Post: The Fabulous Neysa McMein," The Saturday Evening Post, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2019/05/post-artists-neysa-mcmein/>.

⁶⁹ "Woman Suffrage Centennial," United States Senate, July 16, 2020, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/People/Women/Nineteenth_Amendment_Vertical_Timeline.htm.

and gather.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Gallagher acknowledges this disconnectedness through a “lack of unified group purpose.”⁷¹ While illustration gave individuals a means for successful careers through independence, fine art exhibitions through structured artist societies (often offshoots of academic institutions) centered around a group effort to dictate and influence public reception of certain arts. Founded in 1901, the Society of Illustrators did not have their first annual exhibition until 1959, further demonstrating the function of the group as a support for independent, commercial artists.⁷² McMein was later inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in 1984, but she shared the honor with two other male artists: John LaGatta and James Williamson. However, McMein was not the first female inductee.⁷³ While the Society of Illustrators post-dates earlier art organizations like the AWS, this increase in specialized societies served to provide further competition for sustaining membership rosters. Illustration continued to endure as a commercial practice later in the twentieth century, but an increased appreciation for the fine arts emerged as hand-illustrated advertisements declined.

Section 4: Shifting Societies

As early pastel societies were not as well documented as other contemporaneous organizations, Fabri’s account of the American Watercolor Society offers important insights to understand how the rising field of commercial illustration impacted the reception of fine arts in America. While the AWS has endured since 1867, the society has noted fluctuation in membership trends especially affected by the flourishing of American illustration. In recounting

⁷⁰ Gallagher, “Chapter 5: A Very Modern Salon,” 69-74.

⁷¹ Gallagher, 74.

⁷² “History of the Society,” Society of Illustrators, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://societyillustrators.org/about/history-of-the-society/>.

⁷³ “Hall of Fame,” Society of Illustrators, accessed March 28, 2023, <https://societyillustrators.org/hall-of-fame/>.

the first hundred years of the AWS, Fabri recounts the shift from fine art to commercial arts in his 1969 publication when addressing the years leading up to World War I. The 2017 exhibition catalogue of the AWS commemorating the 150-year anniversary of the organization includes an article from Robert Fionda, beginning with an overview of the late 1960s. As Fabri's previous compilation focused on the 100 year anniversary, Fionda's additions contextualized the following 50 years. Unfortunately, "publications and magazines were declining because television was now king." Fionda quotes Nancy Bercow who remarks that many illustrators changed over to the fine arts, as "artists had to adapt to survive."⁷⁴ This decline in hand illustration leading up to the 1970s could also reflect the timeline for the emergence of PSA, which was founded in 1972.

Founder of PSA, Flora Giffuni (1919-2009) was born in Naples, Italy, but immigrated to the United States with her parents at the age of two. Following her graduate studies in art, Giffuni studied at the Art Students' League with Robert Brackman (1896-1980).⁷⁵ At the League, Brackman taught figure drawing which inspired Giffuni to incorporate the figure into her own work. Similar to other women pastelists preceding her such as Neysa McMein, Giffuni used pastel as an active agent to promote social change for both women and secondary media. While illustrators worked more independently to further their personal brand, pastel-specific organizations recognized the advantage of a collective group to champion social acceptance for the medium.

⁷⁴ Robert Fionda, "Reminiscing: Fifty Years Past, 1966-2016, American Watercolor Society," in *American Watercolor Society: 150th Anniversary Edition / International Exhibition – 2017*, 10.

⁷⁵ Documents of compiled biographical information on Flora B. Giffuni and the founding of the organization provided in an email message to author by the current president of the Pastel Society of America, Jimmy Wright, January 12, 2023.

Giffuni's motivations for beginning the Pastel Society of America was initiated by the American Watercolor Society's growing dissatisfaction with incorporating pastels into their annual exhibitions during the latter-part of the twentieth century.⁷⁶ While specialized societies like the AWS had emerged to promote work outside of an academic context, often these larger academic institutions proved instrumental to the successful start of these smaller groups. As the Society of American Artists was an offshoot of the National Academy of Design (also composing membership in the Society of Pastel Painters), so too did the Pastel Society of America begin from larger institutional ties, supported by the National Arts Club in New York. The continuation of pastel itself was also tied to a larger academic model, as the practices of figure drawing and observational study were continually offered at institutions like the Art Students' League, which made use of more immediate drawing-type media like chalks and pastels. In contrast to the censorship of mass-media illustrations that avoided overt nudity, the nude as a recurring motif in "fine art" environments empowered women pastelists to embrace this accessibility to an important academic tradition which had been historically less accessible to them.⁷⁷ Despite fine arts and illustration existing as separate entities, both practices rely on commercially-manufactured art materials to produce collectable, visual works.

⁷⁶ Only the exhibition catalogues between 1868-1922 are publicly accessible online through the Philadelphia Museum of Art. During the course of this research, I contacted the American Watercolor Society for access to exhibition catalogues between the years 1951-1976. Assistant Director of AWS, Charity Henderson Vince reported that the specific media (pastel versus watercolor) was not listed in the annual catalogues which recognized award winners or exhibited work. Vince also reported that "Flora Baldini Giffuni" did not show up in the Exhibitor and Membership database. More scholarship is not only needed to not only continue the archive of AWS exhibition catalogues after 1922, but also to pinpoint specific primary-source evidence as to when pastels were exhibited under AWS.

⁷⁷ See Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2021).

American pastelists often utilized foreign pastel brands, yet the growing popularity of pastel during the latter-half of the twentieth century gave rise to an industry in America. Brands like Grumbacher and Rembrandt were popular for many twentieth-century pastelists.⁷⁸ Although Rembrandt was a common brand used in America, its history was not exclusively so. Rembrandt soft pastels were introduced in 1924, but the Talens company began in 1899 in the city of Apeldoorn in the Netherlands. The introduction of Rembrandt pastels supplied by Talens in America was a result of a production facility in New Jersey during the first half of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ Still existing today, this “Rembrandt” branding encompasses a variety of art materials including pastels, paint, brushes, and paper. As a result, this nomenclature projects the artistic authority of the Dutch Golden Age painter himself, distinguishing a historical notion of male professionalism in both materials and practices.⁸⁰ Contrasted to the Royal Talens company, Grumbacher was an American business founded by Max Grumbacher in 1905 in New York City.⁸¹ While limited information exists to connect artists with specific brands, photographs by Alfred Puhn documenting Robert Brackman in his studio reveal an open box of Grumbacher pastels (Figures 9a-b). As Brackman actively taught at the Art Students’ League, Grumbacher pastels would likely have been a common brand used by both instructors and students based on their local production in New York.

⁷⁸ Richard McKinley, “Grumbacher and Rembrandt Pastels | Two Historic Pastel Brands,” Artists Network, December 11, 2017, <https://www.artistsnetwork.com/art-mediums/pastel/grumbacher-and-rembrandt-two-historic-pastel-brands/>.

⁷⁹ “History | Royal Talens,” Home, accessed January 21, 2023, <https://www.royaltalens.com/en/about-us/history/>.

⁸⁰ “Rembrandt,” Home, accessed May 2, 2023, <https://www.royaltalens.com/en/brands/rembrandt/>.

⁸¹ “About | Grumbacher Art,” RSS 20, accessed January 21, 2023, <http://grumbacher.chartpak.com/about/>.

The emergence of smaller businesses founded by artists themselves coincided with the development of PSA and the shift back to fine arts, prompted by further technological advancements in printing. Diane Townsend began making her own pastels for personal use as early as 1971, after finishing her MFA at Queens College in New York. Townsend produced her first pastels with pigments sourced from the dumpster, disposed of by local companies in the printing industry.⁸² A number of American manufactures emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, which reflected a changing ideology of pastel as a contemporary painting practice.⁸³ This resulted in a demand for unique pastel brands, which complemented these flourishing artistic endeavors by professional artists, hobbyists, and enthusiasts alike.

Conclusions

As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, pastel was an inherently commercial medium as early as eighteenth-century America; however, pastel as a product was not exclusively “American-made” until the early twentieth century, as pastel sticks were largely imported. Further scholarship is necessary to properly situate twentieth-century American pastel practices through illustration and “fine art” in context with the earliest pastel-exclusive group: the Society of Painters in Pastel.

⁸² Diane Townsend and Judah Catalan, “Diane Townsend and Judah Catalan of Townsend Pastels talk about the manufacture of pastels,” by Melinda Braathen, *Wave Farm*, December 31, 2012. Guidelines for proper disposal of hazardous materials are still relatively new, as restrictions for dyes and pigments were instituted with a proposed rule released on July 23, 1999 by the EPA. For more information see “Dyes and Pigments, Land Disposal Restrictions,” EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), accessed January 21, 2023, <https://archive.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/web/html/dyes.html>.

⁸³ Notable American manufacturers following Townsend include: Great American Art Works (1995), Mount Vision (2000), Terry Ludwig (2005), Pan Pastels (2007), and Blue Earth Pastels (2012).

The delicacy of pastels often hinder their exhibition in museums; however, there has been further clarification to qualify these assumptions, as pastels on paper substrates are the most susceptible to fading due to the use of dyes in commercially-manufactured fine art papers.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the adherence of pastel to any substrate is incredibly fragile, as the slightest vibration could result in the loss of material. Despite these justifiable precautions involving display and transportation, an increasing number of retrospectives have presented exhibitions of works only incorporating pastel.⁸⁵ These exhibitions celebrate pastels as an independent medium, often avoiding their direct categorization as either paintings or drawings. This deviation is especially evident by exhibition titles which signpost “pastel,” referring to both the specific artistic medium and its resulting visual representations, not just limited to works on paper. Works that strictly use viscous paint mediums (like oil or watercolor) are more readily accepted as painting by the general public, due to their wet application with a brush. Additionally, historical notions of *disegno* and *colorito* are alluded to in acknowledging how line prefaces color, categorizing pastel as a secondary measure to add colorant. These retrospectives highlighting pastels are steps in the right direction, but many of these displays only incorporate artists already established in the cannon of art history. The display of pastel-specific work in exhibitions celebrate this medium as a modern practice, but should further emphasize its categorical ambiguity as a discipline not exclusive to either drawing or painting.

⁸⁴ For more information on these chemical advancements, see Laura Anne Kalba, *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art*, (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2017).

⁸⁵ Recent twenty-first century exhibitions including pastels from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries include: *Pure Color: Pastels from the Cleveland Museum of Art* (2016-2017), *Touch of Color: Pastels at the National Gallery of Art* (2019-2020), *Color into Line: Pastels from the Renaissance to the Present* at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (2021-2022).

While previous museum exhibitions have exclusively featured pastel in focused shows, these events are only temporary. Meanwhile, the Giffuni Gallery of American Pastels at the Butler Institute of American Art established in 2004 is the first gallery in the United States dedicated exclusively to pastel works.⁸⁶ Currently, the Giffuni Gallery has over 300 pastels in their collection, 25 of which include works by Flora Giffuni. Based on the Butler's current records, two pastels works were loaned by the artist herself in 2005, and the remainder of the collection was gifted by Giffuni's daughter JoAnn Wellner between 2021 and 2022.⁸⁷ These contemporary additions make the gallery an active collection, complicating scholarship; nevertheless, more work is needed to incorporate PSA artists and their pastels into art historical research.

With the rising popularity of pastels on an international scale, newer efforts to improve the quality of manufactured pastels through ASTM D8330, or "The Pastel Standard" are well underway to improve lightfastness of pastel products themselves.⁸⁸ This specific distinction of pastel "products" rather than "sticks" acknowledges a broader range that these manufactured colorants can take. In the early twenty-first century, PanPastel was developed by Bernadette Ward and Ladd Forsline in Pennsylvania, which package pastel in pans rather than as sticks.⁸⁹ This distinctive form draws obvious parallels to cosmetic powders, creating visual similarities in

⁸⁶ Louis Zana, "Flora's Vision and Passion," in *Pastelagram*, (Summer 2019): 9-10.

⁸⁷ Information regarding the Butler's pastel collection and works by Flora Giffuni provided in an email message to the author by Butler Archivist, Jean Shreffler, February 16, 2023. Pastels in the Butler do not appear to be accessible online through a public database.

⁸⁸ Michael Skalka, Conservation Administrator at the National Gallery of Art and chairman of the subcommittee of ASTM D01.57, Artist Materials has greatly advocated for D8330-20, coining it "The Pastel Standard." His personal website, *The Syntax of Color* provides additional information on manufactured art materials: <https://www.syntaxofcolor.com>.

⁸⁹ "About," The PanPastel® Story - Pan Pastel, accessed February 10, 2023, <https://panpastel.com/our-story.html>.

packaging. The main allure of this product today is it as a more “authentic” painting medium compared to pastel sticks. Applicators take the form of brushes, but this parallel removes the dual agency of pastel sticks as both tools and colorants; nevertheless, stumps and tortillons could be considered early pre-cursors to this invocation of an applicator for friable colors, yet these early tools were rather utilized to “sweeten” or blend.⁹⁰

Physical archives for proprietary pastel products are limited to respective companies to document their own timelines, but historical art materials are included in museum collections to document material culture. A box of Sennelier pastels (ca. 1900) was gifted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Jeanine Humphrey through the Pastel Society of America in 2014 (Figure 10), demonstrating how medium-specific artist societies like PSA are important resources for museums in accessioning art materials as part of collections.⁹¹

Technological and industrial advancements account for material innovation, but these changes also affect social histories as well. The rise of second-wave feminism in the 1960s motivated women to seek out more fulfilling roles, and both Flora Giffuni and Urania Christy Tarbet are notable examples demonstrating the initiative taken by women as founding members of socially agentic, pastel-specific organizations. In addition to the formation of PSA, Giffuni helped in the founding of a number of regional pastel societies, and aided Urania Christy Tarbet in the founding of the International Association of Pastel Societies (IAPS) in 1994.⁹² Unlike PSA, IAPS acts as an overall governing body for more geographically-limited societies. While

⁹⁰ Burns, “Painting with Pastel,” 31.

⁹¹ Marjorie Shelley, “Mary Cassatt in a Modernist Light: A Close Look at Mother and Child,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 29, 2018, <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/collection-insights/2018/mary-cassatt-modernist-mother-child>.

⁹² “International Association of Pastel Societies,” IAPS, accessed February 19, 2023, https://www.iapspastel.org/ai_history.php.

many of these groups have expansive membership not limited to their representative states or countries, the allure of these organizations is more aimed at establishing connections with local communities.⁹³ Currently, PSA is affiliated under IAPS despite its international presence and 22-year seniority over the latter organization; however, PSA and IAPS membership share overlaps, as contemporary artists recognize both institutions as authorities of twenty-first century pastel practices.

Economic stability in post-war society resulted in the baby boom during the latter part of the twentieth century. Individuals born as a result of this prosperity make up a majority of the membership in pastel societies today, especially in regionally-based groups under IAPS. Issues of gendered amateurism are still pertinent, but these divisions have morphed into a general category of pastel enthusiasts or hobbyists. The previous understanding of women as target-consumers during the twentieth century is not inherently present today; however, the allure of pastel is often associated with upper- and middle-class consumers, who have a disposable income to acquire and collect individual pastel colors. The withstanding popularity of pastel in the midst of drastic change during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a testament to the medium as “recession proof.”⁹⁴

⁹³ For a map locating each of the 62 registered societies in the United States see “International Association of Pastel Societies,” IAPS, accessed March 15, 2023, https://www.iapspastel.org/memsoc_find.php.

⁹⁴ Phone conversation with Diane Townsend on July 29, 2022.

Figures



Figure 1. Henrietta Johnston, *Portrait of Henrietta Charlotte Chastaigner*, 1711, pastel on paper, 11 3/4 x 9 in., Gibbes Museum of Art



Figure 2. John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Mrs. Joseph Barrell (Hannah Fitch)*, 1771, pastel on paper mounted to canvas, 23 7/8 x 18 in., Museum of Fine Arts Boston



Figure 3. Henrietta Johnston, *Mary Magdalene (Gendron) Prioleau*, 1715, pastel on paper, 12 x 9 in., Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts



Figure 4. Henrietta Johnston, *Colonel Samuel Prioleau*, 1715, pastel on paper, 12 x 9 in., Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts



Figure 5. Henrietta Johnston, *Frances L'Escott*, 1716, pastel on paper, 11 1/16 x 8 1/4 in., Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts



Figure 6. Rosalba Carriera, *America*, ca. 1730, pastel on paper mounted to canvas, 16 1/2 x 13 in., National Museum of Women in the Arts

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

An Illustrated Weekly
Founded A. D. 1728 by Benj. Franklin

MAY 26, 1917

5c. the Copy



In This Number: BASIL KING—RUDYARD KIPLING—SAMUEL G. BLYTHE
IRVIN S. COBB—ARTHUR TRAIN—E. POOLE—CHARLES E. VAN LOAN

Figure 7. *The Saturday Evening Post*, “Woman Making Bandages” cover from May 26, 1917, illustrated by Neysa McMein

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

An Illustrated Weekly
Founded A. D. 1728 by Benj. Franklin

MAR. 6, 1920

5c. THE COPY



Beginning: The Book of Susan—By Lee Wilson Dodd

Figure 8. *The Saturday Evening Post*, “Woman Voter” cover from March 6, 1920, illustrated by Neysa McMein



Figure 9a. Alfred Puhn Photographs, [ca. 1950-1959]: *Robert Brackman working in his studio*, RB-9, Roll 1116, 1951, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution



Figure 9b. detail showing “Grumbacher” label



Figure 10. Sennelier pastels, ca. 1900.
Department of Paper Conservation, The
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift
of Jeanine Humphrey through the Pastel
Society of America, 2014

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