More Sketchbook Explorations: Gel Pen Drawings on Colored Paper with Lisa

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(upbeat electronic music) - Welcome back. For this class, we're going to work outside of the sketchbook. Your sketchbook is a great place to develop your voice and find your style. But ultimately, you wanna move outside of the sketchbook and create things on canvas or paper that you can frame, sell, or give away. Although you can play around with the techniques that I'm going to show you today in your sketchbook, we're going to be working on colored backgrounds with gel pen. The first project we're going to do today is decorating the outside of a small craft paper sketchbook. And then, we're going to play around with a Japanese-inspired wave pattern in white gel pen on black paper. A few years ago, I got a package from my favorite pen company, Sakura of America. They sent me some gel pens. I opened them up and promptly put most of them in a drawer. I sent the other half to my 15-year-old niece, because I thought gel pens are for teenagers. And then a few months later, I was playing around in my sketchbook, and I decided to open up a pack. And I discovered the magic of gel pens. They are not just for teenagers, and they are not just for decorating your binder or notebook in school. These pens make fabulous patterns on paper and great art. These days, gel pens are an integral part of my repertoire. (upbeat electronic music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- With this class you're going to need a brown craft paper notebook, they also sometimes comes in blue or black or other dark colors and any of those are also fine. I love this series by Scout Books, these are my favorite little notebooks. You also need one or two colored gel pens that will show up on whatever color paper your notebook is, plus one white gel pen. And then we're going to be working on black paper. Strathmore makes this really great nine by 12 black paper that I really love. It's going to be really helpful for you to have a little bit of white paint, it can be watercolor from a tube, gouache, or acrylic white.

Chapter 3 - Drawing Designs on Colored Paper

Using gel pens on a kraft paper notebook

- We're going to adorn this notebook with a repeat of the same basic floral shape. I'm only gonna use two colors. This sort of neon orange, which will translate more pink on the craft paper and a white gel pen. But you can really use any color you want. So the flower shape we're going to draw is sort of a long half-circle and takes a few minutes to color in with gel pen 'cause the tip is rather fine, but it's not so bad. So you want to color as you draw the shapes. We're gonna draw the stems and the leaves after we lay down all of the flower shapes. And they're all going to look mostly the same, and you want to vary the sizes. Don't worry too much about filling in all of the space with the gel pen. You can go back over it later. You'll notice that these flowers, when you first lay them down with the ink they look dark and then they dry much later. It almost looks like chalk, and they really begin to pop off of the craft paper. I may go back in with this pink and add some more later but for now I'm gonna put it down and pick up my white pen. Now I'm going to lay down the same exact flower design which we will add detail to after we get the basic shapes down. These will be in white, alternating in white. And again, I'm sort of imagining a garden where flowers are different heights

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and sizes and you wanna use your eye to help you judge what the composition should be. You can even layer some so that some of the flowers are actually sitting behind some of the others like I'm doing here. When you color in with a gel pen it doesn't look entirely opaque. In fact, it's, you can actually see the texture of the pen on the paper but I really like the texture and how it looks so I don't mind it so much. So I'm gonna stop there and now I'm going to start my stems and leaves and for the pink flowers I'm going to use the white for the stem and the leaves and for the white flowers I'm going to use the pink for the stem and the leaves. The base of our flower garden is right down here at the bottom. We can always go back and add more flower shapes later if we feel like there aren't enough. I'm gonna add the leaves last I've decided. Get the stems laid down first. So we have white stems on all of the pink flowers and now we're gonna pick up the pink pen and put pink stems on all of the white flowers. And you'll see already, even without adding the leaves yet the space is starting to fill up. So I wanna look for the flowers that are sort of the most in the foreground and it looks like this white flower is so let's start by putting these on him. Oops, see I just made a small mistake but there really are no mistakes. I'm starting to put pink leaves on a white stem but that's okay. To make it look more intentional maybe I'll put some white leaves on this pink stem. Originally I was gonna make the stems and the leaves the same color but sometimes, quote mistakes are your happy accidents and this still looks cute. I'm going to go back in over some of these flower shapes that have mostly dried and put another layer of gel pen over them. When you're coloring in solid with gel pen it helps to go over the area in another direction. Now that I've finished the overall composition with the flower shapes, stems and leaves, I wanna go in and see if there isn't anything that I might want to add to make it more complete. I have this area right here which feels a little empty but I sort of like the negative space there. Instead of adding another flower here, I think what I'm going to do is actually make this white flower a little bit taller. When you see negative space on your canvas or paper or in your sketchbook it might be your tendency to want to fill it in. But what I encourage you to do is play with the negative space and use it to make your composition even stronger. Now that I've got my composition exactly how I want it I'm going to go in and lay in some detail over the flower shapes. Let's start with the white gel pen on the pink flowers. You can make whatever designs you want on your flowers. I'm going to do a combination of stripes and dots. When you're laying gel pen over gel pen best to make sure your base layer is completely dry first. I'm repeating the same design on every flower. You've probably heard me say a lot in this class approach drawing with a light touch. The harder you press down on your gel pens or your micron pens the more room there is for error. If you go in with a light touch sometimes the ink actually flows more freely. Now that I've layered the white details on the pink flowers I'm going to pick up the pink pen and lay details down on the white flowers. I love how the pink gel pen pops on top of the white gel pen. The very last step is to go in and fill in any little holes in your drawing. So, I'm noticing that some of these leaves are not completely filled in or they're a little bit messy so I'm gonna go in and fill them in. This design is deceptive. It looks, you know, rather intricate but really it's really simple. We have the same basic shapes repeated over and over. So, the flower shape with the same exact design on it and the stem and leaves. Super simple, repeating the same thing in only two colors and yet so beautiful and interesting looking. I made a couple of other notebooks and I love these because you can give them away as gifts or make them for yourself. These two have geometric patterns on them. This is a scallop shape with circles. This one is a triangle pattern that I made that has little white dots and these are all also made with different color gel pens. You can really have a lot of fun with gel pens on these cute little scout books which also come in a larger size.

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Using white gel pens on black paper
- I'm going to teach you a totally new pattern. We're going to use white gel pen on black paper and make a Japanese-inspired wave pattern to fill almost an entire page. While this pattern, once it's finished, can look really complicated, it's actually pretty easy to create once you get into the flow. I usually start in the bottom left-hand corner. Again, you might want to start in the right hand corner, especially if you're left-handed. I start by making either a backwards S, or a forwards S, or some kind of wave-like pattern. Basically you're just going to be building out in different directions. A wave. Or, a series of waves. This is meant to sort of mimic what's going on in the inside, underneath the ocean. There are no rules for this pattern technique expect to make sure that none of your lines are straight and that you repeat the same motion, or the same wave pattern a few different times. I'll show you what I mean by that. So you can see here, I made this wave mark, and then I repeated it several times down, not all the way across but maybe one, two, three, four, five, six times. You might want to do a few more, a few less. This one is going this direction and only includes one curve. You can have some that are complete circles or spirals like this. You can make them start and end wherever you like. If you've got some negative space here you can just fill it in. This is really just a very freeform. It might feel slightly uncomfortable to some of you when you're first starting out. I'm gonna take this line right here and connect it here. This is really great practice for freeform drawing. Eventually, this entire bottom three quarters is going to be filled, so you have to be really inventive about how you fill it. I'm mimicking the bottom part of this wave, and then I'm creating a new wave over here. You can make the space between your lines a little tighter, or you can make it looser. That part is up to you. Or you can alternate tightness and looseness. And again, hold your pen fairly lightly. Go slowly. Should be no rushing in your drawing. You'll see here, this curve that I made was a little bit wonky compared to the rest of them and that's okay. This is going to look cool no matter if your curves are crooked or perfect. I'm drawing really intuitively right now, and because I draw all the time, making lines that are flowing in and out of each other comes really easily to me, so this may feel a little overwhelming and even difficult for you. If that's the case, I recommend stopping and taking a look at what you're drawing, and stepping back and saying, "Oh, most of my lines are flowing this way. "Maybe I should have a few that go this way." Be really thoughtful about what you're drawing while you're drawing it. Notice that I'm alternating the direction of my waves. Some are going down, some are going to the left, some are going to the right. There's a lot of energy and movement already. I'm even closing some lines, like this is kind of a kidney bean shape that I made, and I'm going to fill that in. This really is your chance to go really freeform. You can start and end and connect the lines really anywhere. The idea here is not to copy what I'm doing, but just to get the idea for what I'm trying to achieve and then try to achieve the same thing yourself. There's no intersecting lines, you'll also notice that. I'm not overlapping. Each line has its own separate space and certain lines meet in certain places, but there are no intersecting lines. That's probably another rule that I forgot to mention earlier. The reason that gel pens are so great for this kind of drawing is that they flow really smoothly on the surface of your paper. Notice I started this line here and I brought it down and connected it to a wave that I drew, maybe, five minutes ago. We're playing with the space in interesting ways and going back and working with existing lines until the space is filled up. Now you're going to go ahead and fill up your page to about three quarters. I have already completed most of another spread, which you can see here. You'll notice that I made the top sort of look like the surface by creating some waves that... Shapes that were jutting out. We're going to add one more wave coming out of the surface. Right here, just to show you how I've done it. I'm working off of an existing line. I'm trying to mimic this sort of wave shape or motion as I've already

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done here. Notice that I'm not going straight across. I've got my waves in a sort of sweeping motion. Yours could look like this or go down or go up, but I'm encouraging you to just think about movement and motion instead of a straight line. The final step is to add your moon. You can draw your own circle freehand if you're comfortable doing that, but that's really hard for a lot of people, so I recommend finding a cup or a glass that obviously has a circle top, and laying it down and tracing around it. I'd like my moon to hover behind the top waves and not be completely separate. You can do yours however you want. I think I'd like my moon to go here. I'm going to draw around the cup but not over the portion where there are waves, only on on top because I don't want to draw a circle over my wave drawing. This is really important. When I pull the cup away, you can see I've only drawn from this point over to this point, and I'm only going to fill in around the waves that I've drawn. You can fill in with the white gel pen, much like we did with the floral shapes on the cover of the notebooks, but for a space this large, I recommend using some opaque, white paint. That's what we're gonna use right now. I've got some in my palette. I'm taking my flat head brush and mixing in a little bit of water. I don't want this to be super wet. It's watercolor, so it's easily thinned out. I'm just mixing in a little water here, and then I'm gonna do a little test area here to see how it lays on it. This is looking pretty thin. I want it to be somewhat transparent, but I want to add a little bit more paint pigment in here so that it looks a little thicker. That's a little better. You can always go in with another layer. I'm gonna take the edge of my brush and make sure that I'm staying inside, basically inside this white line. This part is the easy part. It's okay, you can see the brush strokes. Brush strokes are what add character and texture to your piece. I'm gonna go around the top part of this wave. I don't necessarily want my moon to be super flat and opaque, because actual moons have some texture and some darker spots in them, but I feel like this needs one more layer of white paint before it's finished. As with the notebooks that we decorated, this is deceptively complex. In reality, we've got one or two shapes that we're just repeating over and over and over and over in only one color. It's actually a really, really simple design and yet, when you finish, it looks really complex and interesting. This combination here looks really great framed in white. As with anything that you frame, make sure that everything is completely dry before you put it behind glass. There are two things I hope you take away from all of these classes, and one of them is that really, drawing in this way that I've been teaching is about basic lines and basic shapes. There's nothing complex about it. We're using lines and shapes in almost everything we're drawing. And so, when you look at your drawing as basic lines and basic shapes, it really makes it feel much more manageable and much less intimidating. I also hope you remember that imperfection rules. You maybe be drawing along and your pen may slip, or one side might not match the other side, and you think, "Oh my gosh, I've made a mistake. "I need to start over." But I really encourage you to embrace those mistakes and work with them, and use the imperfections and wonkiness in your drawings as your own style and what makes your work stand out, and what makes your work organic and interesting. (energetic music)

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