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ARTIST INTERVIEWS, PASTELS

## PASTEL ARTIST SOPHIE AMAUGER AND HER NEW UNISON SET

20th November 2014 by Lisa Takahashi 2

Sophie Amauger originally trained as a graphic designer but for the past 14 years has dedicated her working life to creating sumptuous depictions of nature in soft pastel. She often teaches in her native France and has recently selected a landscape set of 72 shades for Unison, one that is versatile yet sensitive to the many hues found in the French landscape. The Jackson's Art Blog were keen to ask Sophie about her artworks in pastel.

*Lisa: When did you first realise you wanted to become a pastel artist full time?*

**Sophie:** When I stopped my graphic job in advertising I was looking for a life with more drawing, more open space, more nature, so it was easy to take this decision.

*Lisa: Why is pastel your medium of choice?*

**Sophie:** I am working outside most of the time and pastel is perfectly adapted for capturing the light without losing time to mix colours.

It is easy to describe atmosphere and to take in my box a selection of pastels corresponding to colours and values of the landscape where I am.

In my last painting escapade, I left for Brittany with formats of paper cut from a portfolio, and returned with 12 pastels in the a single cardboard box, an easy mode of transport!

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Sophie Amauger at work

*Lisa: How did you learn your approach to pastel painting?*

**Sophie: I learned it by myself.**

*Lisa: What does your work tell us about nature?*

**Sophie: I hope that my work tells you about light, about moments of simple emotion, as everybody can experience it when out walking.**

**The subjects which I choose to paint are not picturesque, they are everywhere if you're able to see them.**

*Lisa: What is the most valuable piece of advice about making art you have ever received?*

**Sophie: In the school of graphic art where I studied advertising drawing one of my teachers told me to "draw every day": it is the best advice I have ever received.**



Sophie Amauger: 'Bec d'Andaine', Pastel on Card

*Lisa: Can you tell us a bit about your experiences of art school?*

**Sophie: The name "Art School" is paradoxical; in Art school, you learn technique, but not Art. Art progresses with knowledge of the self**

*Lisa: Can you tell us about the colour selection for the Sophie Amauger Unison Pastel set?*

**Sophie: I am teaching in nature for some courses in the summer, and very often, my pupils do not have a good set of pastels with which to work. Half of them have too many pastels for their limited work space (without a table and 6 square meters!) and the other half have sets with colours which are not in nature and very soon they realize they won't use 1/3 of the pastels...**

**Most of the time those boxes do not have enough light colours and also not enough very dark colours (violet, green, Brown)...light comes from contrast of dark against light.**

**They often have a lot of blue-green, but no greens with yellow tints.**

**It's impossible to have all colours you need, but I tried to put in this set my basic colours that I can use in In the Sierra Nevada in Brittany or around Toulouse where I am living.**

**I organized it so that the arrangement is intuitive (so that pastels are easy to put back in place) and adapted to my method of work out of doors.**

**In the bottom upward the set comprises of the following:**

**Greens are next to the dark values (brown and purple), then comes the line of ochre that we can associate with these purple browns, or shine with the colours of the on-line light 2.**

**The first line is dedicated to blue to paint skies or water. There are so many other blues in the Unison colour chart harmony, but the set has only 72 pastels...**

**No black pastel, I never use it, no real white too, it kills colours.**





Sophie Amauger: 'Le Passage', Pastel on Card

*Lisa: What in your view is the biggest challenge faced by artists today and how do you think the challenge is best overcome?*

**Sophie:** With consumerism and the era of disposability I wonder about the motivations of the buyers and what attracts them. Public education, exchanges between artists and the public is more important than ever...

*Lisa: What are you working on at the moment?*

**Sophie:** I have just returned from Normandy, where I painted the beaches and fields; I am going to work on some of these subjects again on a larger format in my studio.

*Lisa: Where online or in the flesh can we see more of your work?*

**Sophie:** I shall be present in the show Artoulouse in March, 2015; with the Art of the pastel in France in June to Giverny and with the Society of the French Pastellists in Limoges in July August.


I am represented in Wildevuur Galerie -North Holland- and will have an exhibition there next summer in July and August.



Sophie Amauger and her best friend to share plein air painting experiences with, Marcel Moulin.


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Lisa Takahashi


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2 COMMENTS



**Marianne McAuliffe**  
November 28, 2014 at 8:00 pm

I am confused. In the U.S. we referred to the two types of pastels as oil pastels and chalk pastels. in the UK and Europe they are referred to as soft and hard – but then it is unclear from all the descriptions if soft pastels are a different form of chalk pastels or are actually and only oil pastels. Can you please clarify this distinction for me.

MSMcAuliffe

REPLY

Julie Caves  
December 2, 2014 at 10:10 am