

The following 34 artists, who are members of the Appalachian Pastel Society, participated in this virtual group activity while “Sheltering-in-Place” at their homes. The artwork they created is shared here. Hugs and best wishes to all until we can meet together safely.

APS Adventures in Pastel...Adventure AAAA1 “Going Wabi Sabi”

Welcome artists to our brand new series of APS Adventures in Pastel! Our first challenge is to paint in the style of Wabi Sabi. The term Wabi Sabi comes from Zen Buddhism and can be defined as a way of living that focuses on finding beauty within imperfection and peacefully accepting the natural cycle of growth and decay. It is a philosophy prevalent throughout all forms of Japanese art. For artists, wabi sabi is often described as one of appreciating beauty that is asymmetrical, imperfect, impermanent or incomplete.

Step 1: Choose a subject that you feel would be exciting to explore in the Wabi Sabi style. For inspiration, feel free to explore Wabi Sabi on the internet and see the illustrations attached below.

Step 2: Create your Wabi Sabi painting in any size, color palette, or surface you prefer. Remember we are exploring this style and no one is expecting a masterpiece!

Step 3: Take a photo of your painting and send it along with any remarks you would like to share about this challenge and how it impacted your ideas about design and composition going forward.

Step 4: Send the photo of your artwork, **title, size and any comments** to Kay Gordon (jkaygordon364@gmail.com) by January 26th at 6:00 PM.

Step 5: Remember, this deadline is firm and nothing can be posted that is received after **6 PM on January 26th**. NOTE: your painting does not need to be in its finished form. This adventure is to encourage all of us in exploring new techniques and then sharing what we are learning with each other.

On your mark; get set; GO WABI SABI!

Kathy Amspacher, Hendersonville

Wabi Sabi being what it is, I decided on doing my hand. The dry aging artist nails and skin are the imperfections. The beauty is accepting it peacefully as a natural cycle. Sometimes it makes me happy to see it as a map of my life....they talk of dirty pastel hands followed by washing hands OFTEN.....dry wrinkled skin followed by happy memories of boating, golfing etc. in the sun.....crooked fingers followed by being grateful that I have lived long enough to see my grandmother's hands in my own.

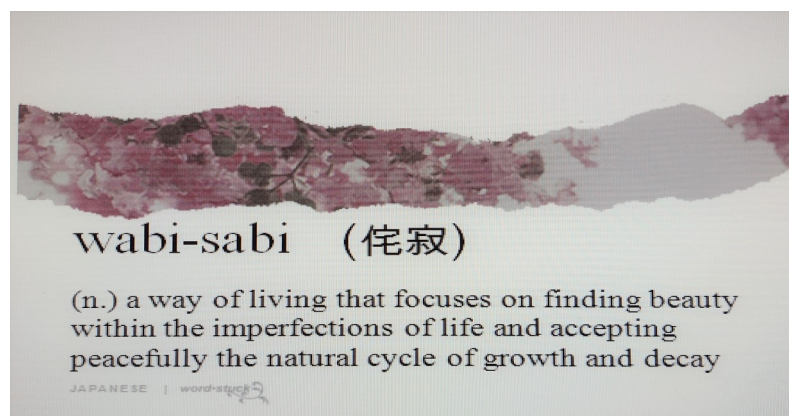
Title: Acceptance

Size: 9x12

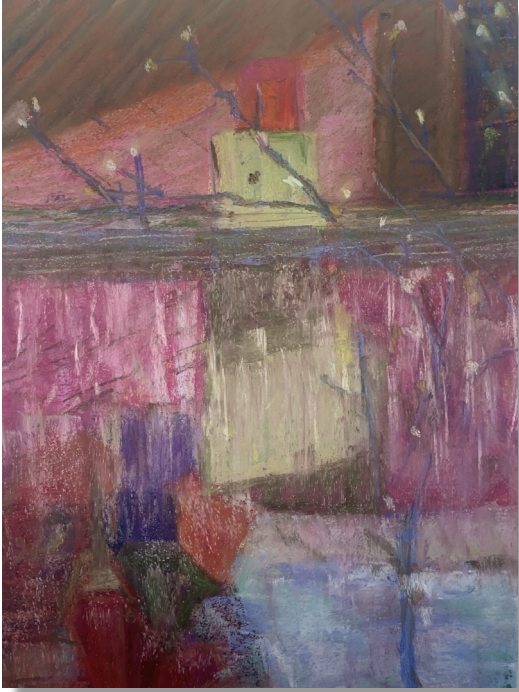
Thanks for this Wabi Sabi fun.



Acceptance
9 x 12



Blurry Window 12 x 9 Uart paper



This is a depiction of a window that was being decorated for Christmas in New York City. I happened to walk by and the shapes and colors, and twinkle lights, caught my eye. I realize this is not a worn, torn, loved object, but after I had the photograph printed it was tainted a bit from water damage. To me there was a beauty in the messed up blurry image. The photo was not destroyed, but still interesting. This is how I interpreted the Wabi Sabi nature of things.

I enjoyed this exercise and feel like my eyes have been opened a bit to looking at the world around me.

Worn Journal 12 x 9 Uart paper



Although this is not complete I had so much fun with this exercise that I chose a different subject matter too thinking it might be a better representation than a street window!

Jane Best, Morganton

Top of the Tie 8 x 10 Uart



After reading about wabi sabi and looking at examples on the internet, I found a stick, moss, and partially melted snow on top of a landscaping railroad tie in my yard.

I liked the random arrangement and design all made by nature and decided it might have painting potential.

Beryl Bradley, Brevard, NC

Happy New Year !

I hope this year we will be able to get back to in person meetings

After I worked on this painting for awhile it wasn't feeling finished. I was going to add leaves but decided on a bare winter tree instead. Adding the snow and some broken rotting branches gave it that wabi sabi feeling for me.

Bare Bones

11 x 14 on sanded premium pastel paper



Deborah Chase, Hendersonville

Barn Find

9.5 x 7.5



I was familiar with the term “wabi sabi” in relation to imperfection but after checking it out more I made my painting about the “sabi” part.

The contemplation of what is old and worn to appreciate its beauty.

I find the textures and patterns of the old wood and rusting metal interesting.

Nancy Clausen, Swannanoa



The Gray Tulip

12 x 9

Here is my Wabi Sabi painting. I call it the Gray Tulip. It is a 12 x 9 done on black Mi Tientes Canson paper. I don't usually work on black, but thought it might be fun. Neither do I usually work on Canson.

My idea came from various things or impression of things. The Tulip idea actually came from an answer to a crossword puzzle.

I used mainly hard pastels which worked well on the surface. They were a variety of Faber Castell, Rembrandt and a Girault.

Ruth Crowe, Matthews, NC

I had a difficult time finding my subject, but enjoyed, it is knot from a dead post from Colonial Williamsburg, VA.

I have not been able to transfer the original picture to my phone from phone, so I do not have the original picture.

I have always been fascinated with the patterns in dead wood, so this was a pleasure to try.

Thanks for the challenges—you all do a great job coming up with the subjects.

Beauty of Dead Wood

6 x 4

Misty-toned sanded paper



Diane de Grasse, Black Mountain



Late Blooms

12.5 x 9

Hard and soft pastels on ArtSpectrum paper.

Thanks for another good challenge. Unfamiliar with Wabi Sabi, I did a lot of looking. For me, it was easier to see imperfections and impermanence in three dimensional objects rather than paintings.

But on the easel I had already started a painting suggesting transitory conditions: haphazard late fall blooms, browning foliage and a building in disrepair, and I've submitted that one. An abstract might be my next try.

Thank you again for the inspiration and discovery in the Adventure series.

Jennifer Donolo, Burlington, ON, Canada

Foglesong Valley Road, Ceres, Virginia 13.5 x 19



Pastel on paper
(Colourfix Pastel
Paper, leaf green
dark)

I used Nupastels,
Richeson, Terri
Ludwig and other
soft pastels

For many years I have cycled in and around Wytheville, Virginia. Each visit, this forlorn barn, and many others in the area like it, would show signs of decline, and the effects of time and the elements.

On one visit, this structure was no longer there. All that remained were some boards and corrugated metal sheets tumbling down the steep hill behind where the barn had once perched.

I feel blessed to have seen this barn over the years, observed it, absorbed it, spent time near it, photographed it, and to have painted it many times.

The overwhelming quietude of the Valley, the beauty of this rusty, woody barn, teetering on the brink of the hill, and so exposed to the forces of nature, are impressions that stay with me.

Painting in the style of Wabi Sabi was a challenge; to me, this encompassed a Wabi Sabi composition (something asymmetric, simple, austere), of a Wabi Sabi 'subject' (imperfect, incomplete, old), And, painted in a Wabi Sabi style (texture, roughness, looseness, and calmness in colours and values). It was a wonderful exercise in working out these multiple objectives, and in exploring the pastel medium. Thank you for this opportunity!

Terrilynn Dubreuil, Asheville

This is about as Zen / Wabi-Sabi as I can get!

Winter Beach 9 x 12



While in Maine this cold, oddly-mixed winter, I am a couple miles from one of my favorite walking beaches: Higgins. This particular morning I took a walk during a foggy, windy day and captured a washed-out scene. Deceptively simple, tonalist palette, but has the feel of the cold moment when I almost froze my fingers taking the photo.

I've been getting to the beach as much as possible, regardless of the weather, because in Asheville, well, it's SO far away. Actually, in inclement weather, especially with strong winds, it gives the best atmosphere for beautiful creations!

Will Evans, Fairview



Weathered by Life's Storms

9 x 12

My understanding of the term Wabi-Sabi was very limited, research expanded this to extend into Zen Buddhism and the culture of Japan.

The part of Wabi-Sabi that caught my attention was “Fukinsei”, irregularity or asymmetry. The NC Arboretum has an excellent display of Bonsai, a Zen Buddhist practice of tray planting, miniature landscapes, stretching back to the 6th Century.

J Kay Gordon, Weaverville

My reference photo included the vibrant green top of this palm tree, but...

...for this Adventure, I painted only the dead palm fronds that hang on the tree until they fall to the ground. The next gusty day, this tree will probably trim itself.

I started with a quick sketch on black Uart 800 with a white charcoal pencil. Initial painting was with Creatacolor hard pastels...brightening and filling in with a variety of softer pastels (Mt Vision, Terry Ludwig, Unison)...final calligraphy with a black Girault.

Waiting for the Wind 6 x 8



"The Buddhist view of the facts of existence: Both life and art are beautiful not because they are perfect and eternal, but because they are imperfect and fleeting." From Japanology.org

MaryAnn Grib, Gray, TN

Hanging in There 7 x 5



I chose as my subject a plant in my home that is having a difficult time of it and is quite imperfect at the moment but interesting nonetheless.

I used pastel pencils for this one on 5x7 320 sanded paper. I would consider this a study which I might use for a larger piece. Title will be "Hanging in There".



The Old Mountain Laurel

7 x 5

Surface: UART 500 grit

This old Mountain Laurel stands within a clump of wild rhododendrons outside my studio window. Its bent and misshapen form has caught my attention

for many years. Thus, I chose it for my subject for our Wabi-Sabi Challenge.

I first encountered the concept of Wabi-Sabi when I took a ceramic workshop taught by a good friend, Ed Gray, in Michigan. My first ceramic pots easily qualified for needing a Wabi-Sabi outlook to see any artistic beauty in them.

Ed later gifted me a book titled: "Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets, and Philosophers" by Leonard Koren. I reread that book this week to familiarize myself with the concepts behind this artistic esthetic. In his book Koren says: "All things are either devolving towards or evolving from nothingness." I think this old Mtn. Laurel is in the "devolving" stages of its existence just like me.

May we always see the simple beauty that surrounds us.

Susan Harkins, Vilas, NC

Being a new member I was very excited to do my first Art Adventure!

For the Wabi Sabi theme I choose to paint from a photo I took in Kentucky of this grand dying tree. I found it's decaying nature embodied a graceful but imperfect beauty. I like the way the forest seems to bow in honor toward the wise old tree.

I used UArt 600, toned with pan pastels. I had fun experimenting with various techniques to represent the wood texture. I settled on new pastel with an alcohol wash then a layering of hard and soft pastel (Sennelier).



Majestic Grace

8 x 6

Mona Hearne, Matthews, NC

I'd never heard of Wabi Sabi until last Wednesday!

When I researched it on Google, I realized that I own an actual Wabi Sabi.

The top photo is "Apple Blossoms" that my son and daughter in law sent to me when they were stationed in Japan with the Air Force.

I decided to try my hand at Wabi Sabi by adapting the art they'd sent to me in the '90's. The substrate is Rice Paper a friend had given me in the '70's. Life is fun!

Anyway, the Apple Blossoms are on a 6 x 11 piece of Rice Paper. I used Ludwigs greens and radiants, and Sennileir white.. I also used Cretacolor pastel pencils.

It was fun to create. For sure it is imperfect.

Joyfully, Vernona "MONA" Hearne



Apple Blossoms

11 x 6

Kathy Hutchinson, Rutherfordton, NC



Standing Alone
8.5 x 5.25
on Colourfix sanded rose grey



This is a painting from a photo of my favorite tree...thanks for giving me the reason to paint it.

This challenge just called for this tree because it is 'perfectly' asymmetrical!

Jan Jackson, Hendersonville

In Our Backyard 4 x 5 on Uart



I really enjoyed this challenge.

It was not hard to see the beauty in the "dead" limbs and the shadows on the snow were a bonus!



Budding Blossoms 9 x 12

The simplicity of this flower arrangement shows the natural cycle of growth which is a part of Wabi Sabi. From the bud(early stage of growth) to the blossoming into a full flower, this arrangement illustrates the development of the flower. The flower will eventually fade and die leaving behind the seeds for new growth.

Another aspect of Wabi Sabi is an asymmetrical composition. The vase is off center and the branches are unbalanced.

I also limited the selection of colors to simplify the drawing. I think the drawing has the look of a Japanese influence.

Karen Knaub, Lake Lure

This may have been the toughest challenge yet for me. I had a hard time understanding what wabi sabi is.

So I am hoping I did this challenge correctly.

This is of a blue heron in the marsh. I want to keep working on it but feel that Japanese art is more simplistic.

Thank you for the challenge



(title)

9 x 11

Cindy Lidd, Garner, NC

Trees in Bloom
9 x 12



Carl and I are moved.....boy am I glad that is over; still trying to get settled in.

Anyway, I am still trying to paint and one of these days I will actually be satisfied with what I am doing.

The attached is a 9x12 on 600 grade Uart pastel paper; it is titled "Trees in Bloom".

Gina Linton, Fletcher, NC

This was a fun challenge as I was not aware of this art style.

I enjoyed looking for a subject, and thought about painting a leaf in the snow but settled on the pine straw. Looking for beauty in simplicity as well as a changing season was thought provoking.

I've never painted snow before. I'm not sure my pine straw stands out as much as I would have liked, but it was still fun.

I mostly used Terry Ludwig blues, a 2021 Christmas present from my husband.

Y'all continue to challenge us with great subject ideas! Thank you!



Awaiting Rebirth

5 x 7

Margaret V Lyn-Soroken, Black Mountain



Forgotten Tree

9 x 12

Title: Forgotten Tree

Size: 9x12

Medium: pastels on paper

The remains of this tree trunk got my attention. What's left by fire, weathering and moss I tried to depict on a light ground and a dark ground. I chose light ground and will continue to play with it.

Thank you APS for nice surprise of Mt Vision pastels!

(Margaret was the winner of the AAA-Series Award!)

Linda Medders-Jackson, Cross, SC

Woman of the Tree



I have not a clue of what to do to make waba sabi art--this is ain't gotta clue artwork

Meryl Meyer, Weaverville

*Tree: Weathered and
Worn Study*
6 x 8

Charcoals, hard pastels, a few soft
pastels on Light Blue Canson
Smooth



I chose this tree as my subject, because it represented being weathered, worn, broken, and survival. I was also emotionally connected. Despite its struggle it still stands out and speaks to us.

I decided to use a gray scale palette to express its struggle and being lonely and set apart.

I used white, black and gray charcoals in my sketch then added Rembrandts and some softer blue grays; Unison and Diane Townsend grays.

I am not a big fan of Mi-Tientes Canson Paper for hard pastels, but the charcoals worked well.

My original reference photo had a more colorful background and was taken on a peak fall day on an Blue Ridge Parkway overlook.

I took several photos of this tree which I would like to paint at a later time.

I liked this theme so much I created a Wabi Sabi Photo collection. In it are a variety of subjects.

Thank you for this Challenge.

Frankie Milhorn, Kingsport, TN

Driftwood Beach 21

8 x 10



The location was Jekyll Island, Ga.

I am not finished with this piece. I may add more driftwood, not sure yet. There was a lot of it in the photo I took but I wanted to simplify it for this art challenge. To get it in on time I went ahead and sent it.

Thank you, Frankie

Sylvia Nissley, Black Mountain

I've been absent from pastel work for years but want to return and I am new to NC and hope to find a pastelist for instruction or sharing work.

Wabi Sabi Pitcher

9.5 x 11



Chris Robinson, Leicester, NC

Wabi Sabi, the art of imperfect perfection

6x6 black Uart paper with Unison and Jack Richeson pastels

The beautiful Dogwood petals seem perfect, but if you look closely some of the edges have turned reddish brown, and there is a small hole in one petal.

This blossom will last until the weather turns hot, and then fade away as everything must eventually do. But we can enjoy its beauty until something else replaces it.



Dogwood Dreams

6 x 6

Gary Rupp, Black Mountain

This is my Wabi Sabi. My thought was there is nothing quite so impermanent as the few moments at sunrise where the new light of day paints the world in colors not to be seen exactly the same ever again.



Spanish Moss

5 x 14

Zoe Schumaker, Hiawasse, GA



Faded Beauty

14 x 11

This adventure was partly inspired by the recent workshop with Deborah Stewart. My subject was a fading bouquet purchased for the workshop.

But perhaps the most "wabi sabi" element was the support I used. I had an old multimedia artboard with a previous pastel painting on it. After scrubbing off the unsuccessful painting, I applied some gray gesso, which did not adhere well. But the result was pretty interesting -- a mottled background with gesso in some places, and the ghost image on the recycled board showing through in others.

I did a quick charcoal sketch, applied more gesso, and then added pastel on top. I tried to keep the whole painting loose and somewhat "unfinished". I stopped early and put this aside; perhaps some time later I will "see" what needs to be done to finish it. Or not.

Andrea Stutesman, Black Mountain

Paper: 12" x 9" UArt paper

Soft pastels: Unison, Richeson, and Terry Ludwig

Wabi Sabi is the view or thought of finding beauty in every aspect of imperfection in nature.

When I took this picture, I was amazed at the beauty in destruction. The picture is of Hunting Island after two hurricanes two years in a row. Trees were uprooted and denuded; most laying on the beach partially embedded in the sand. I thought it an appropriate wabi sabi subject.



Beautiful Debris

9 x 12

This is Bill

10 x 8



This is “Bill”, a Tree frog that lived on the screened porch of friends of mine. They had Bill for five years. He died a few months ago. Quoting Richard Powell, “Wabi Sabi nurtures all that is authentic by acknowledging three simple realities. Nothing lasts, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect.”

This is a picture of a painting that my friends purchased several years ago in celebration of Bill because of the white frogs.



Sunflowers again 18 x 24

Ruth Whitaker, Newnan, GA

I used a combination of soft pastels.

After much research I think I understand what Wabi Sabi is.

I started with a pastel underpainting, rubbed in, then worked over it.

It was an interesting challenge.

Broken Trees 9 x 12



Sawyer Bear Whitemiller, Cape Coral, FL

Knabe Piano photo



I am very proud of this painting. I love my Knabe Piano even though it is very old and a little chipped. I think that this shows just enough beauty in imperfection.

Age & Beauty 10 x 12



Much appreciation to all who participated and shared their paintings
and their comments!