The Original Oil Pastels

The Seed of Invention: Encourage Creativity in Children

Art has always been considered an integral part of Japanese culture. The Taisho period of Japan (1910-1920), was a time when three factors influenced the Japanese art world:

1) A new art theory expressed the idea that free-form drawing increased creativity.
2) The need for quality art materials motivated Japan to import crayons, a new medium for drawing.
3) First attempts to manufacture a new type of crayon began.

The new art theory called “The Jiyu-ga Movement” (drawing without a master), grew in popularity. In his book, “The Theory of Jiyu-ga”, Japanese artist Kanae Yamamoto provided new art teaching theories. He believed that free-form drawing inspired children’s creativity. At the time, copying models was the way children were taught to draw. Encouraging artistic creativity in children was considered a revolutionary concept. Yamamoto also recommended that a drawing medium of vivid color and a soft texture would help children explore their creativity.

Entrepreneurs Collaborate

At the same time, Rinzo Satake and Shoukou Sasaki, owners of a Tokyo-based private school wanted a quality crayon suitable for their school children. They were motivated to create an art medium for children that sparked creativity. Satake and Sasaki began formulating their ideas, started experimenting, and founded the Sakura Crayon Company.

New Hope

Amidst the devastation of post-war Japan, Sakura sponsored over ten Cray-Pas train sketch tours for 600 to 1200 students that toured Tokyo and other parts of Japan to lift the children’s spirits and to inspire new hope for the future. The tours were such a success that it made headlines in 1953 when UNESCO brought some of the children’s artwork to a gallery in NY.
Innovative Product Creation

1921: Satake and Sasaki, with advice from Yamamoto, developed a crayon that exceeded the quality of the Japanese competition. Their goal was to create a product of the highest quality, so their search continued.

The Sakura Crayon Company created the name: Cray-Pas. “Cray” for crayon, and “Pas” for the bright colors of pastels.

1924: Cray-Pas consisted of a coconut oil and a stiffening oil combination as the base. These ingredients were affected by temperature extremes. A hard Cray-Pas for summer and a softer version for winter were produced.

1927: Improved formula made Cray-Pas sticks draw easily, blendable and usable during any season.

This formulation continues to be the basis for the Cray-Pas children and adults use today.

Now: Sakura is ranked among the most innovative developers and manufacturers of art materials and writing instruments in the world. Sakura owns many fine works of art created with Cray-Pas which is exhibited at the Sakura Art Museum in Osaka, Japan.

Sakura Crayon Company is now Sakura Color Products Corporation in Japan with locations worldwide. Sakura Color Products of America is the U.S. subsidiary.

The Cray-Pas® Oil Pastel Family of Products

The motivation to promote creativity & self expression remains intact. Innovation, first-class ingredients, and the belief of an individual’s Power to Express™ has expanded the Cray-Pas family.

Junior Artist®, Expressionist®, and Specialist® are ideally suited to compliment technique and expression from children to professional artists.

Cray-Pas Junior Artist®: Children
Young artists blossom with creamy, smooth color that they can smear, blend, dot, over-lap and mix. Three stick sizes are available – a chubby size for small hands to grasp, a jumbo stick and a regular size. Cray-Pas Jr. Artist Colorpacks provide educators with a school year size supply of sticks to use in their classrooms.

Cray-Pas Expressionist®: Amateurs
The extra fine quality pigment formulation of Expressionist enables high school and college students, emerging artists and hobbyists to express their creativity. Extremely smooth to apply, it aids in the creation of gradation and color blending to build texture and depth. The Expressionist Extender creates color hues that further extend the visual possibilities of the artist’s work.
Cray-Pas Specialist®: Fine Arts

Cray-Pas Specialist provides a highly concentrated pigment formulation for professionals. The creamy texture of Specialist can be combined with a variety of painting mediums. Specialist Extender assists with shadows and depth, as well as impasto and subtle color wash effects. Each Specialist color is performance rated for light-fastness. The exquisite color range is ideal for fine art, commercial art and illustration.

Cray-Pas Varieties and Sizes

Junior Artist XEP Series 8 mm diameter X 60.8 mm

Junior Artist XCJP12 Series “Chubby” Size Stick 18 mm diameter X 60 mm length

Junior Artist XEPL-C2288 Set “Jumbo” Size Stick 10 mm diameter X 71 mm length

Expressionist Series 10 mm diameter X 71 mm length

Specialist Series 10mm X 10mm X 65 mm length
Cray-Pas is an ideal material for art education. Its flexibility helps to bring out imaginative drawing in children.

Basic Techniques

How to hold sticks

Like a pencil  
Clenched  
Side holding

Basic Drawing

Surface drawing  
Line drawing  
Dotting

Color-Mixing

Gradation  
Over-Lap Mixing  
Two Sticks Mixing  
Blending by hand or tissue paper  
Dot Mixing

Unique Techniques

Edge Stencils

1. Apply Cray-Pas thickly around a stencil.  
2. Lay this sheet across a second sheet, and with a finger of cloth, smear color from the edge of the first sheet onto the second. Repeat in many places.

Scratch Work

1. Apply Cray-Pas bright Cray-Pas colors to paper.  
2. Cover them in black Cray-Pas or other dark color.  
3. Scratch designs in the overlay-color with a needle or palette knife.

Water-Color Resists

1. Draw with Cray-Pas.  
2. Paint over it with water color. The Cray-Pas drawing will resist the water color.