

Art Materials News

WE REVIEW ART SPECTRUM'S NEW, INNOVATIVE PANPASTEL & SOFFT TOOLS RANGES, WHICH TAKE THE STICK OUT OF PASTELS

Great News For Pastel Artists

The new, patented product ranges called **PanPastel** and **Sofft**

Tools were launched to the art supplies trade in the USA last year and are now available to Australian artists. We road test their capabilities and share a few suggestions from the distributors with you.

what are PanPastels?

PanPastels are very soft pastels - so soft that you can't hold them - and that's why they are placed in a pan so that they can be applied like paint. They are potentially set to transform how artists and crafters use the pastel medium.

These are genuine artists' quality pastels, uniquely packed in a **pan format**. They are made using a manufacturing process requiring minimal binder and fillers, resulting in a **rich, ultra soft and low dust formulation**.

According to the manufacturers, all of these professional quality colours are **highly pigmented**, have **excellent light-fastness** and are **fully erasable**. These colours were developed so that artists can easily lift, apply and control pastel colour, just like true painting.

They are fully **compatible with traditional pastel sticks**, all pastel appropriate surfaces, and conventional fixatives. They can also be used in mixed media.

Each pan contains approx. **35%* more material than the average pastel stick**. The colours can be mixed and blended together, **eliminating the need to invest in hundreds of colours** for a complete pastel painting palette.



The full range of new PanPastel colours and Sofft Tools



The sponges come in a variety of sizes and shapes

a range of tools

The new Sofft range of tools was specifically developed for use with PanPastel Colours. Sofft is a comprehensive **range of unique applicators and tools**, which enable artists to create new effects with many colour mediums, in addition to PanPastel, including pastel sticks, acrylics and ceramic glazes.

PanPastel Colours are being **introduced in special bonus packs**, which include free Sofft Tools, a storage jar and instructions. There are 60 colours in the range - 20 mass/pure colours, with 20 shades and 20 tints. Each pan contains 9ml (0.30 fl oz) of colour.

Sofft Tools were specifically developed for use with PanPastels, and can also be used with most

water-based art and craft materials to create a variety of new techniques, marks and effects.

All of the Sofft Art Sponge and Cover products are made from semi-absorbent micropore sponge, which is non-abrasive, and was developed to hold and release the right amount of colour when used.

Sofft Knives & Covers transform the traditional painting knife into a multi-use and absorbent applicator for art and craft techniques. These **inexpensive knives, when used with Sofft Covers, function like a cross between a brush and a knife**.

There are **four shapes** in the Knives/Covers range. Each shape has been specially developed to create new marks and techniques. Finished effects are different to brushes, as the brush stroke is eliminated.



The Sofft Tool applicator has an interchangeable head

PanPastel Colours suite these applications

- Backgrounds & underpaintings
- Controlled, painterly effects – from intense to delicate pastel marks
- “Dry-in-dry” techniques – mix and blend like paint
- Building up ultra thin “glazing” layers without overfilling the “tooth”
- Pastel washes

TOP TIPS

- Load the Sofft Tool with colour by wiping it across the surface of the colour pan using a circular motion. Hold the pan while loading the tool. Do not dig into the pan.
- Work the entire surface of the pan evenly.
- Load the tool multiple times for more intense colour application.
- Apply colour to the work surface like paint - vary pressure and angle during application to change the effect. Do not overwork colour during application - traditional painting rules apply to prevent “mud”.
- You can use the same tool with several colours – clean between colours by wiping sponge/applicator on a dry paper towel.
- If a pan’s surface becomes contaminated with another colour, clean the pan by gently wiping away the contamination with a clean sponge or dry paper towel.
- To combine PanPastel Colours with other mediums, mix together on a palette or combine directly on the working surface.
- **Important: Keep pans dry i.e do not apply wet tools, fluids or mediums directly to the colour pan surface.**

1st Time Users

Art Spectrum recommends beginning with the following basic techniques:

- 1 Block in large areas of colour.
- 2 Erase areas of a colour you have blocked in.
- 3 Apply details over a colour block (use fixative as required) with edges of applicators, covers & sponges.
- 4 Fix (with pastel fixative) as appropriate.
- 5 Double load the Sofft Tool with two colours and apply. Loading the palest colour first.
- 6 Mix colours on the surface like paint to create intermediate colours.
- 7 Experiment on a variety of surfaces such as pastel paper, Colourfix, Pastelbord, primed canvas etc.
- 8 Enjoy the diversity as PanPastel™ Colours are fully compatible with:
 - traditional pastel sticks (soft & carré)
 - pencils, charcoal, watercolours, acrylics, craft paints etc
 - conventional pastel fixatives
 - pastel appropriate surfaces
 - artists’ erasers.

how to use the new PanPastel colours and Sofft Tools



Applying the PanPastel colours



Blending colours with one of the tools from the range



Blocking in colours with the Sofft Tool oval sponge



Double loading colours onto a Sofft Tool sponge



Using the sponges for making different marks



Using the Sofft Tools for applying acrylics