Kids: Steal these tips from a professional artist

Art Thief

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DRAW A SOFT KITTEN

And learn about sfumato

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DIFFICULTY METER

What you need Dull pencil, eraser and 4 or 5 colored pencils or crayons. →
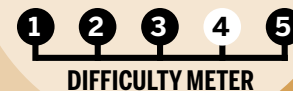
by **AMY RAUDENBUSH** • *art@phillynews.com*

You say sfumato ...

Sfumato (sfoo•**mah**•to) is an Italian word that refers to soft edges where one tone or color gradually blends into another. Its inventor, Leonardo da Vinci, described it as "without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke."

Look at the Mona Lisa's features above. The shadows are quite dramatic but have no sharp edges. You are looking at a masterful example of sfumato!

Whether you are working in oil paint, colored pencils or crayons, the secret to sfumato is the same. Gradually build up the dark tones with layers of color and avoid hard edges or "coloring in the lines."

You will want apply each color you use in all of the areas of the picture, varying the pressure to allow for more or less of each color. Each time you change colors, rotate the direction of your pencil strokes. Go horizontal with the graphite, diagonal with the yellow, vertical with the green ... and so on.

Another tip is to make sure your pencils aren't too sharp. A rounded point works best.

1 Starting with the round head and muzzle, sketch out the shapes that make up the head. Allow the large triangular ears to break through the top of the head. Notice that the eyes are close to the muzzle and not up near the ears.
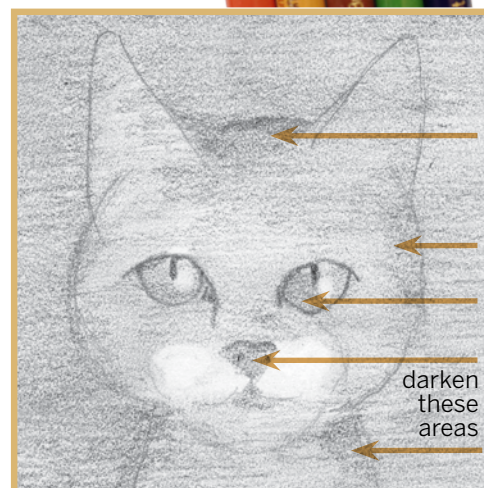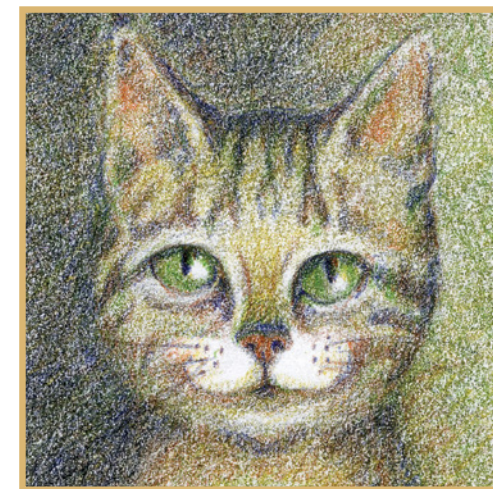
2 With a soft, dull pencil, lay down an even tone of pale gray with a side-to-side motion. Then with your eraser, gently remove some of the gray on the muzzle and on the highlights of the eyes. Darken the eyes, nose and edges of the figure.

darken these areas

3 With the gold (or yellow) pencil, lay down a tone in a diagonal direction. You will add yellow everywhere (except in the white areas) varying the pressure of the pencil strokes to allow for light and dark regions. Repeat this process with the orange pencil, focusing on the nose and inner ears.

4 With the green pencil, begin to establish the kitten's stripes and green eyes in vertical strokes. Remember that some green will appear in all but the lightest areas of the picture and a lot of green will appear in the eyes. Repeat this process with the brown pencil, adding a little extra pressure to the edges of the head and body.

5 Your darkest color (violet blue is used here) will bring contrast to the drawing. Use it in diagonal strokes to create soft-edged shapes – not hard lines and edges. Note the shadow cast by the fur along the top of the green eyes.

Next week's heist: We create a pattern.