

Anika Kirk

The Night Owl Artist

Stamina and a never-ending quest for perfectionism ensures that this artist is up until all hours, creating her marvellously detailed and colourful works of art.



I have been interested in art since I was a child. My mum said to entertain me she would sit me down with some pencils and I would easily occupy myself all day. I enjoyed art throughout my school years doing multiple art subjects, but after graduating I did not pursue it any further.

I have always remained creative, trying many different avenues such as jewellery design, fashion and photography. But it has only been in the last two or so years that I have really started to pursue my artistic side through drawing, and will try to see where it might take me.

I am self-taught, attending a few workshops here and there. I enjoy learning, and have a lot of art books that I refer to. I believe you should never stop learning new things. Knowledge is extremely powerful and with the correct knowledge you have the power to produce amazing things.

I really admire the work of Bec Winnel; she would have to be one of my biggest inspirations. The detail in her pieces is super human! Audrey Kawasaki, Diela Maharanie and Kate Tucker are among some of my favourites as well as the greats Dali, Picasso and Australian artists Ken Done and Jeffery Smart. I have found Instagram is a fantastic place



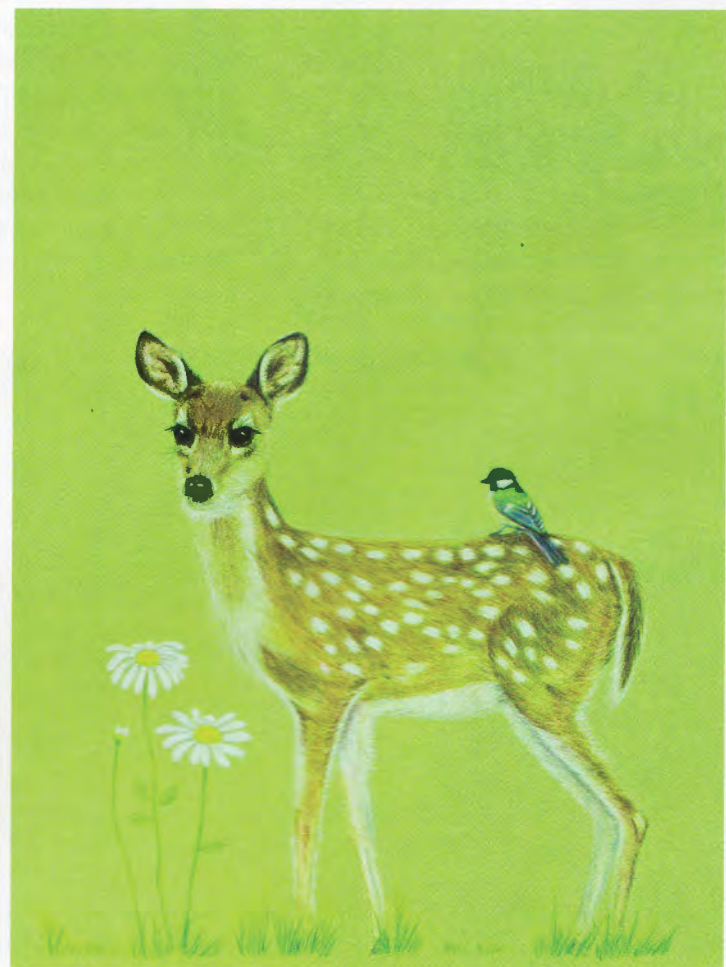
for finding and connecting with other artists around the world.

As I work full time as an imports coordinator for a shoe company, which can be quite mentally draining, art for me is like a form of relaxation or

meditation. I find sometimes that I think a lot when I draw, or I am totally lost in the zone and I can switch off all thoughts altogether and get lost in my own world. Usually this way I can end up finishing a piece and not feel like it

was difficult as it just flowed. I try not to overthink it. I believe for me that is the best way.

In saying that though, there is a fair amount of pre-planning that goes into each piece. I will generally research





for hours, sometimes days to find the perfect subject. I often take little pieces from a variety of images to piece together a reference that I am happy with. For this reason I can't live without my laptop! I have many folders of images that have inspired me. Whenever I feel uninspired I go to these folders and I can almost always find something that will spark an idea.

I grew up on the Gold Coast in Queensland, and if you have grown up in a beach town you will know the feeling of going down to the beach, sitting on the sand and using that time to listen to the waves and clear your mind. There is some kind of serenity

about staring at the waves and out to the horizon. I do this often as a way to keep myself grounded and on-track.

I love colour and this is reflected in my art as well as in the way I dress! All kinds of colours and patterns, natural and man made together can inspire me. I tend to draw late at night through to 2 or sometimes 3am. My friends and family think I'm crazy and often ask how I function on such little sleep, I simply reply, "I'll sleep when I'm dead!" I find I am my most creative self late at night. I'm not sure if it's because I am in a state of delirium, but whatever it is it seems to work for me!

Working in such detail can be very challenging and I am often also questioned how I can be so patient as some of my drawings can take up to 40 hours. The answer is I don't really know. I am definitely not that patient with regular day to day activities.

I have a kind of obsession of sorts with precision and detail in my art. A lot of things I feel could probably be left as they are, but I find myself going back over older drawings, adding in more and more detail. With each new piece I produce I feel my techniques are improving. I don't think I am ever completely satisfied that any of my drawings are actually complete.





I really enjoy shadows and contrast, working with light and shade to create life-like depth. I enjoy how the correct use of negative space can really bring a subject to life. I enjoy studying the way light is reflected, whether it be on a glass or a bird's feathers. I will often catch myself staring at a flower or vase after subconsciously breaking it down into all the different colours I can see, and working out the light and shade, even if it is a subject I am not planning to draw.

My favourite medium is coloured pencils. I use mainly Prismacolor pencils. They are beautifully soft, almost with a crayon-like consistency and the colours layer on top of each other very nicely. In order to achieve the detail in my drawings, the pencils need to remain very sharp, and with these particular pencils it is quite hard to maintain, so for the finer detail I use a mixture of the Prismacolor and Derwent. I find the Derwent pigment is slightly firmer and therefore they stay sharper longer, allowing me to pay more attention to detail.

As I draw a lot of animals, I tend to use small precise strokes mimicking fur or feathers, building up stroke by stroke and gradually adding in colour after colour. I like that I can control the medium to make precise strokes as opposed to the uncontrollable nature of watercolours for example. I also use pencil blend to smooth out larger shaded





areas to give a more even texture. This is an amazing medium that brings a whole new aspect to drawing with colour pencils.

I am fascinated with nature and wildlife. I love to watch documentaries and will often find my next subject this way. I like to challenge myself by attempting new subjects as often as possible as with my latest piece *The Amethyst* (used for my demonstration). I am just so

fascinated how such beautiful things are produced from nature and the earth. I really enjoyed reproducing the different facets of the crystal. In *The Amethyst* I used around 25 different colours. I generally use a large amount of colours in each piece. I use a mixture of colours in all my pieces to create a better sense of contrast and depth, for example adding in blues and purples to create more depth in blacks. This is demonstrated in the crow's

wings. I have used a variety of colours ranging from greens, to purples and even red.

So far I have not entered any competitions, although I hope to do so in the future. I am currently just trying to identify my style and work on improving my techniques and learning new ones as well. I would love to one day be able to spend my days full time creating art, but for now I have to continue to be a night owl artist! ■

Pencils

Glittering Amethyst

By Anika Kirk

Each facet of the crystal is closely examined for its colourings and shadings to ensure the artist captures the full beauty of this amethyst.



MATERIALS

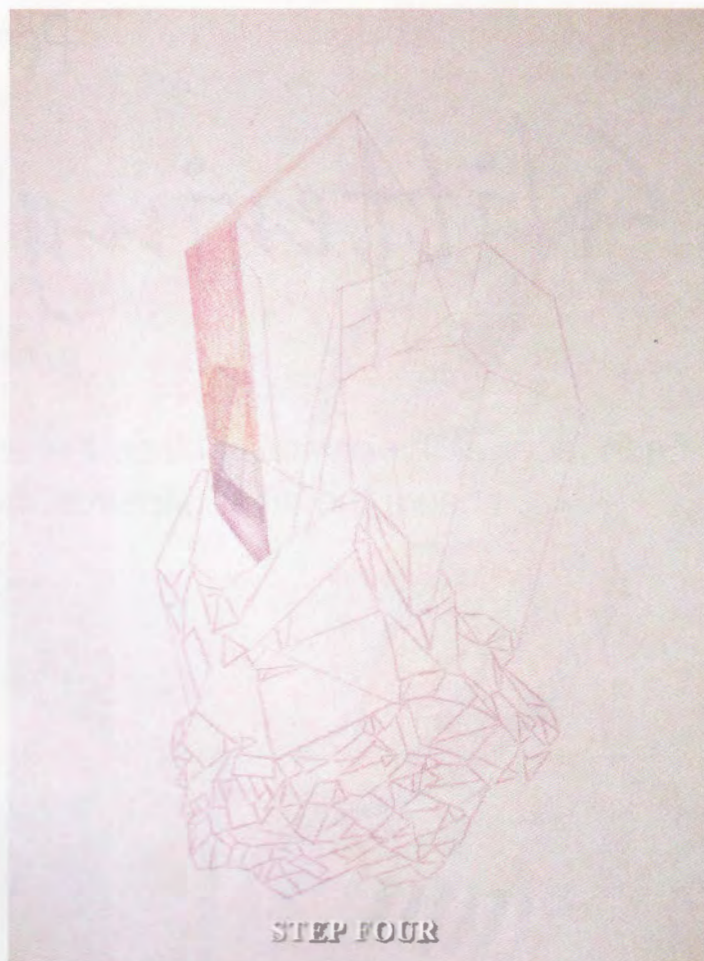
- Prismacolor Premier colour pencils
- Faber Castel colour pencils
- Derwent watercolour pencils
- Blending stick
- Prismacolor blending pencil - colourless
- Zest-it pencil blend
- Q-tips
- Kneaded eraser
- Derwent battery powered eraser
- Bruynzeel Pencil sharpener
- Pencil extender



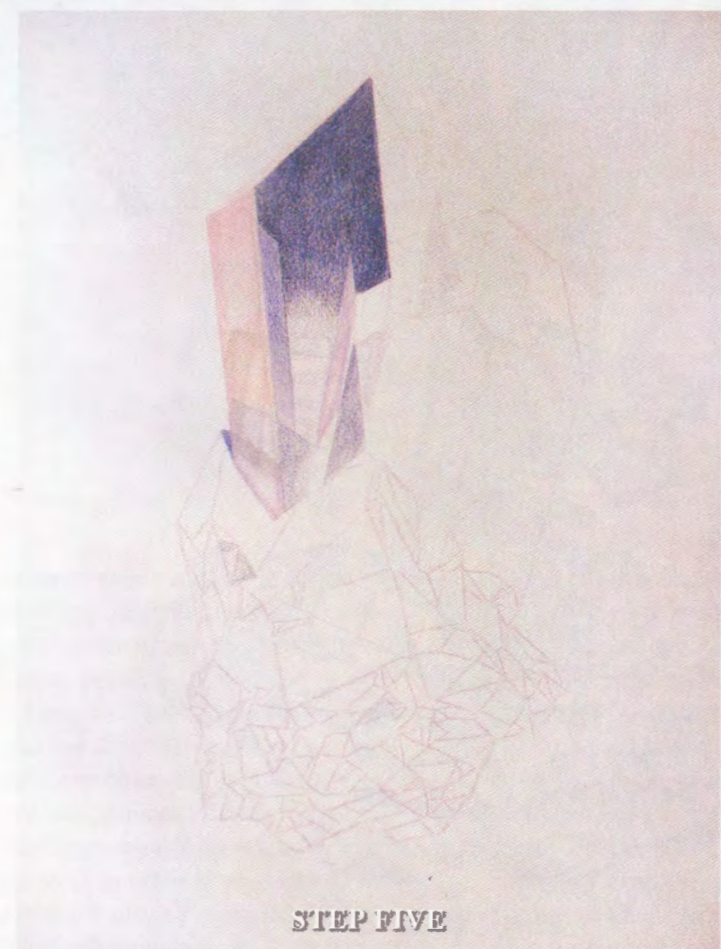
FINAL STEP



STEP THREE



STEP FOUR



STEP FIVE

STEP ONE

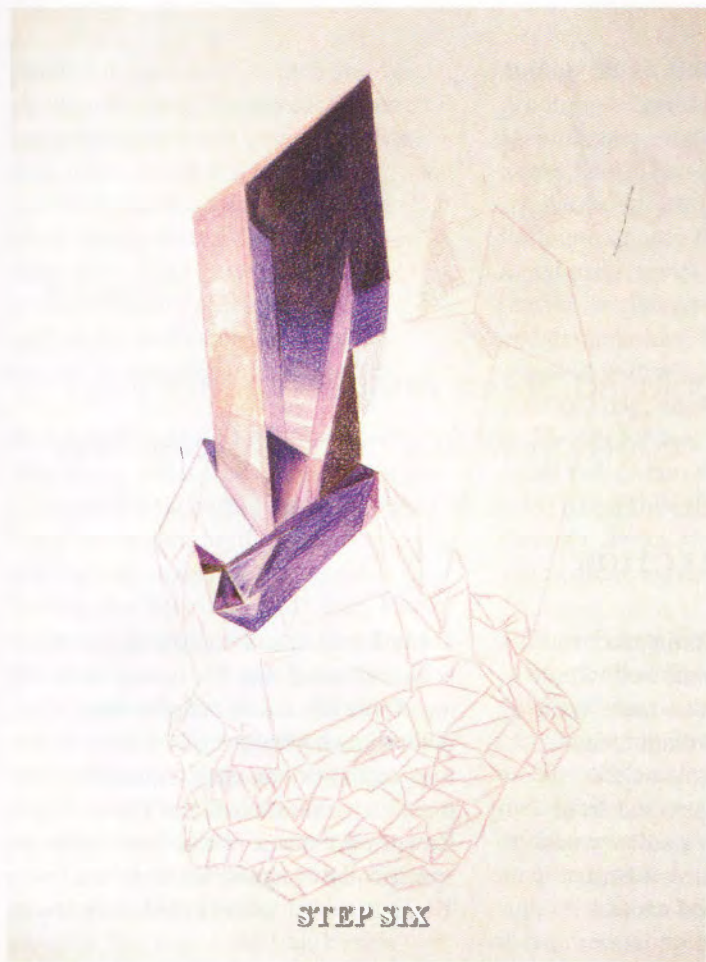
Choose a reference photo. In this case I have chosen an amethyst crystal. For this piece I have one reference photo, but ultimately you can use as many as you like. I often use many images to piece together the final image.

STEP TWO

I begin by picking out as many colours from my pencils as I can see in the reference photo/s. With the chosen pencils I will then start a test sheet so I can see exactly how the colours will look against each other. From here I can eliminate or add in more colours as I go.

STEP THREE

I start by mapping out the subject in a light colour to use as guide lines. In this case I have used lavender as the final piece will be completed in purple. I don't use grids or anything like that as I judge proportion purely by eye.



STEP SIX



STEP SEVEN

STEP FOUR

I start mapping out the light and shade of each facet with a faint layer of colour. This makes it easier to picture where the final piece is headed and gain a better sense of what needs to be done.

STEP FIVE

I then begin to fill each facet of the crystal with a light layer of colour. Studying the image intensely I will colour in small areas at a time as opposed to filling the whole subject with a layer of colour. I feel that completing small sections at a time makes the whole subject less daunting to complete.

STEP SIX

I continue the process of filling in each facet at a time. My pencil strokes are light at this stage, as I gradually build up the colours layer after layer.

STEP SEVEN

Now the whole subject is filled with colour, it is time to go over each facet with pencil blend. I don't use this for all my pieces, but for the crystal I felt it would add to the effect of portraying the smoothness. After this I will then go over the whole piece again, adding in the detail. For this step pencils must remain sharp. I often find myself with pencil in one hand and sharpener in the other, lightly sharpening after every few strokes.

FINAL STEP

The final step is difficult for me as I never feel quite finished. Generally I will stand back from the drawing or walk away and come back a few minutes later. This helps to readjust my perception and see clearer what details still need to be added. This process can take weeks but for me is a very necessary step. ■

ARTIST'S HINTS AND TIPS

- Invest in a pencil extender, they are very inexpensive and will help you to get the most out of those pencils you thought you would never use as they were too short, but couldn't bear to throw out!
- I use a Bruynzeel pencil sharpener and sharpen all my pencils by hand (no electric sharpener). This sharpener is the Rolls Royce of sharpeners! Sharpening by hand allows you to feel the pencil and adjust the way you are sharpening to avoid breaks.