

MARIO ROBINSON'S  
STEP-BY-STEP PORTRAIT

MAKING AN OLD  
PASTEL NEW AGAIN

BEST PRACTICES FOR  
VIEWING PHOTOS

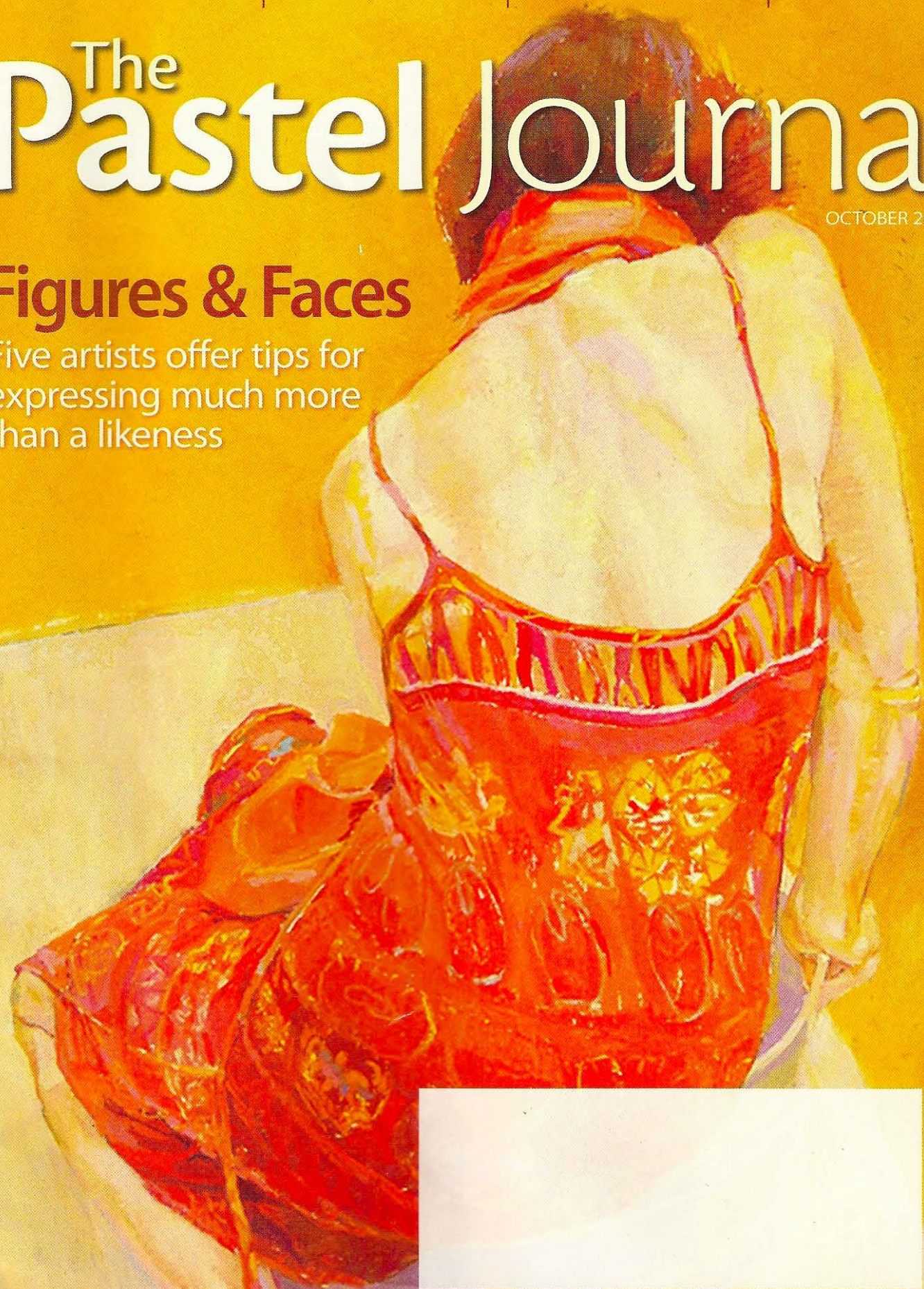
AN EVALUATION  
CHECKLIST

# The Pastel Journal

OCTOBER 2010

## Figures & Faces

Five artists offer tips for  
expressing much more  
than a likeness



Four pastel artists  
contemplate the pleasures  
and challenges of making  
people your subject.

# Portraits from the heart

BY ANNE HEVENER

I believe that the greatest paintings reveal the heart of the artist within the work," says **Alain Picard**, one of four pastel artists featured in this special showcase of notable portrait and figurative painters. Each of the painters—**Sydney McGinley**, **Ellen Eagle** and **Sam Goodsell**—shared thoughts that echo Picard's sentiment, relating the strength of a portrait directly to an artist's connection to the subject. It's true; any artist who chooses the human figure as a subject must possess solid drawing skills. It's also true that no painting is a success that doesn't feature dynamic composition and skilled handling of color, contrast and edges. But where the two are paired, where there is both technical proficiency and emotional power, that's where paintings of a human subject have the power to move us unlike any other.

## Alain Picard: The Heart of the Matter

Artist Alain Picard ([www.picardstudio.com](http://www.picardstudio.com)) enjoys painting the landscape, but the face and figure are his favorite subjects and the subjects of paintings for which he's best known. "The opportunity to convey emotion and life through the human face and form is my greatest passion," he says. "It never ceases to challenge and consume me."

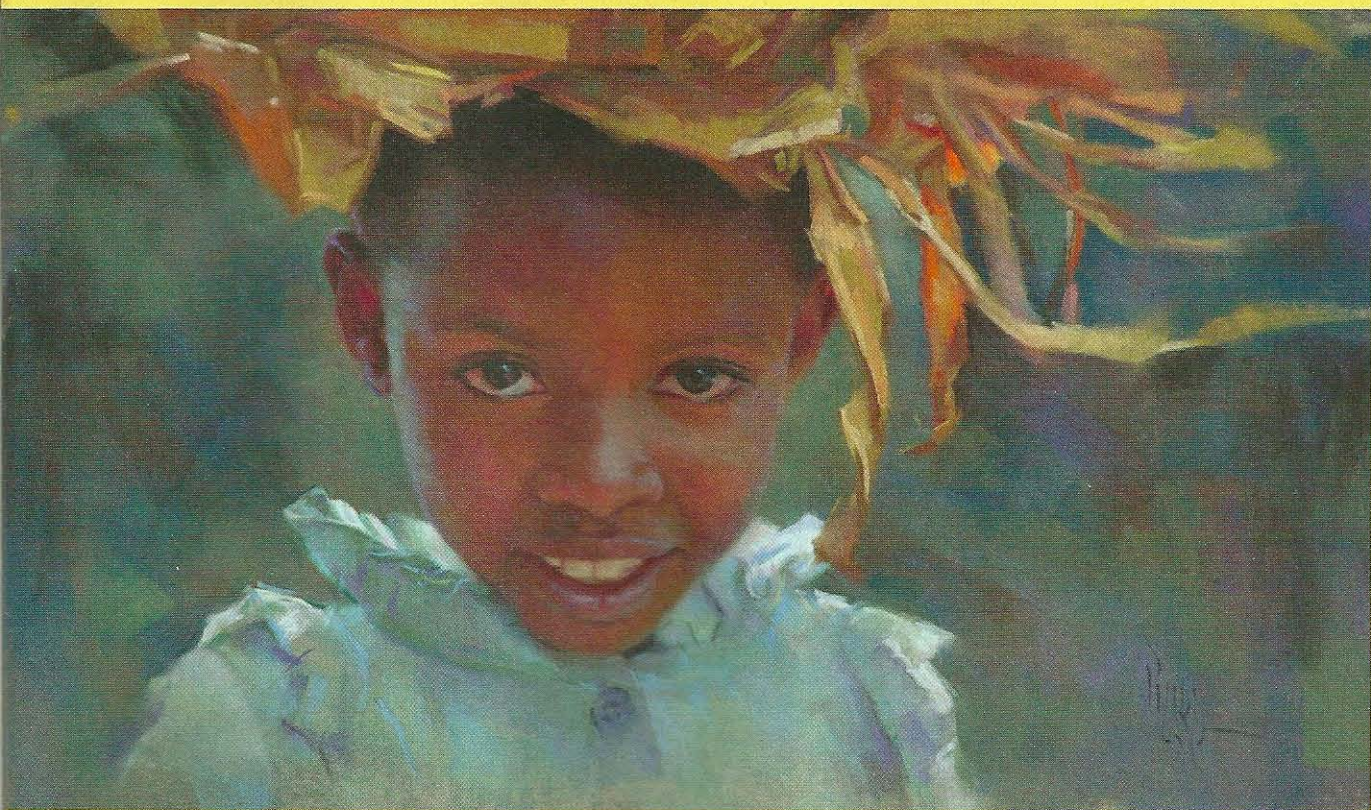
Picard renders his subjects in a lush, painterly style that appears fresh and unlabored. To get the effect, he pays particular attention to identifying the simple abstract forms within his subject. "I apply these quickly and broadly with the correct value and color key," he says. "Even a few strong

marks, if accurately placed, will go a long way in communicating a painterly approach." Also key, Picard says, is the use of the softer pastels right from the start. "I work with the broad side of broken, unwrapped pieces to attain a 'brushwork' effect." If necessary, he might go back in with harder pastels to refine the more detailed areas.

Picard's pastels *Evelyn* (opposite) and *No More Tears* are part of a series of paintings he calls "Reflections of Hope," inspired by stories, people and images he encountered during a service trip to Rwanda in 2005. "I spent a week with a team of friends traveling the country, photographing the people



*No More Tears* (7x12)




*Evelyn* (11½x19)

and places I encountered, and listening to the stories of the Rwandan people,” Picard says. “Their stories were tales of horrific violence and unimaginable loss due to the 1994 genocide when 1 million people were slaughtered in just 100 days, but they were also stories of extraordinary hope, as forgiveness and reconciliation were beginning to take hold.”

Picard met the girl portrayed in *Evelyn* when he and his wife worked alongside her and others to build a clay brick house for an elderly member of the local community. “She

was the girl that all the other children would follow around,” Picard says. “She’s a natural leader who commands your full attention with her captivating gaze. I still wonder about her—how she’s doing and what kind of life she has been given the opportunity to live. These sacred moments have etched themselves into my heart while visiting Rwanda. I suppose that’s why this painting carries such resonance with others.”

The young girl in *No More Tears* was living with her mother and her grandmother when the artist met her. “Her grandmother is one of the women who was systematically victimized during the genocide by known AIDS carriers,” Picard says. “A strategy of war that caused the virus to spread dramatically among women in Rwanda as a result.”

Picard created a portrait that would plead the case for children around the world. “Love, safety and provision. These are gifts that all children deserve,” Picard says, “regardless of where they live—be it Rwanda, Haiti, New Orleans or your own hometown.” 

### Start Big

I work from the big simple shapes to the smaller suggestions of detail—“start with a broom, end with a needle,” as the saying goes. I love to block in the big shapes quickly and boldly and then pull the portrait out of the fog, starting with the general statement void of detail, and refining as I move toward the finish. I can’t stress enough how important a solid foundation in drawing is to successful pastel painting.

—Alain Picard

## Materials

### Pastels

Schmincke, Terry Ludwig and Great American. Also Nupastels for finer work (when a sharp point is required)

### Surface

La Carte pastel card or Wallis pastel paper

To see more pastel portraits and figural work by the four artists featured in this article, visit our website at [www.pasteljournal.com/article/pastel-faces](http://www.pasteljournal.com/article/pastel-faces).

