S3 Portrait – "Self-portrait with sunglasses and cap"

This portrait was created using watercolour pencils. You could achieve similar effects with colour pencils, oil pastels or paint. The expression on the face is quite serious as it was drawn from life, using a mirror whilst wearing dark sunglasses. This made it difficult to see the eyes, hence the frown.

The same process should be followed if you are doing your own self portrait, rather than attempting to copy this example. If you are working from a photograph or a selfie, it can be easier to change the mood and expression in the face to something more light-hearted.

Step 1 - Sketching the composition

If you are right-handed, start by sketching the left eye first. If you are left-handed, start by sketching the right eye first.

Both of these options will help you compare the shapes and sizes of both eyes more accurately. This is because the hand that you are drawing with, will not cover the eye that you have drawn first, so it should make it easier to compare the size and shape of each eye.

Use the sunglasses to help connect both sides of the face and judge other measurements. Any areas of light or shade should also be sketched out at this stage as this will help you achieve form and depth in your portrait.

Step 2 - Introducing colour to your composition

You will now be ready to add colour to your original drawing. This should be done gradually because this will make it easier to mix colours, as the work progresses. Think about the anatomy of the face when you are doing as this will determine the shape and direction of your pencil marks.

Any highlights or lighter tones should be left as gaps at this stage. You should also remove any of the original pencil marks if these are too dark.
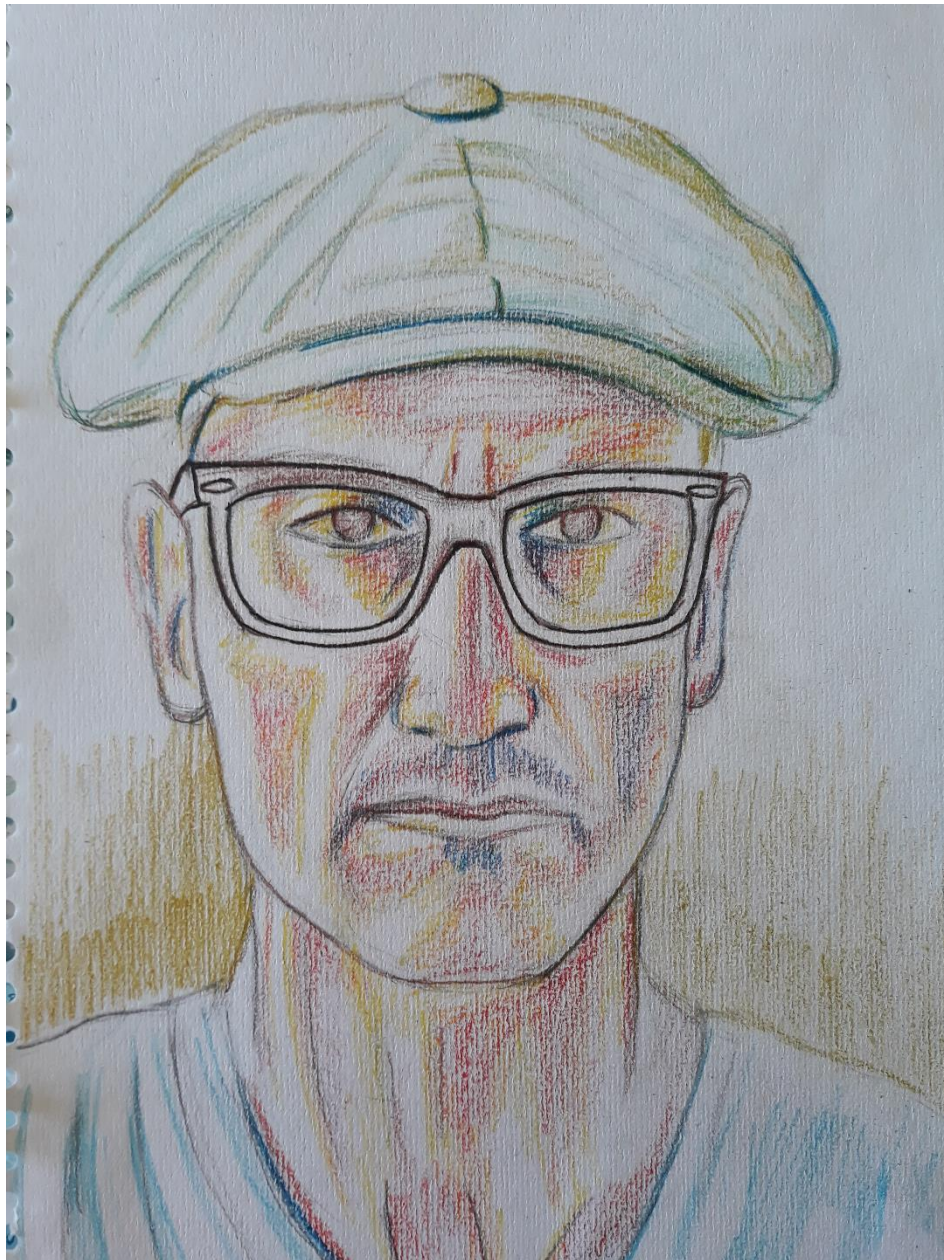
Step 3 – Increasing the variety of colours throughout the portrait

Introduce more colours to bridge the gaps between the white areas of your portrait and the colours you have added so far e.g. yellow overlapping red and white to create a lighter skin tone in the middle of this area. Think of adding blue or green or purple for cooler areas of shadow. Also introduce a neutral colour to the background.

Step 4 Adding detail

At this stage you should add definition to the main features of your drawing by using more permanent marks. You should remember to use a suitable type of mark for each of the textures that you are trying to show.
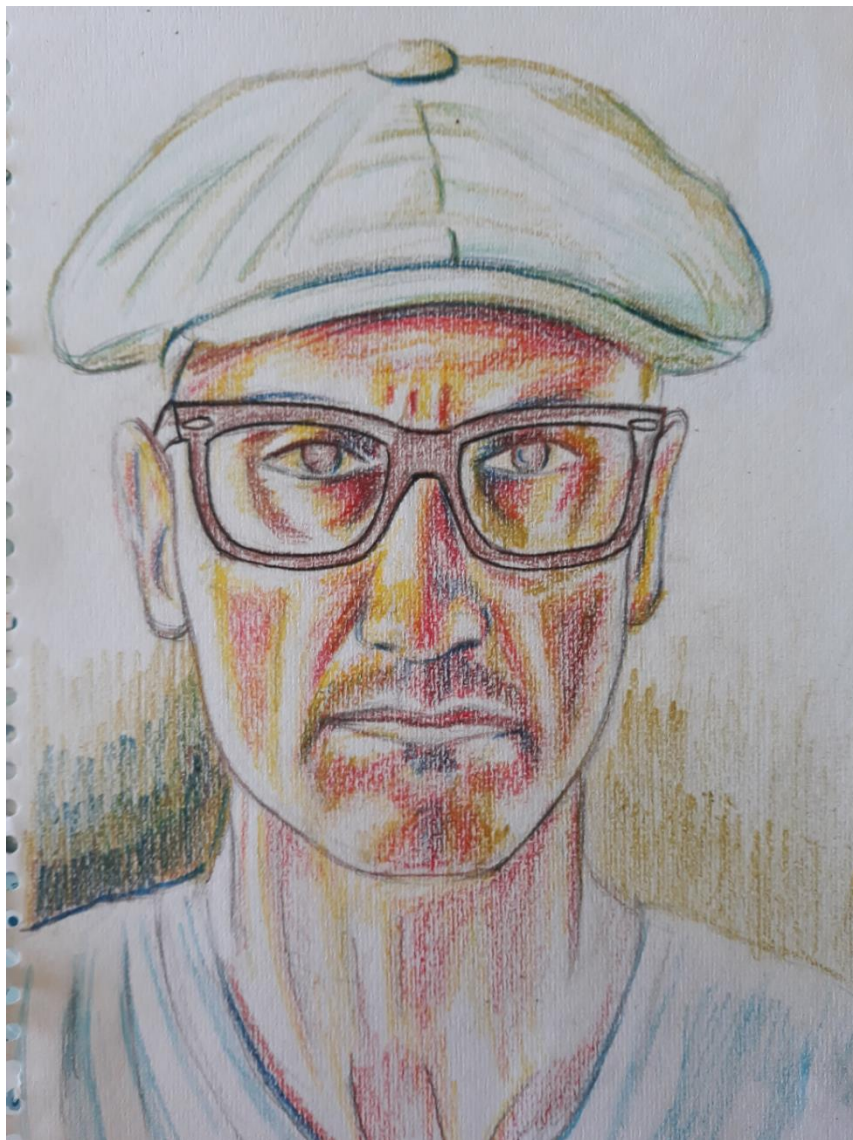
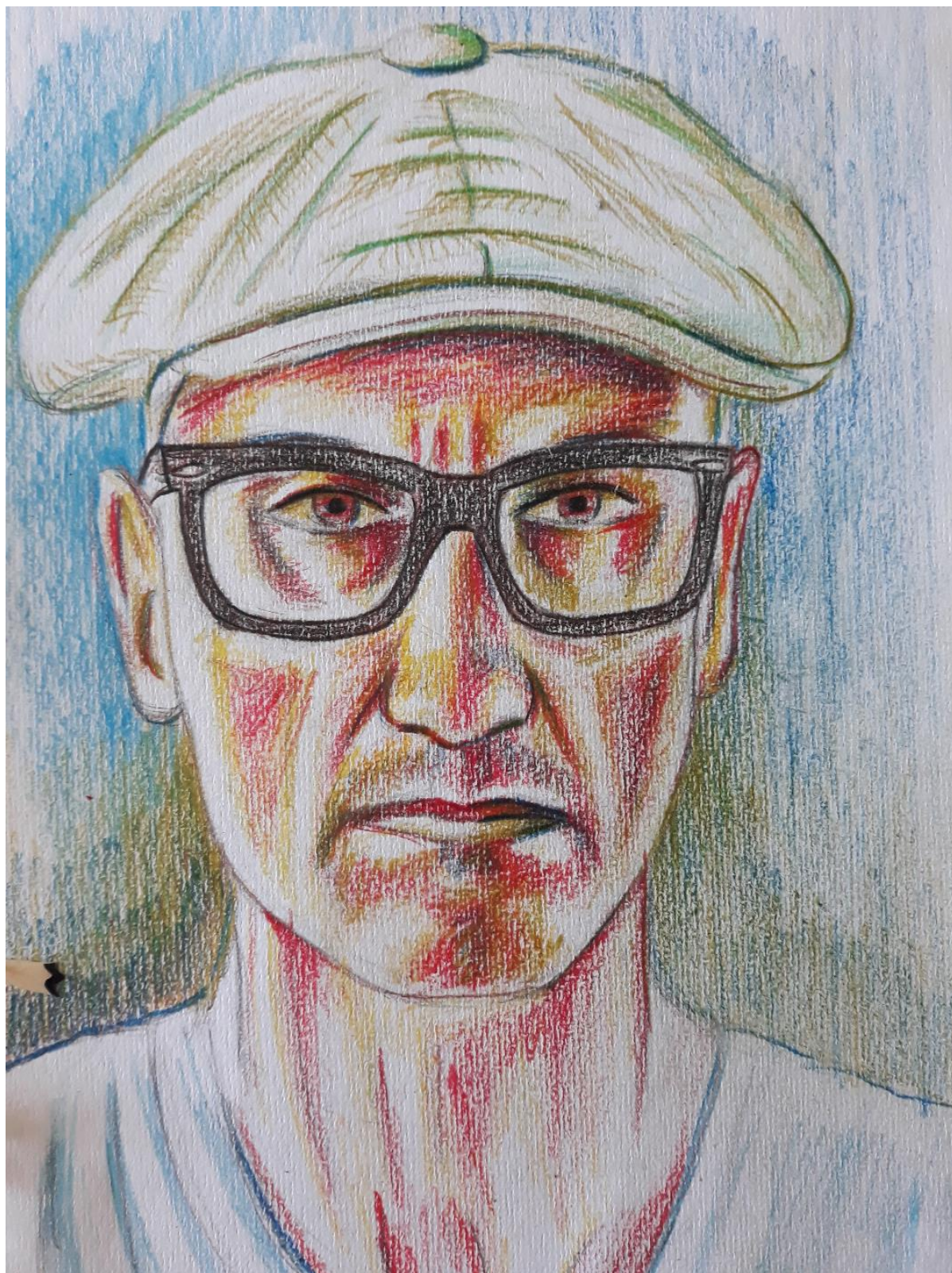**Steps 5 and 6 – Increasing the tonal range and intensity of colour**

At this stage, you should now feel more confident about adding richer colours and shades.

Lean heavier on the pencils whilst still using suitable directions of marks, to increase the sense of depth and form in your work.
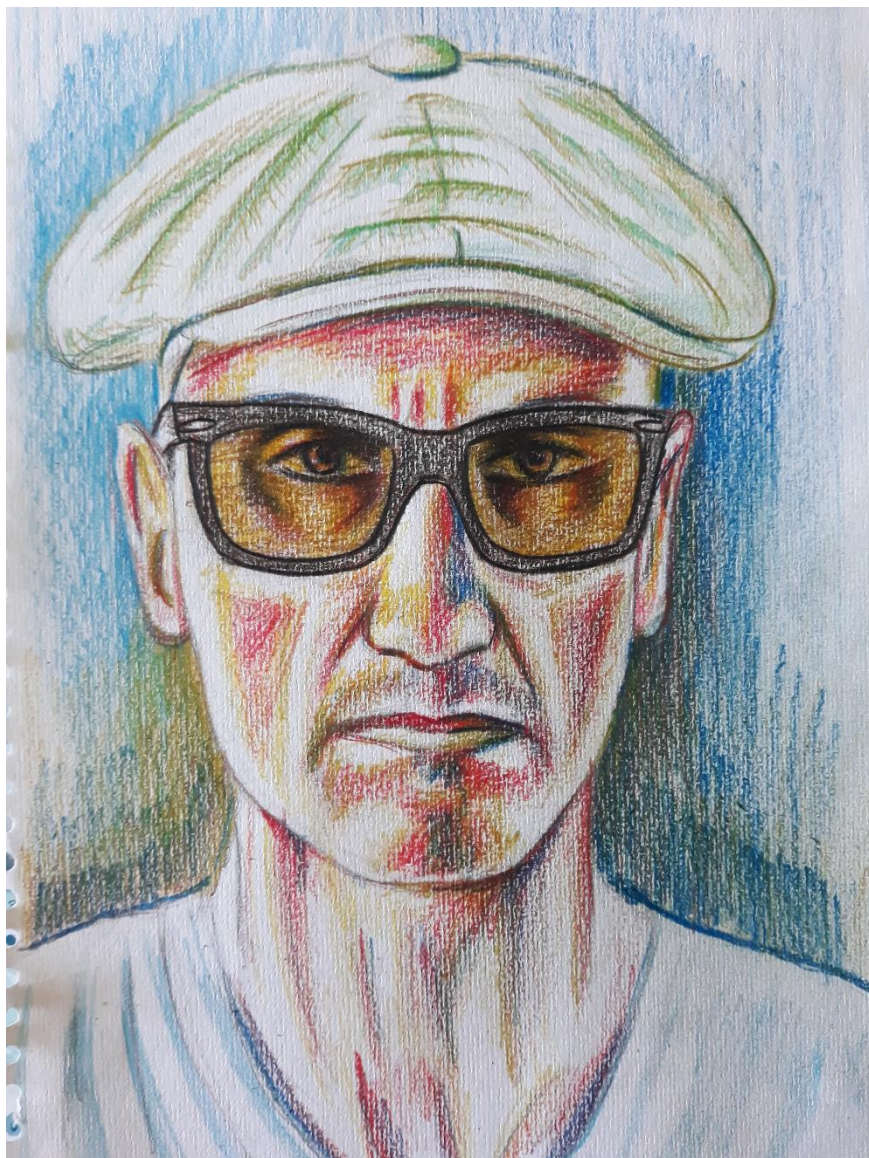
Step 5

Step 6

Step 7 – Finishing touches including sunglasses (colour pencil)

If you are using colour pencils you would use this final stage to refine the textures that you are trying to show. You would also use darker tones to enhance the sense of depth even further than in the previous stage. Also add colour to the sunglasses. Add a layer of colour over the lenses. Try not to lean heavily on the pencil when you do this. This will help you to avoid losing detail in the eyes.

Step 8 – Addition of water and finishing touches (watercolour pencils only)

If you are using watercolour pencils, you should now use soft paintbrushes to add water and complete the piece.

Use a damp brush to blend some areas of colour together.

Areas of colour will look darker by doing this.

Be careful when using this technique because it can make areas of your picture smooth when these should have a different type of surface.

There should also be areas of white paper visible in your portrait to represent highlights. Pay close attention to areas of detail and avoid blending areas together which should remain separated.

Try to avoid working on two adjacent areas of your painting if these are still wet. This will help you to avoid losing detail and accurate colours.