Charcoal Blending Tools with Lisa Solomon

Chapter 1 - Charcoal Blending Tools
Introduction

Overview
- Hi, I'm Lisa Solomon. I'm an artist and an art professor, and I'm gonna show you some blending techniques. (relaxed music)

Charcoal Blending Tools
(upbeat music) - Hi, I'm Lisa Solomon, and I'm an artist and an art professor. And I'm gonna show you some blending techniques. What we have here is some compressed charcoal, it comes in different soft-nesses..? (laughter) So there's hard, medium, soft and there's also a white compressed charcoal, which is nice. These are blending tools that I think a lot of people look at and go "what the heck are these?". And I'm gonna show you what they can do, but you can actually just use your finger, or use a paper towel that you ball up into something similar. This is a kneaded gum eraser. It's a different consistency than a white or rubber eraser. You can see I can kinda pull it apart. You can twist it around to make a little point and this will fit into little tight areas. You can also break it apart to make smaller erasers. And when it gets dirty, you can knead the dirt out of it so that you can find a clean spot in the eraser. So it's super handy that way. This is a suede-like material. I don't know if its real suede or not, but it's called a shammy cloth. And this helps move the materials around. These are woodless pencils. These also come in soft, medium, and hard. And you'll notice a difference when you're drawing. The soft is gonna be easier to push around. The hard is not gonna move around as much. Sometimes you want things to blend, sometimes you don't. So be aware when you're drawing, of which grade of material that you're using. Let's try stuff out! I'm gonna start with a compressed charcoal. All these will also work with vine charcoal, or charcoal pencils. You don't have to get materials that look exactly like this. And I'm gonna draw a line, with the hard charcoal. I'll use one of the bigger ones so you can see. And I'm gonna move the material around. What's really fun is when these get a little dirty, you can actually start to draw with them as well. And you'll see there's a different quality to this than there is to this. This is softer, it's a little more ghost like. This would be really nice to do a shadow. We'll try the medium. I can push this one around a little further. It just feels softer when I'm using the blending tool. And again, I can draw with it once my tool is dirty. And then let's try the soft. It's like butter. I'm gonna show you the difference with the shammy. So I'm gonna go ahead and blend on this side and we'll do a little comparison. With a completely different look. You'll notice, on the left, I can still sort of see my original line, and the shammy is kind of creating a ghost around the original line. Where as the blending tool kind of really got in there and mushed all the material together. And just for fun, I'll also show you what the kneaded eraser can do. That's hard, that's medium, that's soft. I'm gonna take the eraser. It's more similar to the blending tool, but again, it's just a slightly different look. As you're drawing, you'll realize how these can be useful to you. So for example, if you're drawing a cloud, or if they're big puffy clouds, you might want to use a kneaded eraser. If you're going into leaves, you might want to use the blending tool in order to make the veins of the leaves. You'll figure out how it is that you want these to work. I'm also gonna show you what happens when you

use your finger. Which is one of my favorite ways to blend, but you do get a little dirty when you do it this way. So, gonna use my finger on the hard compressed charcoal. You'll notice it's a lot softer and wispy-er. I mean, you can really see the difference between these. This is the medium. And I'm gonna use a clean finger. This is the soft. So I'm gonna show you one more time with the woodless pencils; how the three of them work. This is the hard. Soft, clean side of the blending tool. This is the medium. This is the soft. I'll shammy the other side. And then we'll do hard. And medium. And soft. And I'll show you the finger technique. These will also work with the white compressed charcoal. Or these teeny, tiny guys, are really nice when you're getting into small spaces. If you need to move the charcoal around in an eye, or get in a flower, or a leaf, this little guy's really gonna be your friend. Cause he's super tiny. When these get dirty, you can either just go out and buy new ones, they're not super expensive. I think this pack of six of them was only a couple dollars. You can also use an X-acto knife, and clean them off. You can also erase some of the material off of the blending tool. Its not gonna get super clean, but it will be clean enough for you to use without making too much of a mark. So let's try and put all of this to use really quickly. A really good exercise to do is to just make a sphere and see if you can pop a little highlight on it. So we're gonna try and do that with, let's try medium compressed charcoal. So I'm just gonna draw a circle. And I'm gonna say that the light's coming from this side. I'm gonna use my blending tool and fill that in. Making it all nice and soft, and even. Now if I wanted to, I could fill it all the way in and come back in with the white and add a little highlight that way. It's gonna be a different look. The white's gonna be grayed out because it's interacting with the charcoal underneath. So I'm gonna use the hard charcoal to get the darkest edge, down here, underneath. Sort of, in contrast. (blows) And then I'm gonna try and make a little bit of a shadow underneath this sphere. And we'll use all three. I'll use the kneaded eraser to kinda blend the material around a little bit more. So it doesn't look so much like I drew it. Gives it a softer edge. So, as you can see, each of these tools offers you a different kind of mark making ability. You should just try them out! Or maybe you already have them in your tool kit- in your artist tool kit- you bought a set and you were like "I don't know what these are for". Now you know what they're for. So just try them out, practice them out. They'll be good for all different kinds of applications. See which ones work for you. (upbeat music)