

Choosing the art board for your needs

By David Messing
Special writer

The ground was blanketed with a fresh layer of fallen snow. The air was crisp and cold, the radiant sun was warm and the snow sparkled like carelessly scattered sequins.

The branches of the trees were laden to the breaking point with white sticky snow.

In and through this wintry scene were families cross country skiing. Adults, teens and even little children seemed to glide effortlessly 10 and 15 feet with each stride.

It all seemed so beautiful, too beautiful, for my family and I to not partake. So there we were in a snow-white dreamland and the only sounds to pierce the quietness and stillness were our screams of fear and riotous laughter.

By the time my family of five ravaged the park, the snow was no longer on the trees, there was little silence in the woods and the smooth blanket of snow was full of ski and pole prints. Not to mention seat, knee, elbow and face prints.

ONE PASSER-BY was apparently oblivious to the fact that it was our first time. Even though we were soaking wet and had sticks from the woods stuck in our knit hats, scarfs and gloves, I say "oblivious" because he asked us what would be the best path to follow.

I confidently said, "Sure, if ya want to follow our path..." Then my son, interrupted and said, "It's the one with a face print in the snow about every ten feet." As we all laughed, the man skied away.

They do have the paths through the woods marked with little pictures of a

artifacts

cross country skier, but we thought we were on the wrong path because when we ski, it doesn't look like that at all.

So it is, that "cross country" skiing is not as easy as it looks. But, what a challenge: we loved it and had a ball... so much that we've been back a few times since. Now everyone wants their own skis, even Adam.

Well, there are likewise, many art boards which are not what they appear to be.

As a matter of fact, they are not even what they sound like. By that I mean that they are not boards at all but more like heavy paper. The first and most popular board, which is not a board, is Bristol board.

BRISTOL COMES in three different plys or weights. One ply is about the weight and thickness of drawing paper. Two ply is, of course, twice as thick and could be compared to the cover of the yellow pages. Three ply is quite thick and rigid yet it is still much thinner than art poster board.

Bristol is available in two surfaces: "Plate" being very smooth and "vellum" having some tooth. Both sides of the 22- by 30-inch sheets are usable. Bristol ranges from high rag to 100 percent rag and the cost for the better quality is of course somewhat higher.

Plate Bristol is my favorite for tight pen and inks with a technical pen, although the vellum receives a nice line despite the tooth. Bristol also comes in pads, both plate and vellum, one and two ply, high rag and 100 percent rag.

Although Bristol is used for everything from pencil to airbrush, my favorite use for it is graphite pencil on either surface pen and ink on two ply plate and keyline on three-ply plate.

Scratchboard is also not board but a card stock paper with a heavy clay coating. Untreated scratchboard is white and must be coated with India ink.

Treated scratchboard has my vote because you cannot ink the even blackness of board at home as well as the

manufacturer. Scratchboard is mostly associated with the look of white lines scratched into a solid black background.

SCRATCHBOARD is also available with textures which when scratched appears to create shades of gray.

Coquille or embossed board is again a heavy card stock with a textured pattern. The textures available are shell, stipple and linear. This board is for camera ready artwork. You simply draw on the textured surface with a black and gray colored pencil and the board automatically breaks your areas into varied width lines or dots.

Many cartoonists still use this very old board. I use it mostly for product and architectural rendering. It is also an

excellent for portraits and still life.

Probably the closest thing to an actual board is railroad board. This comes in a six to 14 ply. This again is similar to a heavy card stock.

It usually comes in many colors with the same color on both sides or in two colors. This firmy board is good for quick signs and is often sold as poster board in drug stores.

True art poster board is 28 ply and is considerably sturdier than railroad board. Oak tag is much like railroad board except for the color which is usually a light buff color. I most often use Oak tag for making stencils and templates for airbrushing.

Well, that's it from the cross-country ski expert, Dave! Next week we'll look at the art boards.

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for 10 years and operates two art stores, Art Store and More, 18774 Middlebelt, Livonia, and 265 N. Main, Plymouth. Messing encourages questions and comments from his readers. You may write to him at his store or in care of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 33203 Grand River, Farmington, Mich. 48024.



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