

Rogério Lupo – Graphite Workshop: supply list

We have plenty of stores selling good material, via internet or locally, and many artists share their experiences in websites and videos. Be careful though, because the experience of an artist with any given material can be thoroughly different from yours. Use their tips and hints, but trust only your own tests (that is, question my own hints too). I have seen many artists definitely disappointed with excellent materials, myself included. Sometimes they have tested defective stuff or it is just that they do not find affinity with the results that some specific material provides. Different artists may either worship or curse the same exact material, thus do not be afraid of experimenting.

Below you find a list of some useful materials to have during your practice as well as suggestions of brands of the essential stuff, all based on my own experiences; so keep yourself open to subverting the list.

1. Use a piece of parchment paper or paper towel under your hand to protect your drawing from your skin oils and humidity that can cockle the paper. **And avoid talking over your paper before, during and after drawing**, for saliva sprouts can cause yellow spots of contamination in the long run.

2. Pencils: (2H if possible) H, HB, 2B, 3B, 4B and 6B (7B if possible). Remember different brands can have different standards, therefore be attentive not to purchase, without swatching, an HB and a 2B from different companies (or from different product lines of the same company) that can possibly present the same grade of shade. Good brands in order of my personal preference are Staedtler, Lyra, Mitsubishi, Bruynzeel, Faber Castell, Caran D’Ache, Cretacolor, Koh-I-Noor. Derwent is a good and soft pencil, but the ones I have tested crumble too much and leave small pieces of graphite on the paper.

I remark that rare has been the pencil, even among the better brands, which does not eventually present crystals that grit the paper while stopping to scribe. Some brands get better, some worse, and even the most expensive pencils can disappoint us. Again, we must swatch constantly, rarely breaking relationships definitely with any brand.

A mechanical pencil 0,3 mm with a B graphite, for contours and details, is not indispensable but is welcome.

3. Soft white eraser: Sakura high quality FOAM or Pentel hi-polymer SOFT. Avoid Staedtler Mars plastic or similar, for it causes excessive friction, harms the paper and usually crumbles off in pieces.

4. Kneaded eraser: Milan, Design, Cretacolor, in order of my personal preference among the ones I know. This is such a picky material (or maybe I am), for it needs to be gummy enough to remove the graphite shading just by the applying of gentle hits over it. But very often even the best companies do not get good qualities to it, and then they may be sometimes too greasy and totally useless in removing graphite. Again one needs to swatch, but always preferring gummy over greasy qualities. If not enough yet, to further complicate this issue, the best Kneaded Erasers I have ever found are those which, although gummy, when we slice them they are dry in the portion sliced. They become gummy there again after we begin to mold and knead them for use.

5. Stylus (and a good sharpener if you wish, but stylus is essential)

6. Paper: section 2.4 of my Graphite Guidebook offers some quite detailed discussion addressing various aspects to be taken in account for decisions. There are many different companies offering several types of paper and each one has its own traits, advantages and disadvantages. Personally I prefer the middle ground between textured and smooth papers. Good possibilities are the Strathmore Bristol, Canson (C à grain, Dessin or Fine Face), Acervo Debret, Hahnemühle Dessin Lana. But again, it is worth researching what else you have available in your country, swatch them, and hear other artists' experiences. Remember to test both sides of each paper for they often present different surfaces.

The free video lesson can help, for at least you will be able to see how I proceed during swatching. Notice in the scenes that some textured papers make spontaneous dark spots arise and this can eventually become inevitable. The outcome can therefore be out of control. Personally I consider better papers are those which provide a relatively even texture (without unexpected stains) when we apply graphite in a constant and uniform manner as I do in the video. The precise moment of these tests is in the link: <https://youtu.be/C4L2oxuCEqI?t=2607>

Some more useful information perhaps can be found here:

<https://www.strathmoreartist.com/blog-reader/shading-techniques-selecting-paper-for-graphite.html>