CROSSHATCHING

In crosshatching, lines and strokes of color are criss-crossed on top of one another to create a fine mesh of color or tone. As with HATCHING, this technique is used mainly in pastel and pen and ink. It is also one of the classic techniques of tempera painting.
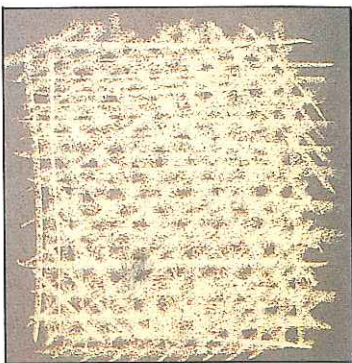
In both hatching and crosshatching, the spacing between the lines can be varied, depending on the density of effect you want. The technique can be used to model form, to build up areas of light and shade, or to create lively color mixtures.

Pastel

In pastel painting, crosshatching is a simple technique, but amazingly versatile in its application. It is worthwhile experimenting with, because you will gain a lot of valuable knowledge about the behavior of this medium.

Instead of crosshatching with vertical and horizontal strokes, try running lines in opposite diagonal directions to create a basketweave effect — or try a combination of the two. Experiment also with different color combinations and with various colors of paper; when two or more colors are crosshatched on colored paper, the effect is extremely vibrant. For a softer effect, vary the pressure on the pastel to create a series of hard and soft edges.

Edgar Degas (1834-1917) used a great deal of hatching and crosshatching in his pastel paintings, which appear to shimmer with light due to the vibrant optical effects produced by the interweaving colors.
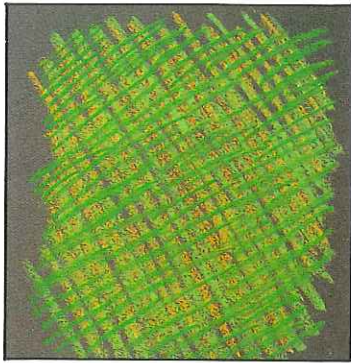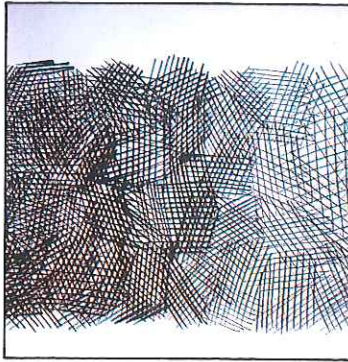

Crosshatching • Pastel
1 A limitless variety of tone and hue can be achieved simply by altering the spacing and direction of crosshatched strokes. This is an example of multiple crosshatchings: vertical and horizontal lines were laid in and then crosshatched with diagonal strokes.
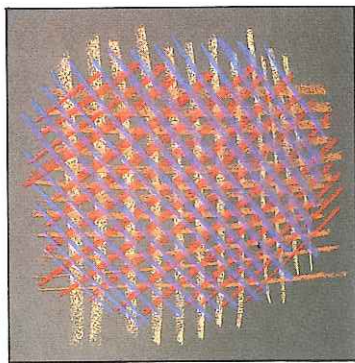
2 By intermixing different colors, the possibilities are extended even further. This example was done with four colors.
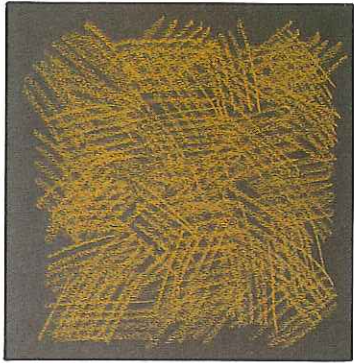
3 Alter the pressure on the pastel stick so that some lines are thick, others thin.

4 A lively pattern is created by juxtaposing small patches of crosshatching that run in different directions.

Crosshatching • Ink
Crosshatching is a classic technique of pen and ink work. By varying the density of the lines a wide variety of tones is achieved. Freely drawn lines like these look more lively and interesting than perfectly straight, mechanical lines.
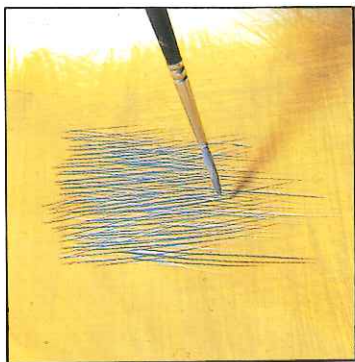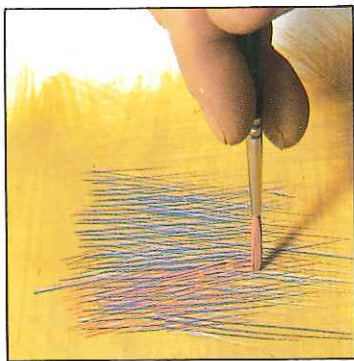

Crosshatching • Acrylic
In acrylic painting, an old, splayed brush comes in handy for creating a slightly rough crosshatched texture in the paint because each bristle leaves its own tiny stroke. Here the artist has laid a flat wash of yellow ocher, and has then crosshatched in various directions using fairly dry paint. The underlying color glows through the overpainting to create a subtle optical mixture.

Tempera lends itself well to crosshatching because it can be applied in several layers and dries very quickly. Crosshatching can be done using any number of colors, brushed on in any direction. In this image umber and ocher have been crosshatched with white on a blue tinted support.

Crosshatching • Tempera
1 Using the tip of a fine brush, paint lines with slightly slanted strokes, working first in one direction and then in another.

2 Applying a different color, repeat the crosshatched strokes to create a fine mesh of textured color.