



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **How children's thoughts were put into colour: A short story about the coloured pencil**

*Bright yellow, lavender, lime green: Colours are now part of almost every children's room. The coloured pencil in particular has become a loyal companion and designer of childhood. It gives a first expression to the child's perspective on the world. In 1834, Johann Sebastian Staedtler introduced a coloured pencil in Nuremberg that allowed for more precise, cleaner and, above all, colourful drawings. By the end of the 19th century, STAEDTLER, then J.S. Staedtler, discovered children as their target group. What occupies children today, how they see the world and in which colours is once again put on display on World Kids Colouring Day on 6 May.*

#### **Charcoal, red chalk and pastel**

The child as an artist? Children's thoughts, brought to paper quickly and colourfully, as an expression that attracts adults' attention? Children all over the world share their ideas for World Kids Colouring Day on 6 May. The fact that we can discover stories in their colourful drawings today was also related to a technological innovation. The artists of the past not only had to master their own distinctive brush stroke, but they also had to produce their paints themselves. Those who wanted to paint with dry materials 400 years ago could choose between charcoal, red chalk and pastel chalks, and they definitely shouldn't mind getting their hands dirty. This changed with the development of the wood-cased pencil from the 17th century onwards. At the beginning of the 18th century in Nuremberg, in addition to graphite, red chalk and pastel chalk were gradually incorporated into a wooden "casing". The wood-cased pencil, more precisely its mass production, made writing and painting affordable for many. A red-chalk pencil cost only a few farthings or cents by 1740, depending on the quality. After all, red-chalk pencils already covered a colour spectrum from light, dark to purple red or red-brown.

#### **Fine stroke, good adhesion**

Today it sounds trivial, but in the 19th century it was a decisive innovation: In Nuremberg, Johann Sebastian Staedtler managed to improve the red-chalk pencil by 1834 so that it could "sharpen pencils to the finest point", enable fine line thicknesses and stick better to paper. He developed a process for the production of differently coloured oil chalk cartridges in which colour pigments were mixed with binders, ground several times, pressed and dried in the oven. Finally, the coloured leads were impregnated with wax. Founded in 1835, J.S. Staedtler finally specialised in the production of this new coloured pencil. "The handle of the coloured pencil is a matter of course today, not only for World Kids Colouring Day, but initially needed some help starting out, as research in our archives has shown," says Britta Olsen, Head of Brand & Communication at STAEDTLER.

#### **"Coloured pencils, short, for children"**

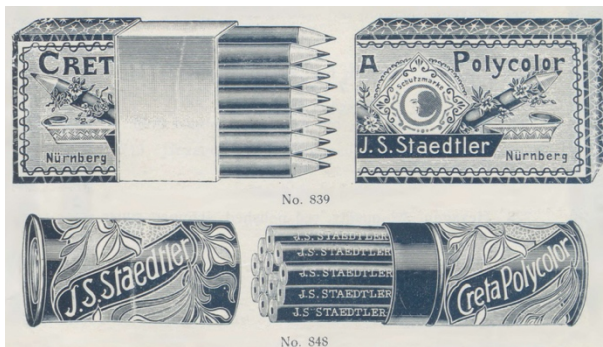
In the first catalogue received from 1860, J.S. Staedtler already offered its coloured pencils under the product brand "Creta Polycolor" in 100 different colours, for example in "Carmine light red", "Sea green" or "Azure blue". Polished in the respective colour and stamped with a gold stamp, the initial intent was that the wood-cased coloured pencils should first inspire artists or merchants. Due to their ease of use

and the affordable price, however, it can be assumed that children and adolescents also used the crayons, for example in art lessons by home and private teachers. It wasn't long before J.S. Staedler officially discovered children as a target group, as an "Illustrated Price List" from 1898 suggests: In the table of contents there is an entry "**Coloured pencils, short, for children**", which refers to "short coloured oil pastels in cedar wood Creta Polycolor 11 cm long".

### In school and art lessons

Since 1925, STAEDTLER has been running its own product line for "children, pupils, beginners", which was mostly used in school, especially in art lessons. They first appeared in the "Illustrated Catalogue A4 (1925 edition)". Merchants should be persuaded to reach children and pupils with the product group "Cheap colour pencils for school". The pencils were available in boxes printed with children's motifs as well as fairytale motifs. The colour selection was based on the "colours prescribed in schools".

If you have any further questions about the history of the coloured pencil at STAEDTLER, or about sources from the STAEDTLER archive, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Caption:

From the middle of the 19th century, Nuremberg based J.S. Staedler offered pencils in a wide range of colours under the name "Creta Polycolor". The product illustration from 1909 depicts them in richly decorated packages. Image rights: STAEDTLER company archive



Caption:

From the mid-19th century, the Staedler family operated a pencil factory in Nuremberg in sites at Hadermühle 23 b and Flaschenhof 31-34. In 1866, the company produced more than two million coloured and regular pencils. The undated copper stitch depicts the J.S. Staedler pencil factory around 1860.

Image rights: STAEDTLER company archive



Caption:  
The assortment of coloured pencils offered by J.S. Staedtler ranged from 1909 from "Yellow Lake" and "Prussian Blue" to "Van Dyke Brown". The catalogue presents a total of 60 out of 100 available colours – suitable for "Artists, Engineers, Schools (...)" and for Office and General Use. "  
Image rights: STAEDTLER company archive



Caption:  
Pencils and crayons were stored in style, even a century ago. In the 1910s, J.S. Staedtler offered a selection of 12 Creta Polycolor pencils in a flat sliding case 17.5 cm long for adults and 11 cm long for children.  
Image rights: STAEDTLER company archive

## About STAEDTLER

STAEDTLER is one of Germany's oldest industrial companies. The group ranks among the world's leading manufacturers and suppliers of writing, colouring, drawing and modelling products. With its products, STAEDTLER inspires the creativity of its customers throughout their life: from their first attempts at colouring in early childhood to products for creative work. The writing and creative goods manufacturer offers a wide range of high-quality products for all ages and demands, constantly developing new approaches to connect analogue tradition and digital innovation. STAEDTLER headquarters are located in Nuremberg. It employs 3,000 people in 26 countries worldwide – of which 1,200 work in STAEDTLER'S domestic market. For production the company stays true to its roots and counts on quality "Made in Germany": nearly two-thirds of all STAEDTLER products are manufactured in Germany. [www.staedtler.com](http://www.staedtler.com)



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