

NEW WAVE FINE ART PRODUCTS

“Focusing on the details:” a talk with Kyle and Keith O’Brien



Your company has had a meteoric trajectory. How did it start?

New Wave took shape on a kitchen counter four years ago. The idea for an ergonomic artist’s palette balanced between the hand, arm, and body originated with our father, Tom, who was tired of feeling discomfort when holding a palette. One day we stopped by our parents’ house to

find him messing around with scissors and cardboard palette cutouts. Intrigued, we began asking questions, and before we knew it we had scissors in our hands as well. We like to joke around, describing the evolution of the design by saying, “Our father came up with the three-point design, and we put it on steroids!” Since introducing the handheld wooden palettes, we’ve begun producing palettes for an array of painting styles: Posh™ tabletop palettes, Grey Pad® disposable paper palettes, and Easy Lift® peelable palettes.

Our formula is simple: solve a common problem shared by artists and focus on the details. Our handheld wood palettes provide a patent-pending three-point design that evenly distributes the palette’s weight among the hand, arm, and body, providing complete comfort when held. We sand each palette by hand, then finish the palettes with a resilient, proprietary satin finish that is resistant to water, standard artist solvents, and mediums, and is easily cleaned.

Your website offers an amazing array of testimonials. Do you consult with artists while you’re developing a product?

We’ve been very fortunate to have our products used by many of the top artists painting today and believe this is because we work closely with artists. Listening to artists’ feedback has been the catalyst to the introduction of all our products. During the days of our cardboard palette cutouts, we organized



a focus group with artists in the Philadelphia area at Studio Rilievo, owned by Neilson Carlin, while the idea for a handheld palette was still in concept form. A dozen very patient artists sat through hours of continuous questioning from two “palette obsessed” brothers on a Saturday morning (we kept them going with coffee and chocolate!). We learned a great deal that day; we cannot thank those artists enough.

Your wood palettes are themselves objects of beauty. How did you come to collaborate with Amish artisans?

We grew up swerving the car around horse and buggies! The Amish have been a constant in our surroundings. As New Wave came into fruition, it was natural to include the Amish who are the best at what they do and a true pleasure to work with. We want to provide artists with products of the highest quality and are lucky to be working in conjunction with an amazing team.

I love your company’s name because it works on so many levels: how did “New Wave” occur to you?

While having a lengthy name debate one night, while looking at the lower contour of our handheld palettes, we noticed that the contour looked like a wave. We were introducing a “new” design, and a “new” company, so New Wave just worked!

What are you looking forward to in the future?

For us there is nothing like taking an idea from a concept to the tangible product—it’s the artist in us. The new product is our art and our product line is our portfolio. We look forward to developing fine art products for years to come.

Check out New Wave’s website,
www.NewWaveArt.com.