

painting

HANDOUTS

Vjeko Sager

A LISTING OF COLOR PROPERTIES AND PALETTE DIVISIONS

The following is a concise description of the specific nature of a range of colors which gives the largest variety in mixing. The colors are divided into three major groups: the cool and cool-warms, the neutral and the warm and warm-cool colors. Each color is also then defined by its specific degree of transparency and tendency towards another hue. For example: Cadmium Lemon Yellow is a transparent cool-warm with a tendency towards green. Please note all colors discussed are oil pigments of good to superior quality (all pigments are chemically pure).

COOL & COOL WARM

Cadmium Lemon Yellow
cadmium barium-sulfide
Transparent
Green Tendency

Quinacridone Red (Rose)
quinacridone
Extremely Transparent
Violet Tendency

Pthalo Blue
copper
Extremely Transparent
Green Tendency

Lamp Black
carbon from oil flame
Semi-Transparent
Blue/Green Tendency

Titanium White
titanium dioxide
Extremely Opaque
Blue Tendency

French Ultramarine
sodium
Very Transparent
Violet Tendency

NEUTRAL WARM

Cobalt Yellow (Aureolin)
potassium cobaltinitrite c.p.
Extremely Transparent
Neutral

Rose Madder Genuine
2-dihydroxyanthraquinone
Extremely Transparent
Neutral

Cobalt Blue
pthalocyanine cobalt
Extremely Transparent
Neutral

Intense Black
carbon from gas flame
Opaque
Neutral

Zinc White
zinc oxide
Transparent
Neutral

Blue Mars
aluminum sulfosilicate
Opaque
Neutral (relative)

WARM-COOL

Cadmium Yellow Light
cadmium sulfide
Opaque
Orange Tendency

Cadmium Red Light
c.p. cadmium sulfo-selenide
Opaque
Orange Tendency

Cerulean Blue (Genuine)
aluminate cobalt stannate
Opaque
Green Tendency

Mars Black
ferroso-ferric oxide
Opaque
Red/Violet Tendency

Lead (Flake) White
lead carbonate
Opaque
Tendency Pale Yellow

Violet Mars Red (Venetian)
synthesized iron oxide
Opaque
Red/Violet Tendency

COOL & COOL WARM

Carbazole
carbazole dioxazine
Transparent
Blue Tendency
Raw Umber
natural earth
Semi-Transparent
Blue/Green

NEUTRAL WARM

Violet Manganese
ammonium phosphate
Very Transparent
Neutral (relative)
Burnt Umber
natural earth
Semi-Opaque
Tendency Red/Orange Tendency

WARM-COOL

Violet Cobalt
cobalt phosphate
Transparent
Red Tendency

Alizarin Crimson
dihydroxyanthraquinone
Very Transparent
Violet Tendency

Yellow Ochre
aluminum hydroxide natural earth
Opaque to Semi-Transparent
Yellow/Orange Tendency

PALETTES DISTINGUISHED BY MIXING HARMONICS

Dead Palette:

Yellow Ochre (yellow), Mars Red (red), Raw Umber (green), Lamp Black (blue), White

Muted Palette:

Yellow Ochre, Mars Red, Ultramarine Blue, Raw Umber, White

Passive Palette:

Cadmium Yellow Light, Cadmium Red Light, Cobalt Blue, Raw Umber, White

Active Palette:

Cadmium Lemon Yellow, Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Alizarin Crimson, Raw Umber, White

Over Active Palette:

Cadmium Lemon Yellow, Quinacridone Red Rose, Pthalo Blue, Pthalo Green, Carbazole Violet, White

HARMONIC OR CLEAR MIXING COMBINATIONS

(Secondary colours)

Examine the following combinations carefully. While doing so look up each color's properties and note how colors with harmonic or analogous tendencies make mixed colors of greater clarity. This is a general rule to follow when you desire to get absolute clarity in a mixed color. These are only a few of the possible combinations available in your palette.

ORANGES

Cadmium Red Light + Cadmium Yellow Light = Orange (clear)

Quinacridone Red Rose + Cadmium Yellow = Orange (cool-warm vibrant)

Yellow Ochre + Iron Oxide Red = Orange (muted)

GREENS

Cerulean Blue + Cadmium Lemon Yellow = Green (clear)

Pthalo Blue + Cadmium Lemon Yellow = Green (extra cool vibrant)

Cobalt Blue + Cadmium Yellow Light = Green (muted)

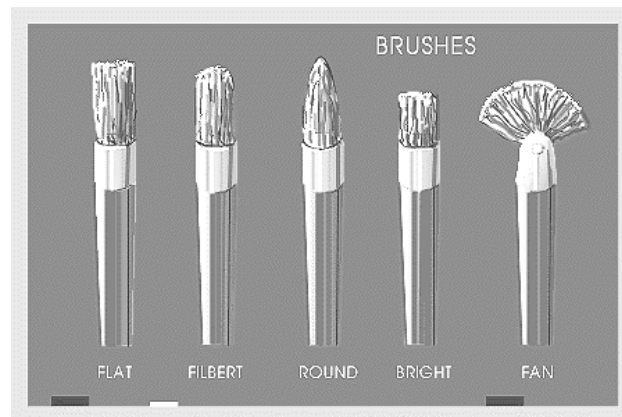
VIOLETS

Ultramarine Blue + Alizarin Crimson = Violet (clear)

Pthalo Blue + Quinacridone Red = Violet (extra cool vibrant)

Cobalt Blue + Cadmium Red Light = Violet (muted)

MATERIALS + PROCESSES + TECHNIQUES + TIPS + COLOUR THEORY +



BRUSH TYPES

- **Flat:** is characterized by its long flat bristles. Used for long fluid strokes and can be used to create a sharp edge.
- **Filbert:** much like the flat, but with a slightly rounded edge. This brush can create softened strokes with rounded edges.
- **Round:** characterized by its round barrel and staggered bristle lengths. Used for long continuous lines. Makes interesting edges when rolled in the hand as the brush stroke is applied.
- **Bright:** characterized by its short flat bristles. For controlled detailing and can be used to create sharp edges.
- **Fan:** characterized by its fanned out flat bristles. Used for soft edges and subtle blending.

PALETTE KNIFE

- This versatile tool can be used for mixing paint on the palette, for scraping off paint, and for applying paint to the canvas.

PALETTE

- Is a flat piece of material that serves as a place for mixing and working with the paint before it is applied to the canvas. A pane of glass with a piece of white paper attached to the back makes a good palette. This kind of palette is versatile because it can be easily cleaned, the paper can be changed to match the colour of the painting ground (for better colour choices), and the surface will have no adverse effects on the paint. Palette pads, pieces of metal, and enamel surfaces can be used. It is important to have a surface that can be scraped with a razor knife for easy cleanup.

RAGS

- Rags can also be used for softened transitions when they are rubbed into painted surfaces. 5

WATER-BASED PAINTS

Gouache is an opaque paint system with excellent covering power. If applied too thickly, gouache can be prone to cracking or peeling off. Gouache dries lighter than it appears when wet; this makes colour matching difficult when reworking an area. Gouache films are less vulnerable than those of transparent watercolour because they are thicker, but paintings should still be protected through proper storage and curation (drying process). The brilliance and luminosity which are characteristic of gouache come from the surface of the paint film and not, as with transparent watercolours, from the white paper below. Recommended painting surfaces include hot-pressed watercolour paper, cold-pressed illustration boards, Museum Board and good quality papers with a slight tooth. Gouache is very effective on coloured papers and toned grounds.

Acrylic paint is made from synthetic materials that are water-soluble while wet but once they have dried and cured become tough and flexible. The positive characteristics of acrylic paint include little or no fumes, quick drying time, excellent adhesiveness, water cleanup and pigment colorfastness. Acrylics work well for students' quality painting, as it is easily washable and resistant to short-term cracking or environmental damage. The negative side of acrylics is their longevity: acrylic paint should not be used for museum quality works because of their limited durability (up to 50 years). Acrylics cannot be mixed with oil paints.

Ink

Paper choice depends on your pen selection and whether you are using washes. Many pens work well on sketchbook paper, but I find that the fine nib tends to catch on its rough surface - sometimes a fun effect, but to avoid spatters, I use a lightweight (185 gsm), hot-pressed (smooth) watercolor paper. Watercolor paper also takes a wash well.

Tips

- Put enough ink to load the nib in the bottom of a small jar for dipping - that way you will not have a penholder dripping ink everywhere.
- Try doing some small, thumbnail images first.
- Keep washes simple - two or three layers, light, medium, dark.

Let the texture match the subject - spiky grass, curly leaves.

OIL-BASED PAINTS

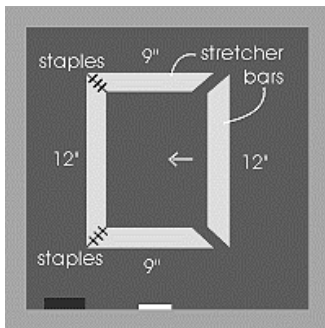
Oil paints are generally slow drying, a quality appreciated in a different way from painters. It can take anywhere from 24 to 96 hours or even longer for paint to dry, depending on the colour, the thickness of the paint, the time of year, and the humidity level. When properly applied, oil paintings may last for centuries. The negative side of oil colours is the environmental damage caused by mineral solvents and spirits used for paint thinning. It is important to prepare canvas with natural gesso when painting with oils, because acrylic gesso has (previously mentioned) characteristics of the acrylic colours.

Oil paints are compatible with alkyds, encaustics (wax-based painting), and egg tempera techniques.

HOW TO STRETCH A CANVAS

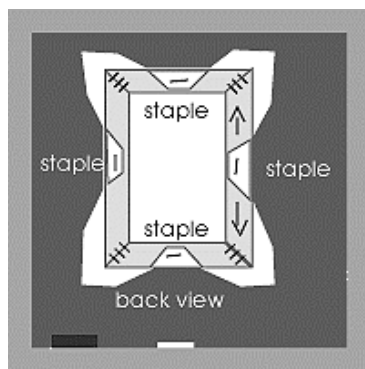
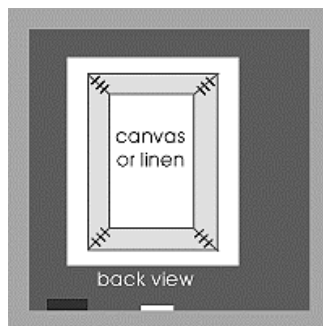
To stretch a canvas for painting you should have the following:

- **Stretcher Bars**-wooden slats that are made to fit together. Each stretcher bar is one side of the canvas. Pre-made stretcher bars are available or you can make your own.
- **Fasteners**-staples or thumbtacks can be used to hold the canvas into place. Brass upholstery tacks were commonly used because they do not corrode. Staples are easy to put in place and easy to remove later.
- **Canvas**-either cotton duck or linen makes best surfaces. Strong material is needed because the fabric is under great tension.



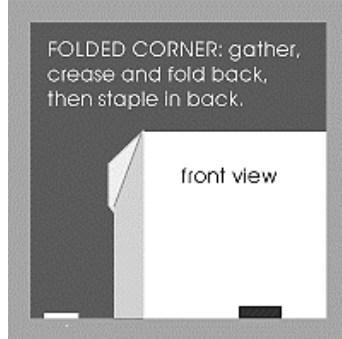
1. Slide edges of four stretcher bars together. Make sure that you have two of each size stretcher bar. Check square by measuring corner to corner, then repeat for the other two corners. Adjust frame until both measurements are the same distance. Staple into place on both sides of stretcher frame. Do not glue or use other adhesives, unless your stretcher bars have no slots, because they can cause discoloration of the canvas and stretchers can be reused.

2. Cut canvas so that it is at least 3" longer on all sides. This will allow you to wrap the canvas around to the back obscuring your staples.



3. Pull tightly and staple canvas at four opposite points in the middle of each stretcher bar. Hold as tightly as possible for good tension. Canvas pliers can be used to help gain a strong grip. Work outward from each of these centres. Stretch evenly by moving from side to side and from top to bottom in an even pace. Only add a staple or two on the left and on the right of centre for each, working toward the corners.

4. When you reach the corners, staple and tighten until the ripples are all gone from front of the canvas. If not, repeat process making sure to work evenly out from each centre while moving around the canvas. When corners are tight take remaining canvas, crease it, fold it back, and staple tightly in back. Cleanly secure rest of canvas. Now you are ready for the surface preparation.



The preparation of a painting ground will differ depending on the medium. If oil paint comes in direct contact with a canvas or board it will cause some deterioration. So it is best to follow a few basic steps.

TRADITIONAL Painting Ground (Gesso): Traditionally, gesso was used as the painting ground for tempera (egg tempera) and oil paintings. Rabbit skin glue is most recommended: prepare solution of approximately 2 ounces of rabbit skin glue to one liter of cold water. Place in pan and heat until glue is dissolved. NEVER BOIL GLUE. Allow the glue to cool to room temperature. If it takes on the appearance of jelly, then you are ready to apply it. Heat again until it dissolves and add chalk dust (calcium carbonate) or whiting (zinc white).

- Once the sizing has cooled, we may begin to brush on gesso. Use broad regular strokes in one direction. Allow drying completely. The drying will vary, but it will probably take a day. When dry, sand surface lightly to take off fabric burs. Repeat the process, but brush across the directional strokes used in the first layer. Once dry, it will be ready for paint, although one can continue the sand and paint process to create smoother grounds.

ACRYLIC Gesso: Acrylic gesso can be used as a ground without any sizing or other surface preparation. Paint will adhere to surfaces that have been coated with acrylic, but acrylic paint will not adhere to oil surfaces. It is possible to use this ground for any painting technique, but be reminded: this surface has time-limited durability (up to 50 years), which affects all additionally painted layers.

- Brush gesso directly onto raw canvas or panel using long regular strokes in one direction. Once dry the surface can be sanded. Then apply another coat of gesso (the first one will soak into the canvas or panel and act as its own sizing) using long regular strokes across the first. Once dry, the surface can be painted or one can repeat sand/gesso process.

COLOUR (terminology)

The Colour Wheel describes the relationships between colors. It is laid out so that any two **PRIMARY COLORS** (red, yellow, blue) are separated by the **SECONDARY COLORS** (orange, violet, and green).

PRIMARY Colors are basic and cannot be mixed from other elements. They are to color what prime numbers are to mathematics. One can mix two primaries to get a Secondary Color. You will notice that each Secondary Color on the Color Wheel is bounded by two primaries. Color **COMPLEMENTS** are color opposites (these colors contrast each other in the extreme). They also help to make each other more active. Color Complements are on opposite sides of the Color Wheel.

VALUE is the darkness or lightness of a particular color. We can divide these value changes into **SHADES** and **TINTS**. **Shades** are the relative darkness of a color and **Tints** are the relative lightness of a color. **PURE HUE** is the base color at its full **INTENSITY**.

It is important to note Intensity of a color here because a value of, lets say, red can be the same as a medium **tone** of that same color. A Tone can be the same value, but can be grayed in such a way that it is not at the highest degree of Intensity. The Pure Hue has the highest **SATURATION** of color. This is illustrated in the middle ring of the Color Wheel. The outer ring of **TINTS** illustrates what happens to a Pure Hue when white is added. The center section of **SHADES** shows the effect of black on the Pure Hue.

Color and Palette: After one has drawn the image it is important to evaluate the color that will be used. Create limitations on color. Choose a specific "palette" of colors to use on your palette. For example if you are painting some foliage, you may want to stick with blues, yellows and greens of varying intensity and perhaps use a red as an accent. Since red is a complementary color to green it helps to activate it. By setting aside some color, like browns or oranges, you can focus the color so that your color information is more specific. Avoid trying to use all the colors in one painting and do not underestimate the power of neutral colors in a composition.

Mixing colour is a matter of proportion.

How much of each colour that goes into the mix determines the outcome. Always start your mix with the lightest of the pigments you are using, and add the others to it. Some pigments are much more "powerful" (that is, they have greater tinting strength), and it will only take a very small amount of them to change another colour.

Finally, colors will look different if you mix them on your paper rather than in your palette.

Some artists like to only mix their colors on the paper, not completely blending them together. Others like the control of color that mixing in the palette gives. Experienced artists will mix their colors directly on canvas. Experiment with these methods to find the way that suits you. Whichever way you go, do not **OVERMIX** your pigments. Let them retain a bit of their individuality...even in mixtures.

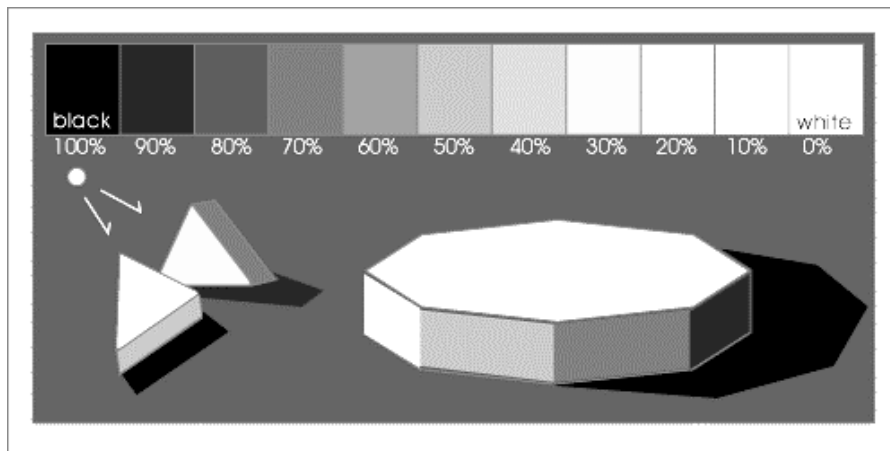
TIP: The little sample on a separate piece of paper/canvas could help you in avoiding big mistakes...

Color **TEMPERATURE** (warm to cool) will move us from one side of the painting to the other, and from the warm reflected light from the ground to the cooler reflected light from the sky. It is also important to understand how using neutralized colors (in the building, shadows and ground) can set off purer, brighter colors (the red flowers and bright green bushes).

TONAL PAINTING

Chiaroscuro is a method for applying value to a two-dimensional piece of artwork to create the illusion of a three-dimensional solid form. This way of working was devised during the Italian Renaissance and was used by artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael. In this system, if light is coming in from one predetermined direction then light and shadow will conform to a set of rules.

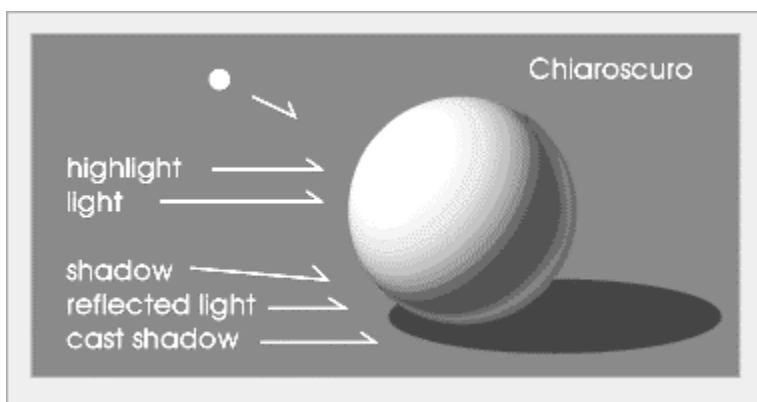
GRAYSCALE AND TONAL VALUES

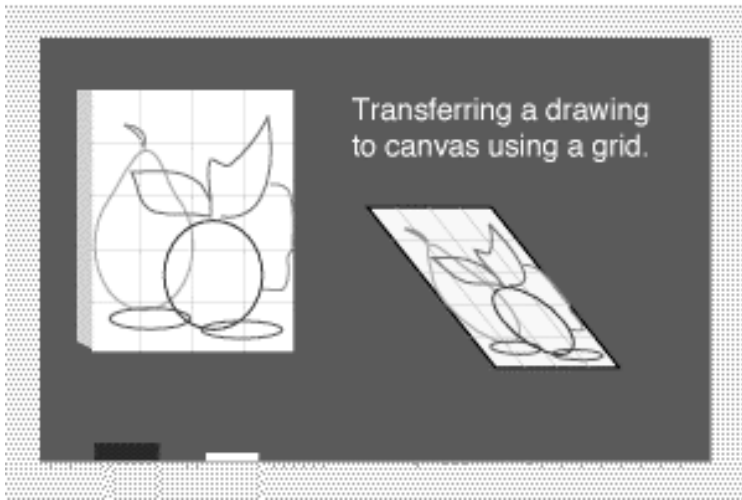


As light hits a plane it creates a value. This is the relative degree of light or shadow on the form. Value changes as a plane is in less or more direct influence of the light source. So, a plane that is turned at a 45-degree angle to the light source receives less light than one that is at a 90-degree angle and, consequently, is lighter because it receives more direct light. Value changes often occur gradually. If you look at the object in the lower left corner of the diagram, you will notice that the relative percentages of black increase as the plane gets further from the light. These changes occur on any object. Even if we are looking at a white object, it will have a number of subtle value changes and would be drawn with only a small amount of pure white. This would occur only at the points most directly hit by the light.

Hint: The background colour and any plane adjacent to the object being drawn will influence the value of the form being rendered. It is important to consider the background value with the object being drawn because it will directly influence decisions in the drawing

CHIAROSCURO

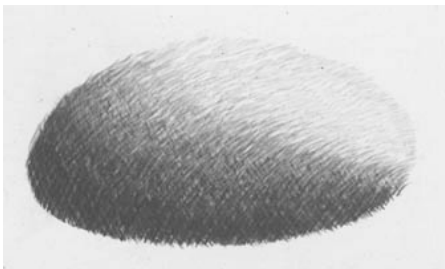




BASIC PAINT APPLICATION TECHNIQUES

Painting with acrylic and gouache can be free flowing. With oils, there can be a sense of plasticity of pushing paint. Do not expect this effects from the water-based paint. It is common for beginners, once they have tempered (mixed) their paint, to work directly with that mixture, dense and thick as it may be. Once the pigment is properly tempered, you can add as much or as little water as you like. It is advised that you apply your dilute paint thinly. The best method is to build up the surface with many, many layers. Never apply impasto (in thick layers) there is the sure likelihood that it will crack and peel off.

For applying the paint, load up the brush and then squeeze out excess paint between forefinger and thumb. The idea is to produce a brush stroke without leaving the puddle or blob at the end of the stroke. When applying the paint, lay down the brush strokes quickly and precisely but do not go over the same stroke in rapid succession; allow the previous stroke to dry.



Crosshatching

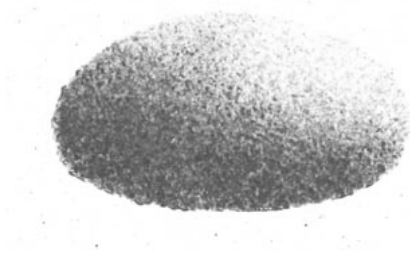
Cross-hatching is the traditional method of applying paint. In this illustration, strokes have been used and laid one on top of another.

The application of paint is not restricted to traditional methods. But then what are traditional methods? Evidence is apparent that pre Renaissance times, gouache/tempera paint was applied in a number of methods including spattering. Through the 're-invention' of water-based paints in the last two centuries the use/experimentation with various applicators widened the range of techniques and methods.

The Use of a Sponge

A sponge is a useful implement with which to apply the paint. It can be used to quickly build up large areas of color. As with application by brush, the sponge is loaded with color then squeezed out. Application is by a dabbing motion over the panel. Again, allow the previous layer to dry before applying the second layer. Sufficient layers will produce a flat uniform surface. Care must be taken in respect of bubbles that get into the paint surface; these should be knocked back before the paint is dry. Failure to do so will result in an “orange peel” effect.

The sponge can also be used to create textural effects. Different types of sponges produce different effects.



Splattering

Splattering paint is both fun and effective. A toothbrush is a useful tool with which to splatter fine dots of paint and even glazes.

The toothbrush is dipped into the paint; excess shaken off and then the bristles are pulled back and then released. Various effects can be obtained in the way the bristles are released. Difficult to explain but fun to practice!

Once experienced, glazes can be flooded on with no danger of disturbing the underlying layers. To an extent, wet in wet effects can be achieved. When using this technique mask out the surrounding areas with either tracing paper or low tack masking film. (Be prepared to do some repair work if and when the paint under-runs.)



Palette or Painting Knife

Another fun method is to 'squige' paint with a palette knife. The important thing to remember is to keep the layer thin! Dip the palette knife into the paint and then squige it on the panel making sure that thick build up of paint is substantially reduced. If you work quickly, you can squige another color into the still wet paint. This method is useful for under-painting textural effects (stone).



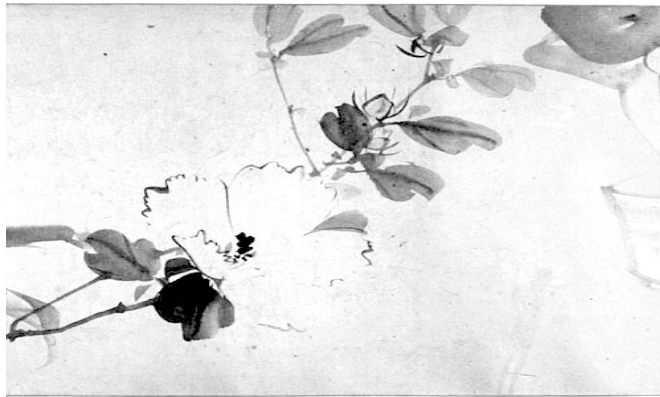


Example 2: Subtractive principle of color combining (pigment)

GLAZING is a term for painting with a transparent medium. In other words, whatever is on the surface beneath the glaze will still be apparent after the glaze has been applied. The glaze will merely change the color cast of the surface. This is a technique that has been used for centuries in fine art. Either oil-based or water-based materials may be used for glazing, depending upon the desired effect. Water-based glazes are sometimes thinned with glycerin or another wetting agent to extend the working time. In general, water glazes are best suited to rougher textures where overlaps of color are acceptable.

BRUSHWORK

In order to achieve the most out of brush, it is important to use this tool the most effectively. The rule may be expressed as: the less is more.



Alternative paint APPLICATORS

Squeegee, various rollers, spray (can, airbrush), spatula, etc

It is important to experiment and test different modes and effects of paint applications. Remember: these effects are just tools, not a destination.

Hints for Evaluating a Painting:

- Turn the painting upside down. If the composition is still interesting then it is successful. Good composition works from all angles.
- Squint to evaluate value. Colour can sometimes confuse and squinting helps to limit colour so that light or dark value can be seen.
- Check to see if the corners and edges seem incomplete. If they are not well painted, it will impact on the entire painting. Make every inch of a painting just as important as the one next to it.
- Find a particular colour and see if it exists in more than one place. Colour can create or confuse a composition. By repeating a colour in several places throughout the painting, one can create a more cohesive composition. This is called Repetition of an Element and can be done with line, form, or colour.

CAUTION

Handling Pigments and Other Artists' Materials

Making your own paints can be a rewarding experience. You must remember, however, that you are dealing with materials that may be harmful if not handled with care. It must not be assumed that the absence of a health warning indicates that a material is safe. All dusts can be harmful if inhaled and persistent exposure to them will at least cause irritation and possible harm to you. There is an increasing amount of information available as to the dangers of powdered pigments, but the safest way is to treat all materials as potentially harmful.

Do not let these warnings, however, deter you from making your own paints and mediums, since the minimum care needed for most materials is no more than good sound studio practice. Here are some recommendations:

Storing Pigments

Pack bulk quantities of pigments in plastic bags to simplify handling and to prevent breakage and spillage during shipment. Small quantities of pigments are packaged in plastic jars with screw top caps and PVC liners. Before using pigments, it is recommended that you transfer your pigments into plastic jars with screw top caps. Please follow these safe handling procedures:

1. Always wear a NIOSH-approved dust mask and gloves. Work on a smooth surface.
2. Pick up the bag by one of its corners and shake it to collect the pigment into the opposite corner.
3. Using a pair of scissors cut off about 3/4 of an inch of the corner you have been holding.
4. Slowly pour the pigment into the jar. Close the lid.
5. Wipe up any spilled pigment with a damp disposable towel. Properly dispose of the towel and empty bag.
6. Label the jar with the product description and contents accordingly.
7. ALWAYS KEEP OUT OF CHILDREN'S REACH.

Safely Handling Artists' Materials

Always read the label. When transferring art materials to other containers, transfer the label from the original packaging onto the new container.

Keep products out of reach of children.

Never use products for skin painting, food preparation or other uses they were not intended for.

Do not eat, drink or smoke while using art materials.

If possible, work with pigments that you have first wetted into a paste or liquid.

Store pigments in sealed, easy to open containers. Bags of pigment when purchased should be cut open and decanted into storage jars (see above).

Wash up after each use—clean yourself and your tools. Keep your work area clean. Wet mop to pick up dust.

Do not inhale dusts. Do not work near a draft or fan that will blow pigments and other dry powders about, but keep your work area well ventilated. Wear a NIOSH-approved dust mask while handling pigments.

Wear dedicated work clothing with long sleeves.

Protect hands and skin from exposure. Wear gloves, especially if you have cuts or abrasions. Use a barrier cream which should be applied about 30 minutes before you start working. Do not allow your hands to get caked in materials—wash them frequently and re-apply barrier cream. Keep hands away from face and eyes.

Warning Labeling

Sometimes products cannot be made non-hazardous, because they are necessary for certain creative activities. Some products contain hazardous materials such as arsenic, lead, mercury, etc. All of these products are clearly marked and carry special warning labels on the packaging. When precautions are taken, such as wearing gloves and NIOSH-approved dust masks, the risk of exposure to these potentially hazardous materials is greatly minimized.

Products carrying warning labels and cautions for safe use can be used safely by individuals who are able to read, understand and follow suggested precautions for handling those materials. When used in properly supervised and controlled conditions, they can be employed with the risk of exposure to potentially hazardous materials greatly minimized.

•

"Nobody is born a colorist. You become a colorist only after many years of looking, experimenting and painting. And painting and painting." Edward Betts

Painting With Three Colors

Understand the characteristics of your paints so you can combine colors that are compatible according to intensity (purity or grayness), transparency (see-through quality of paint) and tinting strength (power of a color to influence a mixture). This enables you to work with just three colors to achieve a harmonious effect. The charts below list the colors for each triad. Sort your paints into these combinations and make sketches using three colors to see how different subjects look with compatible palettes.

COMPATIBLE TRIADS CHART

High Intensity Colors

Standard

(Transparent or Opaque)

Cadmium Red Medium

New Gamboge

French Ultramarine

Intense

(Mostly Transparent)

Winsor Red

Winsor Lemon

Winsor Blue

(Green Shade)

Delicate

(Transparent)

Rose Madder Genuine

Aureolin

Cobalt Blue

Low Intensity Colors

Opaque(Very Opaque)

Indian Red Yellow Ochre Cerulean Blue

Old Masters' (Mostly Transparent)

Burnt Sienna Raw Sienna Payne's Gray

Bright Earth (Unsaturated)(Transparent)

Brown Madder Quinacridone Gold Indigo

"Beauty is our home if ever we have one." Plato

Using a Limited Palette of Two Colors

There are many different limited palette systems, but one of the easiest to learn and use is the complementary color scheme. Using just two colors you can get the effect of full color by exploring the range of colors between the two. Complements will always be opposite each other on the color wheel, so one will be warm and the other cool, giving you a nice temperature contrast. Allow one to dominate the other and you can create an exciting mood.

Here I've combined blue-green (Phthalo Turquoise) and red-orange (Cadmium Scarlet) to achieve a pleasing arrangement of colors that ranges from the original colors through a variety of grays and browns. Try this with other combinations, for example:

- French Ultramarine and Burnt Sienna
- Alizarin Crimson and Hooker's Green
- Winsor Violet and New Gamboge

"We promise according to our hopes, and perform according to our fears."
François de La Rochefoucauld

Change One Thing

First, choose one subject or concept for your painting. Think about how you usually paint such a subject. But before you begin, change one thing. Here are some suggestions:

- If you normally work horizontally, switch to the vertical.
- If you usually work on rectangles, use an oval, circle or diamond.
- If you usually paint on dry paper, paint wet-into-wet.
- If you usually make hard edges, use soft edges.
- If you usually paint small, paint large, or vice versa.

Here are some other ideas:

- Change your horizon to extremely high or low.
- Paint high key (light and bright) or low key (dark and moody) instead of full contrast.
- Emphasize calligraphic line instead of shape.
- Emphasize color instead of value.
- Emphasize pattern instead of shape.
- Use repetition of one element, varying it with each repeat.
- Limit yourself to one big brush instead of your usual assortment.
- Change your usual subject by trading source material with someone else in class.
- Instead of painting what you **see** in the subject, paint what you **feel** about it.
- Make an abstraction emphasizing shapes or colors instead of subject.
- Make a simplified, stylized picture instead of a realistic one with details.
- Paint upside down, both your source material and your support.
- Paint without drawing.
- Draw with your brush instead of a pencil.
- Paint with your opposite hand holding your brush.
- Paint with a brush in each hand.

Do several paintings of the same subject, changing one thing each time at the start of the picture. Let each change suggest other changes, either in that or another picture. Enjoy the process and don't worry about finishing a picture.

Changing your environment can make a big difference, too. Move your drawing table to a different place in the room. Bring in a vase of fresh flowers. Or, simply walk away from your work for awhile.

Janean Thompson writes: "I often take a mental break by simply walking away from a project. I fix a cup of tea and sip it while sitting on a lawn chair, under a big tree next to my studio. It is a commune with nature, a moment of quiet relaxation and a slate cleaning for the clutter in my mind. When I go back to work, it is with renewed clarity."

Practical Aspects

Painting has two aspects, the inspirational/conceptual/aesthetic and the craft. Both are needed if the work is to go on pleasing the informed observer. They are also interdependent: new techniques encourage new perspectives, and vice versa. Before dealing with the techniques of oil painting, which has the longest history and so the greatest variety of approaches, we should note two things. First is that there is no single way of working. Fashions and materials change, though it's not unusual for art schools and studios to play down the diversity of techniques that the great masters employed, and insist on a simple heuristic approach that rapidly hardens into dogma. The second is that schools and individual painters have to be examined without preconceptions. The Impressionists and Pointillists did not, for example, paint *alla prima* entirely, any more than were the late canvases of Titian a culmination of his craft.

General Approaches

Until recently, oil painting has been a craft-dominated affair employing these techniques/approaches {4}:

- *Alla prima*. Rapid spontaneous painting of Rubens, Velazquez and Hals which aims at final effect within the one session. Unlike direct painting of modern artists, however, this follows careful thought and preparation.
- *Fa presto*. Rapid application of opaque paint over and incorporating coloured ground. Fresh finish, but can also show faults in drawing, composition, colouring, modelling and/or tonal relationships.
- Direct painting. Completion of picture surface in opaque paint without using ground or underpainting — e.g. Impressionists and most moderns.
- Three-tone technique. Form and colour represented simultaneously by three tones: light, middle and dark. Used in three ways
 - tones derived as tints (white added) or shades (black added)
 - three separate mixtures, not necessarily from same colour
 - three more or less pure colours (though five or even seven tones may be used in practice.)
- Wet into wet. Wet paint into, over or alongside other wet paint.
- Wet over dry. Traditional approach allowing systematic control.
- Painting to completion or in sections. More control with latter, but a disjointed appearance is the danger.
- Painting in layers. Principle behind traditional technique.
- Refining foundation. Adding to the body colour with more subtlety of colour and tone.
- Finishing with glazes. Final modifications of above with glazes.
- Varying paint thickness. Modifying tone and colour by thickness of paint: common but needs great skill.
- Dead colouring. First application in layered technique, either built up subsequently into further layers or into underpainting.
- Underpainting. Painting which is designed to combine with later painting (often but not necessarily glazes) to produce desired effect.
- Using ground. Ground is important component of finished picture.

Most painters have generally experimented with mixtures of the above, but a rough grouping {4} would be:

Early Approaches

A very slow, methodical approach that employed a brilliant white ground and no thinners. Used by van Eyck and early Flemish masters. 6-12 months needed to complete even a small picture. Wood was the favoured support and this needed to be made smooth and non-absorbing. Allowed painting to be undertaken in discrete, easily remedied stages.

Recommended steps:

- Make precise, detailed drawing on white ground and prime over with thin glaze of oil or oil varnish. Dry.
- Add shadows with thin glaze of oil and earth colour. Dry.
- Add dead colour precisely in glazes, frotties or body colour — most of previous showing through. Dry for several weeks.
- Oil out (rub in fat oil medium to allow adhesion to previous layer) and continue dead colour into underpainting using glazes and thin frotties. Several stages to this. When no more is possible leave to dry for several weeks.
- Oil out and refine painting of previous step.
- Add final glazes and/or final unifying overall glaze.

Painting on Toned Ground

Approach popular in 17th-18th centuries that employed pale ground as middle tone.

Recommended steps:

- Place accurate drawing over one or two-tone ground.
- Shade shadows with thin raw umber washes, ground to show through. Paint dead colour as pale thin turps washes of eventual colours. Washes, ground and shadows now form three-tone scheme. Dry. (Old masters would have used lean colours in essential oils and allowed canvas to dry for months at this stage to ensure that no oil was left to dry later.)
- Remodel above with thicker, more opaque colours, still allowing ground to show through. Dry. (Old masters understood each pigment separately, and varied the medium accordingly.)
- Repaint with more definition, still allowing ground to show through. Reduce yellows to allow for yellowing in time. Dry.
- Add glazes, thickening or wiping out as necessary.

Painting on a Dark Ground

Used by Rembrandt, Velazquez and others for strong chiaroscuro effects. Ground is used for shadows, other areas overlying this have varying degrees of opaqueness.

Recommended steps

- Apply a priming of coloured glaze over white ground.
- Add drawing or sketch in main outlines as required.
- Underpaint in grisaille: model in tones ones only with frotties and glazes over the dark ground. Final underpainting may take several sessions and should be slightly lighter than eventual result to allow for darkening of final glazes.
- Add highlights in white. Dry
- Add coloured (generally multiple) glazes.

Classical Alla Prima

Essentially as painting on a toned or dark ground but simplifying matters by doing away with coloured glazes or restricting them to small areas in the painting stages.

Recommended steps:

- Over a pale-toned ground put a careful shaded brush sketch. Add shadows in two levels of glaze.
- Scumble in white highlights while still wet. Dry if necessary.
- Add colours as frotties or spread coloured glazes, which are then worked into with some white or body colour. Ground shows through.
- Rework previous applications with more body colour.
- Add limited finishing touches of thin body colour in medium.

Fa Presto

Resembles alla prima but there is no preliminary drawing and the paint is applied directly to the ground. Recommended steps:

- Over a lightly toned ground, paint in washes and frotties the broad areas of colour. Application is generally lean and may allow some of the ground to show through.
- Rework the application with a fatter medium and more body colour.
- Add finishing details. Steps can be left to dry, or completed in the one session.

Direct Painting

A style popular since the late 19th century where the paint is applied opaquely to completely cover the ground. Painting commonly proceeds by stages, with drying in between, but may be completed in the one session given the right skill and circumstances. White is used throughout, plus thin washes in the lower stages, but glazing is absent. Recommended steps:

- Sketch in charcoal. Brush away surplus and trace sketch in turps-thinned paint.
- Block in broad areas of colour with turps-thinned but opaque washes of colour. Rework these wet into wet with white or more colour as necessary. Dry if necessary.
- Paint with more subtlety and detail in a fatter medium. Previous stage may or may not show through.
- Add details in fine soft brush.

Glazing onto a White Ground

Here a stained-glass effect is achieved by applying coloured glazes upon a drawing with the minimum of body colour, the latter being necessary to recapture highlights, control the floating effect of glazes, and to simply make them look better. Recommended steps:

- Transfer a precise, delicate pencil drawing onto the white ground.
- Apply a guide to shading with faint coloured glaze. Dry.
- Apply overlapping coloured glazes, working wet into wet where necessary. Dry.
- Retouch shadows. Dry.
- Apply stronger-coloured glazes, oiling out previous surface if too dry to take new glaze. Dry.
- Add detail in finishing glazes, including white in thin glaze to areas where highlights have been lost.

Combined Underpainting and Glazing

Product of body colour applied in a free, painterly way and a subsequent application of precise detailed glazes. Underpainting is built up thickly in layers so that the ground is completely covered. Work proceeds by stages of trial and error, with layers being scraped back or removed (oiling out surfaces between layers helps). Gestation lengthy, 6-12 months perhaps being needed to finish the work. Recommended steps:

- Begin like a watercolour with few pencil lines and broad washes of turps-thinned paint. Dry.
- Lay in thin body colour. Dry.
- Lay in second thin body colour, accepting or overpainting first.
- Build up underpainting in a long, continuous process of trial and error, using the full range of painting techniques. Dry.
- Lay in glazes flatly and work wet into wet as necessary. Dry.
- Lay in thicker glazes, modifying where necessary.
- Add body colour to recapture areas glazed too heavily.

Encaustic

Employed wax, with or without resins. Pigment and wax may be applied cold, but heat is needed to drive in for finishing. Lasts well and was used for frescoes, etc.

General Maxims

Like any craftsmen, painters accumulate practical hints: here are just a few {5} :

- Talent is no more than persistence in recognizing and solving problems. Continual practice is essential.
- The crucial question is not how to paint but what. First decide what you want to paint and then how you'll do it.
- Start with an image in your mind and paint that.
- Ensure you put in every stroke as best you can, even in underpainting. Each stroke should follow naturally from the previous and lead on to the next. Think before applying paint.
- Work the whole picture at once.
- Experiment widely: even professionals must take risks if they're to maintain freshness.
- Decide where and how to focus attention.
- Aim to create a beautiful painting more than learn to paint.
- Work from large to small.
- Do everything as simply and economically as possible. If you can bring an element to completion quickly, do so.
- Grasp the importance and significance of what you see: developing that is more important than

technique.

- Practice and reflection are needed to understand what is taught.
- Crucial to painting is seeing, i.e. sustained concentration and unlearning many preconceptions.
- Don't paint what you see: understand what you're seeing and paint that.
- Paint from dark to light.
- Try to indicate form and texture of object by modifying brushstrokes.
- Highlights occur where a plane changes direction.
- Centre of interest is always in the light.
- Eye prefers warm colours to cold.
- Highlights should be shaped to lead eye as desired.
- Add touches of colour to where shadow meets light.
- Make areas lighter by making the area lighter or by making surrounding area darker.
- Treat similar areas similarly. Keep shadow areas and background similar in tone.
- Darks get lighter as they go further back.
- Darkest shadow is closest to light.
- Highlights on cold areas are warm, and vice-versa.
- Value is more difficult to control than hue. Keep the values simple, and plan.
- Third dimension is not only to be created by value: you should use colour temperature, edges and colour intensity.
- Keep shadows consistent for material - e.g. heavy cloth has darker shadows than thin.
- Edges can be hard or soft, and/or outside (pointing out from picture and indicating thickness of plane) or inside (pointing in.)
- Hard edges rivet attention. Use them for composition and to create depth.
- Use more colour and less white to make paint brighter.
- Use colour to unify and/or make something happen.
- Reserve most intense colours to areas in light.
- Warm colours advance, cold colour recede.
- Decide on one or two dominant colours: de-intensify others.
- Make blacks darker by adding warm colours. Make them lighter with cobalt blue or raw umber. Make them opaque with earth colours and translucent with cadmiums.
- You can't paint hues and values at the same time: they need separate brushstrokes.
- Chalkiness is muddiness that is lighter in value, and from same mistake: blending too many colours.

Art World (as seen form an unknown UK commentator)

Leaving aside art critics, journalists, galleries and curators, the main players in the art world are:

Commercial artists: the great majority, who work in graphic design, textiles, illustration, etc. Technique adequate to very good.

Establishment painters, including some 80 royal academicians in the UK and a few hundred much-commissioned artists. A select group who work through contacts in society and the establishment, plus the leading galleries. Traditional painting of moderate to very high skill.

Serious anti-traditionalists. Work in variety of styles and media, always very conscious of trends. Promoted by gallery-art critic-museum establishment. Skills very various, but always carried off with bravura. Some do very well for a decade or two, but risk of financial hardship when expectations change.

Trendies who catch and develop current fashions. Paint to make money. Skills very bad to good.

Teachers in art college and adult education establishments. Work in various styles of the avant-garde whenever duties allow the time. Some become independent in their forties, but most teach until retirement. Traditional skills usually well in advance of their pupils, but not sufficient to establish a real reputation.

Art course attendees. Painting usually restricted to course hours, and products not generally saleable. Skills poor to good. Awareness of trends and of past achievements rather limited.

Amateurs. Very variable group. Some earn several thousand a year turning out popular subjects. Most spend the odd weekend on presents for friends. Skills poor to good; usually traditional in approach.