

Introduction to Painting:

A Handbook for
Student Painters

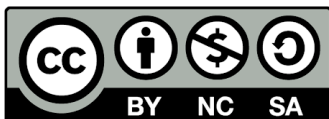


Cory Sellers MFA

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“If in your drawings you habitually disregard proportions, you become accustomed to the sight of distortion and lose critical ability. A person living in squalor eventually gets used to it.”

- Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit*

“Painting is easy when you don’t know how, but very difficult when you do.”

- Edgar Degas

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1. Painting Processes & Techniques

a. Oils - Traditional and Water Soluble

Traditional oil paint is a Non-aqueous paint, meaning turpentine or mineral spirits are used as a diluent, and not water. You cannot clean your materials with water and soap. Pigments are suspended in oil, usually linseed or other plant-based oils. They tend to have a slow-drying time, but this can be sped up by using different mediums.

Some of the first oil paints were used as early as the 12th century in Northern Europe. Artists were able to bring painting out of the dark ages through its use. Painters could paint with more detail which reached a new level of realism. Colors seemed more rich and vivid. New techniques were also used such as glazing, which is the use of layering thin translucent paints on top of one another to build up depth and modify colors in a painting letting the layer underneath show its brushstrokes.

A versatile quality of oil paints are the mediums and solvents that can be used in mixing. Changing the dry time, painters can use this to their advantage for their practice. Color can be easily blended with a slower dry time, and more details can be added quickly in different layers with a faster dry time.

The permanency of most oil paintings, when prepared properly, have a long archival life. Usually, when varnished, the varnish is what yellows, which can be cleaned, removed, re-applied, and restored. Keep in mind; each paint pigment has a permanence quality.

Water Soluble oil paints are a fairly new medium. Their development started in the late 1980's and early 90's and have come a long way. The main thing to think about is on a molecular level; these regular oil paints have been modified to let water penetrate the paint to be thinned and cleaned. This means although they are still oils, they are considered an aqueous paint where water is the diluent.

One does not need harmful or toxic solvents to paint with water soluble oils. This means no more turpentine. Water acts as a turpentine in the painting process. This is a lot safer for home studios and schools. Depending on the brand of the paint, there are a lot of mediums created just like traditional oils to help control the paint. The glazing process is also still possible.

a2. Lean to Fat & Alla Prima

Lean to Fat is an expression used in oil painting for the proper application of the medium. Painters start with a lean or thinned layer of paint. The lean, thin bottom layers are to dry before the next. This will reduce cracking and increase the life of the painting. The grisaille or underpainting (drawing) is usually more common with the first layers blocking in light and dark areas of the painting. As the painting process progresses, less solvent or thinner is used and more medium is added making the next layers more fat. The thick application of paint can be referred to as an impasto technique which can also have benefits in alla prima painting (one shot or wet into wet). Once an area is completely dry, any glazing may take place if desired. Glazing is a process of applying thin layers of Transparent or Semi-Transparent paint allowing the original brushstrokes to show through. This can change the temperature or mood of an area or the entire painting. One can also show an incredible amount of depth this way.

Alla prima is an Italian term meaning “at first attempt,” referring to the painting technique painting “wet into wet,” not letting the first layers dry. A lot of mixing can take place on the surface of the painting in this direct approach. While painting all prima, it is good to keep in mind the advantages of painting opaque paints on top of transparent to reduce muddiness. Painting light into dark can give one more of a crisp hard edge as dark into light can produce a softer edge. The all prima technique is a great way for a painter to loosen up and be more painterly. More times than not, students come in intimidated by oil paint. They tend to be timid and end up being too tight allowing for discouraging mistakes. A student painter as well as an established painter can use this technique to build confidence in applying paint and paint faster which can help in the drawing of the painting. Try an exercise by doing this with two to three simple objects and shoot for a 30-40-minute time restraint. You may love it; you may throw it out. The principle is the practice. Just have fun it.

b. Acrylic Paints

Acrylic paints are a relatively new medium compared to oil paints. They are synthetically made from plastic resins which tend to be fast drying. Acrylics were being developed in the 1920's and 1930's and were commercially available during the 50's as interior wall paint. Many reputable artists of the 40's and 50's turned to acrylics for the versatility and the capabilities of hard edge painting made easier. Acrylic paints are an aqueous paint meaning water is the diluent. This made clean up easy with soap and water and is not toxic like traditional oil paint. There are a number of mediums that can be mixed with acrylics to try to get them to act like oils. Even certain brands such as "Golden," carry a line of acrylic paints called their "Open" series that slow down the drying process.

c. Watercolor Paints

Watercolor painting can be dated back to cave painting where natural pigments were used to mix with water. In more modern-day watercolor pigments are mixed with water and gum Arabic and have a transparent or translucent quality. They became popular in Western painting in the late 18th century with the Romantic landscape painters. Gum Arabic is a natural gum consisting of hardened sap. This helps in the drying process and makes it a bit more archival.

d. Gouache Paints

Gouache paints became popular during the 18th century in France. Gouache paints are very similar to watercolors, but they have a white or chalky pigment added to make them opaque and less transparent. Gouache is usually a little more commercial and used in illustrative mediums or platforms. It dries with a very matte sheen.

e. Fresco Painting

Fresco painting became a well known process during the 13th century and perfected during the Renaissance, and mostly used for mural size works. Here, pigments are mixed with lime water and painted directly onto a freshly laid layer of damp plaster. The paints are then dried into the wall becoming one with the wall. Fresco painters must work fast depending on the air temperature and the humidity. Working in the mural size painters would often use a preliminary drawing called a cartoon with holes punched in the line work. They would then use a sort of pigment to push through the holes. This process is called pouncing. The cartoon is removed, and the drawing is somewhat transferred to the wall in the desired scale.

f. Tempera Painting (Egg Tempera)

Tempera painting is the technique used by painters from the Gothic era to the Early Renaissance. Tempera, or egg tempera, is a water-based medium mixed with egg yolk to act as a binder. It is a very fast drying medium, with a matte finish and was the choice of medium for many artists until fresco painting and oil paints became popular.

g. Encaustic Painting

Encaustic meaning, "to burn in, or fuse." Encaustic painting uses pigments mixed with a hot, melted wax and when dries, has a very matte finish. The encaustic technique can be dated back to the Greeks in the 5th century.

2. Painting Terms

a. Painting Terms to be familiar with

Alla Prima

To paint a picture in one sitting (wet into wet), particularly in oil-painting. It is the wisest method where impasto is to be used. The paintings often have a freshness of color, not always attained by more precisely planned methods.

Binder

The ingredient of a paint vehicle, its purpose being to hold the pigment particles together. It can also describe the gum that holds pastels, watercolor and inks. Etc. Linseed oil in oil paint.

Blending

A term concerned mostly with oils, acrylics, or alkyds. It implies the softening of hard edges between colors.

Cabinet pictures

An older name for smaller easel paintings.

Canvas tooth

The 'tooth' of the canvas describes the coarseness of the weave on the canvas surface.

Chiaroscuro

The contrasting use of light and shadow. Artists famous for their mastery of chiaroscuro include Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and other Baroque artists.

Cotton duck

A name for the type of textile used, the 'duck' comes from Dutch *doek*, which means cloth.

Diluent

Any liquid that will dilute or thin a substance, as opposed to dissolving it. Etc. paint thinner, turpentine, or water.

Fat paint

Paint that is loaded with a lot of medium such as linseed oil.

Gesso

Traditional oil gesso is a mixture of glue (usually rabbit skin) water, and chalk (calcium carbonate) used to create a flexible, yet absorbent surface for the oil paint to be applied onto. Contemporary acrylic gesso has a sizing agent ingredient.

Genre-Painting

Painting that depicts scenes of ordinary or everyday life.

Glaze

The term used for a thin, transparent layer of paint. Glazes are used on top of one another to build up depth and modify colors in a painting letting the layer underneath show its brushstrokes. A glaze must be completely dry before another is applied on top.

Grisaille

A type of monochrome painting laying out the groundwork for a planned-out painting. Also known as the drawing or underpainting.

Impasto technique

The use of paint applied in a thick manner.

Intensity

The degree of purity or brilliance of a color. Also known as chroma or saturation.

Lean paint

A paint layer or paint that has a reduced oil (fat) content. Usually more solvent is being used to thin the paint.

Lean to Fat

Means that each succeeding layer of paint should have more 'fat – oil' than the preceding layer. If you are painting in an indirect method (working in layers *rather* than all in one go – alla prima) you need to adhere to this rule to prevent cracking.

Mahl

A long wooden rod that is used by the painter to steady his hand when working on fine details.

Medium

The method in which an artist works; oil-painting, gouache, pastel, pen and ink, etching, collage, sculpture. In another sense medium may be used to describe an additive to the colors when painting, linseed to oil-paints, egg yolk to tempera, gum to watercolor.

Mixed media

One or more medium used in the same picture. Pastel and ink, pastel and watercolor, tempera, and watercolor, etc.

Modern painting

A term, which traditionally refers to works created after about 1860.

Opaque

A pigment that does not allow light through, as opposed to "*Transparent*" which lets light through.

Palette

An instrument used to carry or mix media. Also, a term used to define a certain use of color.

Pigment

This describes the raw material that all paints are made from. Natural or synthetic materials are finely ground and mixed with a liquid binder into a paste to make paint. The binder can sometimes be called a 'vehicle'.

Permanence

How permanent the paint will be overtime, for example, Permanent Alizarin Crimson is more resilient to changes in atmosphere, exposure to light etc, than standard Alizarin crimson.

Plein air

French for "Open air," painting in the landscape and out of the studio.

Representational

Results are closer to the actual subject matter. They can range from Photo-realistic to less realistic resulting Impressionistic.

Non-Representational

A form of abstract painting which contains no references or associations from the natural world.

Sfumato

Italian word for smoked. It is a method for graduation of tone and color and leaves a soft hazy effect. Leonardo used this to show depth and distance with the *Mona Lisa*.

Stretchers or Stretcher bars

The wooden frame that is used to stretch canvas when preparing it for painting. The four corners are mitered so wedges can be driven into them to increase the tension on the canvas.

Support

The surface on which the artist works. Can be wood, canvas, paper, wall, glass, etc.

Transparent

A pigment that allows light through. Opposite of opaque.

Trompe l'oeil

To trick the eye. Illusionistic painting that deceives the eye.

Underpainting

A term sometimes interchanged with the grisaille of a painting. The initial stage or first layer of an oil painting commonly executed using a monochrome or dead color as a base for the composition.

Varnishes

A final layer of protectant that usually deepens saturated colors. Can be made from a mix of linseed oil and damar varnish.

b. Basic design vocabulary

ELEMENTS OF ART: The visual components of form, line, shape, space, texture, value, and color.

Line Lines possess qualities of direction, division, thickness, and patterns of movement. Can be distinguished among directional, outline, contour, and implied line. Geometric lines can be fast, and organic lines can be slow. (Keep in mind, it can be argued that lines don't exist in painting, and only form against form exist.)

Shape An element of art that is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width. Geometric or Organic.

Form An element of art that is three-dimensional and encloses volume; includes height, width, AND depth (as in a cube, a sphere, a pyramid, or a cylinder). Form may also be free flowing or still, as well as geometric or organic.

Value The lightness or darkness of tones or colors. White is the lightest or has the least value; black is the darkest or has the most. The value halfway between these extremes is called middle gray.

Space An element of art by which positive and negative areas are defined or a sense of depth achieved in a work of art.

Texture Describes a work's ability to call forth tactile sensations and feelings. This can be described as Actual or Visual.

Rhythm Can be related or be looked at as texture for the repetition of certain sequence situations creating patterns.

Emphasis Something that is stressed or given significant importance within the composition. This can be subjective or objective and can be made in a number of ways.

Balance Can be in conversation with the elements of composition and whether it is complete as symmetrical or asymmetrical.

Color An element of art made up of three properties: hue, value, and intensity.

- Hue: name of color

- Value: hue's lightness and darkness (a color's value changes when white or black is added)
- Intensity: quality of brightness and purity (high intensity= color is strong and bright; low intensity= color is faint and dull)

3. Painting Surfaces & Supports

a. Surfaces, (canvas, linen, panel)

Cotton canvas began being made in ancient India around 1500 B.C. The word canvas comes from the Latin word, "cannabis," which means "made from hemp." Through the production of cotton and hemp plants and trade, cotton canvas spread through Europe around the 8th century.

Canvas was used for many different reasons, not just painting. It was used as backdrops, sails, shoes, clothing, and had many other purposes. Canvas came into use for painting mostly for availability and the ease of transportation. It was a lot easier to travel with a large rolled up painting rather than an enormous, heavy wood panel.

Cotton Canvas duck refers to a more heavy-duty product with a tighter weave compared to a standard canvas that will not last as long. Duck comes from the Dutch word, doek, which means "cloth."

When purchasing canvas duck, you will see a variety of different products including single and double filled canvas. Double filled canvas comes in different weights usually from a #12 (12 oz), #10 (15 oz), and a #8 (18 oz).

Single filled canvas is a lighter canvas, more student grade, at 7 oz. This is usually more economical and has a medium texture.

Army duck, comes from the use of Dutch sailors and other uses, but usually has a small tooth and is very smooth, coming in at about 10 oz. Great for portraiture and realism.

Early canvas was actually Linen canvas made from a flax plant grown in Europe. These are incredibly strong and have a great archival life. Linen tends to stretch less than cotton canvas, so it does not expand and contract as much. Linen canvas is a higher quality material which makes it more expensive, but also comes in a variety of weave.

Nowadays, canvas is also made from synthetic raw materials such as viscose fiber and polyester.

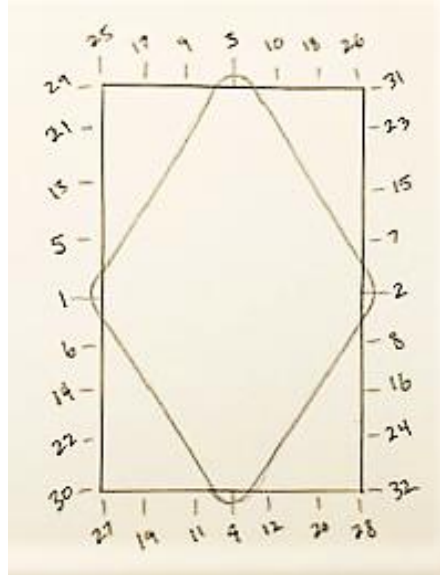
Painting on panel is what was most popular before canvas was being used. Panels were made from hard woods or even metals. Metals that were commonly used were silver, tin, lead, or zinc.

b. Stretcher bars and stretching

Stretcher bars are the framework on which a painter will stretch canvas. These can be bought from almost any art supply store or can be made by the artist. If bought, they are engineered with interlocking miter joints to be easily put together. Stretcher bar keys can also be inserted into the corners that stretch out the corners to increase the tension of the surface. This comes in handy especially down the road with the changing of humidity and expanding and contracting of materials. In store, stretcher bars also come in a variety, ranging from light to heavy duty with increasing thickness mostly used for larger surfaces.

As mentioned before, stretcher bars can be made by the artist as well with the use of ripped wood strips. The larger the wood the more sturdy it will be. How sturdy it is can also be determined by the bracing used. How much bracing needed will be determined on the length of the stretcher bars being used.

Follow the steps in the illustration while stretching canvas onto the stretcher bars. You will want to start in the middle of each stretcher bar going back and forth working from opposite sides going around the canvas until reaching the corners. You will then want to fold a 45-degree fold underneath one side and then fold down smoothly to keep the back of the painting flat.



c. Prepping

The priming of the canvas is a very important step to take in the process of prepping the surface to start painting. "Gesso," comes from the Italian word "chalk." Gesso was originally used by mixing chalk with pigment and animal skin glue, often rabbit skin glue. The animal skin glue is a sizing agent that seals the surface. This is an important step so the oils in the medium do not penetrate the surface which would eventually deteriorate the surface of cotton canvas or wood. Cotton canvas more so.

Modern day acrylic gesso uses a white pigment and chalky mix suspended in an acrylic resin which acts as a sizing agent. This creates a nonabsorbent surface. So, it is not exactly like traditional gesso.

It is recommended to apply 2-4 coats of gesso onto your surface and sanding the surface after the coats are dry, before applying the next coat. Through experience, the painter will know how many coats are sufficient for their work. Most portrait artists like to have a smooth surface, so many coats and a lot of sanding works better for them. Some portraitists will put anywhere from 7-10 coats of gesso on the surface if they feel it is necessary. Maybe abstract expressionists painting on a large scale might not be worried about how smooth they can get the surface and would like to have more texture with less coats of gesso.

4. Pigments – Color and Transparencies

Color elements

- Hue: name of color or pigment
- Value: hue's lightness and darkness (a color's value changes when white or black is added)
- Intensity or saturation: quality of brightness and purity (high intensity= color is strong and bright or more saturated; low intensity= color is faint and dull or less saturated) Grey has zero saturation.

Every color has certain temperature. For instance, French Ultramarine Blue has a little red in it. It is a warm blue compared to Cerulean Blue which is cooler. Think of color as either warmer or cooler than the color it is next to.

Listed below are descriptions for both traditional and water-soluble oils from Winsor Newton. Winton (W) is the student quality line for traditional oils and Artisan (A) is the water-soluble line. You will see that the water-soluble paints are very comparable. Hues of a certain pigment such as Cad Red do not contain actual cadmium. They have replaced them with only safe pigments that look like the cadmium pigment and are usually Semi-Transparent instead of Opaque. I have included 18 different basic pigments.

*In 2020, Winton offers 55 different pigments, and Artisan offers 40 different pigments.

Lemon Yellow – Developed in the 1900's by the Germans.

A – Permanent – Semi-Transparent

Lemon Hue – Resembling that of a genuine lemon

W – Permanent - Opaque

Cadmium Yellow Light – A bright yellow with great tinting properties.

A – Permanent – Opaque

W – Permanent - Opaque

Cadmium Yellow Hue – A warm yellow not made with the harmful cadmium chemical but other pigments to recreate Cad Yellow.

A – Permanent – Semi-Transparent
W-

Cadmium Red Light – A red with orange undertones that has great intensity.

A – Permanent – Opaque
W – Permanent - Opaque

Cadmium Red Hue – A non-cadmium pigment that is kind of a mid-range red.

A – Permanent – Semi-Transparent
W – Permanent - Opaque

Alizarin Crimson – A highly transparent pigment with blue undertones. Developed in 1994.

A- Permanent – Transparent
W – Permanent - Transparent

Cerulean Blue – Developed in 1805 with green undertones.

A – Extremely Permanent – Semi Opaque
W – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

Cerulean Blue Hue – Not as toxic as Cerulean Blue, bright with green undertones.

A- Extremely Permanent – Semi-Opaque
W – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

French Ultramarine – Created by a French Chemist in 1828 as a synthetic but chemically identical alternative to the expensive Lapis Lazuli.

A – Permanent – Transparent
W - Permanent – Transparent

Yellow Ochre – A warm yellow color. Originally made from natural iron oxides found in the earth. It is one of the oldest pigments. Synthetics were available in the 1920's.

A – Extremely Permanent – Opaque
W – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

Raw Sienna – A bright brown pigment. Can be found in prehistoric art. Named after Sienna, Italy where it was used in the Renaissance.

A – Extremely Permanent – Transparent
W – Extremely Permanent – Transparent

Burnt Sienna – Like the Raw Sienna but heated longer with red-brown tones.

A – Extremely Permanent – Transparent

W – Extremely Permanent – Transparent

Raw Umber – Made from rich clays in the earth. Named after the town of Umbria, Italy where it was originally mined.

A – Extremely Permanent – Transparent

W- Extremely Permanent – Transparent

Burnt Umber – Like the Raw Umber but heated longer.

A - Extremely Permanent - Transparent

W - Extremely Permanent – Opaque

Ivory Black – Has brown and blue undertones. Traditional made from roasting elephant tusks.

A – Extremely Permanent - Opaque

W – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

Lamp Black – Made from pure carbon, originally from soot of burnt lamp oil lamps. Tends to have cool blue greys.

A – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

W – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

Titanium White – The most opaque white pigment. Made with modified safflower oil.

A – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

W – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

Zinc White – An opaque white based with zinc pigments. Along with Flake White these have been known to yellow more than Titanium White when mixed with certain mediums.

A – Extremely Permanent – Opaque

W - Extremely Permanent – Opaque

5. Palettes

Historical & Limited

A palette is what a painter uses to hold pigments and medium to mix and load their brush as they are working on a painting. This even goes back to Egyptian times where they would use a palette to mix paint and/or face makeup. They had designated areas or recessed areas to mix certain pigments. Pictured is an Egyptian decorative palette dedicated to King Narmer, and a more modern wooden painter's palette.



Modern day palettes can be made from a number of materials. They can be made from wood, metal, glass, you can even buy disposal paper palettes that come in a pad, like a sketchbook. A glass palette is a very popular choice for painters for its durability, life span, and cleanliness. One can use a razorblade to clean their palette at the end of the painting session. You can purchase a piece of glass from your local hardware store and they can cut it to your desired dimensions. Be sure to reinforce the glass with some sort of backing and tape the edges for safety.

The Zorn Palette

The Zorn palette is a limited palette which was used by the Swedish Impressionist painter, Anders Zorn. It consists of four opaque pigments. Ivory Black, Titanium White, Yellow Ochre, and Cadmium Red (Originally Vermillion). If Cadmium Red Hue is used, you will have a Semi-Transparent pigment to weaken or strengthen your palette. It has been argued that he had to have used a blue to achieve some of the greens he was able to achieve. I am sure over the span of his career he used a blue here and there in his paintings.

You will see, by completing a Zorn palette chart, that one can achieve a beautiful range of colors by using just these four pigments. A wide range of flesh tones can be used by mixing Cad Red, Yellow Ochre, Titanium white and can even cool it down with a little bit of Ivory black. Nice earth tones are also available instead of using a Burnt Umber. And you can also benefit from using Ivory Black, Yellow Ochre, and different amounts of Titanium white to get different greens.

This palette is a great example of seeing color temperatures against one another. By placing a warm red next to a green, the green will appear more green than next to a saturated black. Also, you can achieve a nice grey blue by mixing Ivory Black and placing a warm earth tone next to it.

Rembrandt's Palette

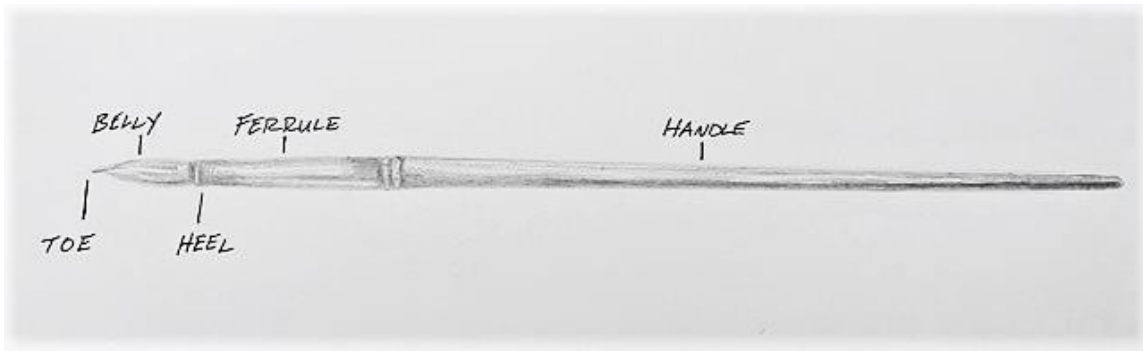
Rembrandt is arguably the greatest 17th century Dutch painter working during the Baroque period. He had a wide variety of subject matter and his portraits are some of the strongest ever painted. His use of light and dark (Chiaroscuro) was masterful and influenced many painters to come. He used this effect to create depth within the painting and figure.

A modern Rembrandt palette is dominated by earth tones including Burnt Sienna, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Umber, a white, a black, and some sort of Cad Red Deep. He would often mix ground up charcoal with his whites to create greyish blue. Rembrandt would often work on a greyish brown ground that seemed to get darker with his age.

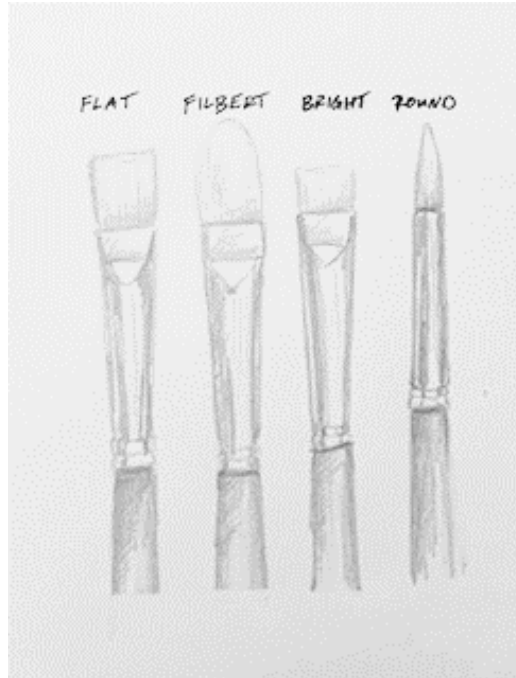
6. Brush Chart and Other Tools

a. Brushes

As one would imagine, there are many types of brushes that all have different duties. The basic parts of a brush are pictured in the illustration below. The Toe, Belly, Heel, Ferrule, and Handle. The use of a long handle is most beneficial to beginning artists trying to stay more painterly.



Listed below are four types of brushes that should be with every student painter. They are a Flat, Filbert, Bright, and a Round brush. All have different qualities, can perform different tasks, and come in different sizes. Using the right brush for the right job can help alleviate some frustrations in painting.



A Flat brush is just what the name suggests. The bristles are usually wide and not very thick. A Flat brush can be versatile in the sense of being able to lay down a broad stroke as well as using the toe for a narrow edge. A Flat brush is also able to hold a lot of paint compared to others. A worn-down Flat usually will turn into somewhat of a Filbert after a lot of use.

A Filbert brush is a thin flat brush that has a rounded edge and is a favorite to many painters. It also can hold a lot of paint and can produce a broad stroke. The Filbert can produce a nice, tapered stroke by using the edge and varying pressure and/or turning of the wrist in stroke. A worn-down Filbert can turn into a Cat Tongue brush (Not pictured) or even a Bright after years of use.

A Bright brush can be thought of having similarities of a Flat brush but more stiff. Think of a brush with short stiff bristles that pushes paint more so than laying it down exposing the white of a surface leaving it more bright. These can create a different effect and useful to some when using an impasto technique and dabbing.

A Round brush is probably the most traditional of all the brushes. The ferrule is round, and the bristles come to a point. Just like all brushes this comes in many sizes. Large round brushes are great for spreading a lot of paint around and small thin Round brushes are great and much needed for any tiny, detailed work. All brush sizes vary from brand to brand.

There are many different types of bristles as well. Like the shape of the type of brush, the bristles also have different functions. Some of the varieties of bristles include natural animal hairs and synthetic. Some brushes will even have a natural and synthetic blend. A good inexpensive student grade oil brush recommended is a brush made from Chungking Hog hair. The bristles come from a hog from the Chungking area of China.

The most expensive of the brushes will include the red sable or kolinsky sable brushes. The bristles come from the tail of a male kolinsky weasel. Although, the Round sable brush is most popular especially for the detailed work it can provide, one can get a red sable in most types of brushes.

Full synthetic and synthetic blends are in production and can be used for both oils and acrylics. Full synthetics have a softness that is preferred by many acrylic painters because they have the ability to lay down the consistency of acrylic paints. Be sure to use the brushes specified for each medium to improve the life of the brush.

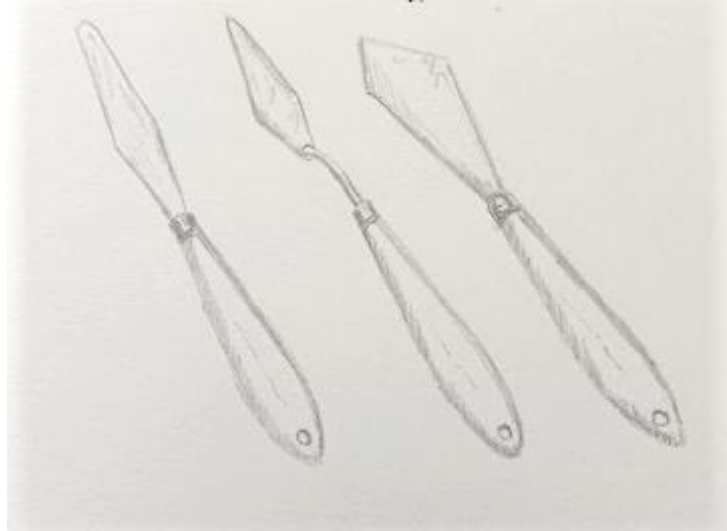
b. Knives

The artist's palette knife can be a very useful tool to have around the easel. There are many different shapes and sizes. A straight mixing knife will make it easier to mix a large quantity of paint without having to clean a brush. It will save a lot of time just wiping the knife clean. Other knives have different angles to perform different duties such as spreading paint on your painting or cleaning your palette. You might find it as an interesting exercise to complete an entire painting using just a palette knife.

Mixing

-->

Painting



In the end palette knives are very versatile. You can use any knife for any job if you find it useful. You can find cheap plastic knives, or steel knives with a wooden handle with a longer life span.

7. Recommended Reading

- *Vitamin P* – New perspectives in Painting. (Yearly Editions), Phaidon
- *Blue and Yellow don't make Green*, Michael Wilcox
- *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques*, Ralph Mayer
- *Art Students League of New York on Painting*, JAMES MCELHINNEY
- *The Art Spirit*, Robert Henri
- *Hawthorne on Painting*, Dover Publications

- *New Art City*, JED PEARL
- *Painting; Documents of Contemporary Art*, Edited by Terry Myers, Whitechapel Gallery
- *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger
- *Art/Work*, Heather Darcy Bhandari, Jonathan Melber
- *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings* Stiles, Kristine & Selz, Peter
- *How to be an Artist*, Jerry Saltz
- *The Natural Way to Draw*, Nicolaides

8. Supply List

Painting I, II

****This list is just a general supply list for students to think about as the semester progresses.**

- Palette – traditional, taped glass (duct tape with backing), old cookie sheet, wood, plastic, or disposable pad.
- Oil Paint (Water Soluble) – Windsor Newton Artisan or Cobra recommended.

Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Yellow Ochre, Cad Yellow, Cad Red, Alizarin Crimson, French Ultramarine Blue, Cerulean Blue, Titanium White, Ivory Black. Other colors may be used at a later date for different palettes.

** Underlined pigments will be used at the beginning of the semester.

- Artisan Mediums to think about -Oil Painting Medium, Linseed Oil, Oil Painting Thinner.

**Try to stay away from the Fast-Drying Medium.

- Brushes for oil— assortment of sizes, round, flat, filbert Somewhere between 2-12.

- Stretcher Bars – At least one set; no larger than 18” x 24”, and no smaller than 14” x 18.”

- Canvas – Some will be provided. Get your own if you can. Between 7-10oz

- Gesso – Even if you are using store bought canvas, you will want to apply a coat of gesso.

- Rags – Old t-shirts or dish rags

- Medium Containers. (Tuna can, Old baby food jars etc.)

- Sketchbook

- Palette knives

- Pencils/charcoal-erasers

(Optional)

- Brush Cleaner, preserving soap/Dawn

- Staple gun – staples

- Blue painter’s tape

- Medium to fine sandpaper

- Supply box / toolbox

9. Tips, Reminders, & Takeaways

- Look at paintings. To be a painter one must see what is out there in the field. You can gain a lot of knowledge just by looking. You can see how something is made. An electrician doesn't just say "I'm going to be an electrician," without having prior knowledge and training on how wires are ran. They will look at plans and see in the field how and what wires are ran where. Even Masters where once amateurs.
- Don't set your bar too high at the beginning. You are learning a new medium in which some study and invest their whole life to. With some rules in mind learn through experimentation and discovery.
- Paint and draw with confidence. Start with a thin oil sketch. This is your underpainting, or some may call it the grisaille of the painting. You can get this to dry rather fast so you can apply the next layer quickly. The use of Raw and Burnt Sienna can be beneficial here with their fast dry time also.
- After you have your underpainting complete, you have your roadmap. You don't have to follow it to a "T," but it's there for you if you want. It all depends on how much you want to include and if it makes sense to you. You will figure out how much you need or want from your map the more times you do it. Now, you need to think about layering and the rule of "Lean to Fat." Thin or lean washes followed by more thick and the use of mediums with your paint.
- Gesso > Acrylic > Oil. Never Acrylic on top of Oils. They will not adhere, and you will instantly see discouraging situations such as, paint separating, peeling, and or cracking.
- Get comfortable – Part of becoming confident is becoming comfortable with the easel and materials. Although, you might find it more comfortable to sit while painting, you will benefit more from standing at the easel while painting. You are more mobile, and you can view your work at a distance easier.

- Take care of your tools. If you do not clean your brushes regularly, you find the life of them will become much shorter. Your tools are an investment. Properly dispose of waste. Rinse and or throw painting rags in the proper disposal bins and dispose of painting waste/sludge in the proper manner.
- Know your pigments. You will benefit greatly by knowing the opaqueness of each pigment. For instance, unless trying to mix on the surface, an opaque paint will cover a transparent and a transparent paint will mix if applied on top of an opaque which could be beneficial if painting Alla Prima. Also be aware of temperature. Each color is only cooler or warmer than the color next to it. Cool colors recede and warm colors advance.
- While painting alla prima, remember; without excessive pressure, painting light values into dark can give one a hard edge, and painting dark values into light can give one a soft edge. Make each brush mark purposeful.
- Start with a limited palette. By limiting your palette from the start, for example the “Zorn Palette,” the chance of becoming overwhelmed is reduced rather than increased by a large range palette with not a lot of experience.
- The best way to practice is to paint from observation This can include a simple still life of only one or two objects. You have to take in account the drawing of those objects. The color of those objects, and the light in use hitting those objects.
- Repeat it. Practice makes perfect. You have to know your subject. Lucian Freud studied his subjects almost obsessing with great intensity knowing the ins and outs. It is encouraged to paint many small studies even after the start of a painting. Small studies give you the chance to experiment with techniques without investing too much in time or cost of materials.
- Keep things simple. Think of everything made of light and dark values.

- In painting, try to say as much as you can with as little information painted. Knowing when to stop or what to leave out can be one of the hardest things a painter does. When you are painting highlights on a bottle or a reflective surface, do not try to paint every little highlight you see. This will become fumbled and harsh. Paint only enough highlights (information) to make it look convincing.

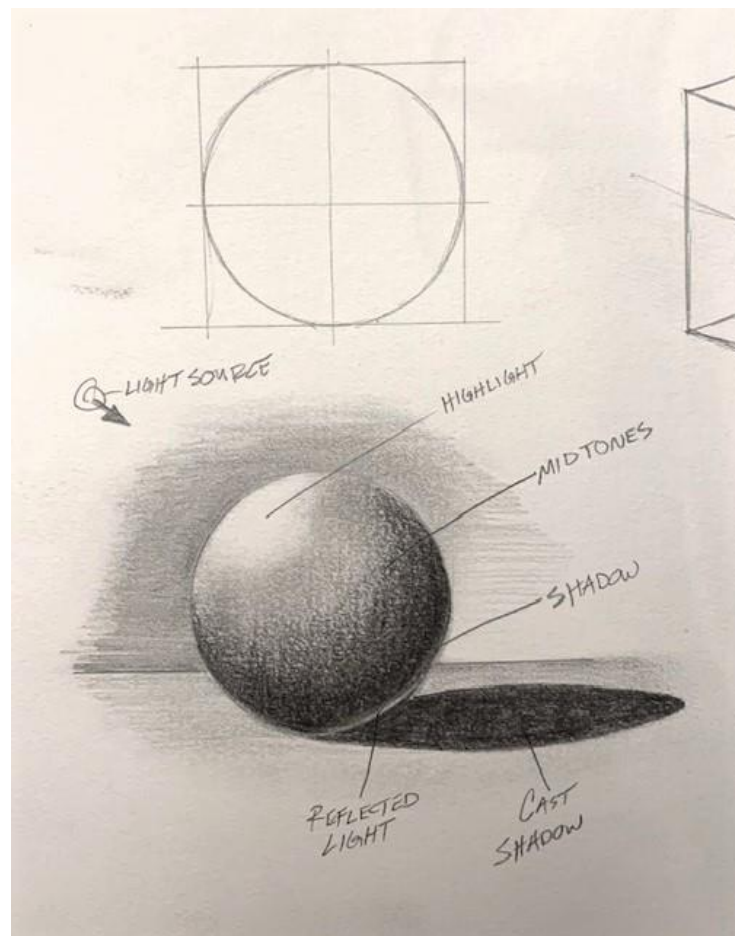
10. Value Scale

As mentioned, when laying out a painting; one can think of it in terms of it all being light and dark. As the picture progresses, drawing or painting, the full range of the value scale might be desirable if appropriate for the work. More times than not, it is. Nonetheless, it can be argued that it adds to the complexity of a work. Pictured here, is a student's exercise using a nine-value scale. You will see a mid-tone with four values above and below the mid-tone. Another vertical stripe is used, using the mid-tone. You will see a simple theory is proven correct here as we see the mid-tone appear to be lighter as its surroundings get darker in value and just the opposite happens as the mid-tone appears to be darker as its surroundings get lighter in value. These are things to consider when laying out a painting that will have a variety of value changes.



Value Pictured with a Sphere

The picture below shows a full range of value put in use to properly insert value for a sphere. Note the light source, highlight, mid-tones, shadow, cast shadow, and reflected light. The reflected light is usually missed by beginning level students, but its there. This drawing of a sphere is the closest it will be to a painting without adding paint. Meaning no lines exist here. It shows form against form (value against value), creating the picture. This thinking and use of value can be put forth to any form in painting.



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