

Oil painting medium Part 2

Colour Mixing 2446

The types of paints mediums and colours available to the figure painter today is considerable, and many makes come in such a large range it more or less eliminates the task of colour mixing simply because you can buy all the colours needed for a project. You can of course take full advantage of this but the downside is that you will need a considerable number of colours to achieve your goal. (nothing wrong with that either) Even so regardless of which paint medium you choose and the number of colours in your pallet there will always be a time when you will need to mix paint in order to achieve a desired shade or tint suitable for your particular project. It is therefore prudent to have some basic knowledge of colour theory and it is not that difficult to understand the basics

Understanding colour theory and how colours work

Don't let the word 'theory' intimidate you. An understanding of the basics of colour theory and the colour wheel is essential for every figure painters and can increase the possibilities for your work. Colours are, after all, one of the basic tools of painting Colour theory encompasses a multitude of definitions, concepts and applications in fact all the information would fill several encyclopaedias. But when it comes to colour related to our hobby we need only to familiarise ourselves with the basics.

The Colour Spectrum



A very useful sliding colour wheel, which visually demonstrates how to mix colour and includes a Grey scale and illustrated colour relationships is available from www.artsupplies.co.uk. This gadget is an invaluable learning tool, and at only £2.75 worth every penny.

The Colour Wheel:

This presents a logical arranged sequence of pure colours based on Red Yellow and Blue which collectively are known as the primary colours and in theory it is possible to mix any colour just using these three.



PRIMARY COLORS: Red, Yellow and Blue In traditional color theory, these are the 3 pigment colours that can not be mixed or formed by any combination of other colours.



SECONDRY COLORS: Green, Orange and Purple are made by mixing the Primary colours.



TERTIARY COLORS Yellow-orange, Red-orange, Red-purple, Blue-purple, Blue-green and Yellow-green. These are the colours formed by mixing one primary and one secondary colour

Just for interest, if the colour wheel is spun like a top all the colours are canceled out and the wheel turns white.

Black and White: When natural light is split into the spectrum (see above) it has no black or white and they are viewed as not being colours. Which in my opinion is tantamount to saying Souron is 'pussy cat' but that's what the theory says ????

Complementary Colour: Are those that are opposite each other on the colour wheel, so Yellow complements Blue, Red complements Green and so on. By mixing a small amount of the complementary colour into your chosen colour will darken it. This is a very handy technique to understand because using black alone to darken colours gives colours that are flat and uninteresting.

Harmonies: Colour harmonies are those that are next to each other on the colour wheel. The harmonies of Red are Orange and Purple and so on. Harmonious colours blend together well because they are naturally adjacent colours.

Discords: A discord is extreme contrast colours. These are very handy when you require a strong contrasting colour to stand out.

Monochromatic: These are tints and shades of a single colour. A figure dressed all in green uses monochromatic colours lights and darks are far more interesting than a single green.

Colour Mixing:

You may have noticed in these tutorials how I dislike 'rules' but with colour mixing I have to make just one. Always mix a dark colour into a light one in small amounts until the desired colour is achieved. If you do this the other way around you will quite possibly end up with a mountain of useless Ork type goo. > Well, I did!!!!

Once you are familiar with the basic theory it is possible to make any colour you like from the just the primaries. Regrettably to fully understand colour mixing is not so simple even professionally trained artists can struggle with details of colour and colour mixing. So for us, just the basics are more that adequate to get us on the right track.

To extend your colours and give brightness and shade colours need to be mixed correctly and in the right proportions. In the following notes I will explain the mixes using artist oil colours as the medium, but the colours are just the same if you use either acrylic or enamels. It has to be said that practice is the key to success and when you are successful write down the recipe in a note book. I have had a notebook for well over twenty years and I refer to it regularly .

Tint and Shade:

These terms simply refer to lighter colour or darker colour. If you darken a colour it is viewed as a 'Shade' and if you lighten a colour it is a 'Tint'.

Mixing Guide:

With a little knowledge of colour mixing, it is quite possible to cut down on the number of colour pigments held in your pallet. Here are some examples of simple colour mixes, which you should experiment with.

- Adding a little Red to Lemon Yellow can produce a whole range of yellows. As you add more red the mix will eventually turn Orange
- Mixing Lemon Yellow with any of the Blues can make some very clear greens. Add the blue to the yellow not the other way around.
- To make dull-greens, mix Yellow Ochre with any of the Blues. You will find that each blue gives a different range.
- Yellow can be made darker by mixing it with Yellow Ochre, but it will no longer be really a true yellow
- Black turns yellow into a dirty green

- Burnt Umber is a rich dark brown lighten with Yellow Ochre and White. For a darker brown add black.
- By mixing any of the Reds with Yellow Ochre will produce a series of dull oranges, and adjusted by adding a little Green gives a Khaki shade.
- Yellow Ochre can be deepened with burnt sienna and a touch of black.
- Adding a touch of Alizarin and White can make a bright Yellow.
- Burnt Ochre This ochre when mixed with any of the Blues will produce a series of warm neutral red/grays. If a little Titanium White is added to this mixture, fine terracotta pink will result.
- Cerulean Blue mixed with any of the Yellows will give a range of agreeable greens.
- Cerulean Blue mixed with Red will give a range of attractive neutral colours.
- Ultramarine Blue (also known as French Blue) mixed with any of the yellows, oranges and Umber colours will produce a range of murky muddy greens.
- A mixture of Light Red and Ultramarine will give a very pleasing and warm grey.
- To produce a fine Purple, mix Crimson and Ultramarine together.
- Monastral Blue mixed with any of the Yellows, and the Browns, produces unusual Dark Greens.
- The darker Khaki shades can be obtained from the above combination by adjusting the amount of Yellow in the mixture.
- Cobalt Violet mixed with varying amounts of Titanium White will give a whole range of warm violets.
- Monastral Violet mixed with Monastral Blue will, produce a very useful indigo.
- Viridian mixed with Lemon Yellow or the Cadmium Yellows, will produce a range of brilliant warm toned greens.
- For a pale green, take white and add a touch of Phthalo green. If it isn't the right shade, add a pinpoint of cobalt, Phthalo or ultramarine blue, whichever gives you the desired effect; if it isn't bright enough add a touch of yellow
- Raw Umber mixed with any of the Blues will give a series of dull dark g Greens.

The list is almost endless, and the reader is strongly advised to experiment with various colours. The only way to begin to understand colour, is to experiment with it, and to record every step of the way for future reference.

Difficult Colours - Red:

Red is a difficult colour to work with because you cannot make a light red by adding white, all you get is pink. Which is good for the Witch King's evening suit but very little to boot, and if you just add black a murky dark brown appears. Probably better for the Witch King but not really useful to us. So we need some sneaky trickery.

Let's say you need a very dark red. Take the darkest you have - alizarin crimson - add a little blue, green, and black. By "little" I mean that all you do is add just a touch of these colours add more till you get the shade required. You will see that when highlighted with a little white no pink will develop.

On the other hand if you need a light Red add Lemon Yellow. This will eventually turn Orange so be careful. If you get this light Red mix correct highlights can be achieved by using a small amount of white which will be a peach colour rather than pink.

If you require an intense really rich red use Alizarin + Cadmium Red + Orange and adjust the richness with one of the Yellow's.

Using black and white properly:

To the figure painter using black and white added to the colours described above will in most cases give a reasonable result and I still do from time to time, but the colours tend to look dull or chalky. Try adding a little red, blue, or green to make your black warmer, or cooler, and to take away that flat, papery appearance it has when applied to a large area. A black garment is not truly black all over; it has lights, shadows, and reflections that break it into many different shades. Too much white in any colour makes it what I call "chalky," a fully descriptive expression, because such colours do appear to have been smeared with white chalk.

Try mixing Ultramarine with Burnt umber to give a fantastic dark colour that can be warm by add more umber or cool by add more ultramarine.

Mix Complementary Colours to make darks. Mix Cadmium Red with Pthalo Green to get a colour that is very near to Black, but twice as interesting. Add White to get a beautiful grey. Or try mixing Ultramarine with Burnt Umber to give a fantastic warm dark colour or cool by add more ultramarine.

Make your own Colour Records.

Keeping track of your colour recipes is a bit daunting unless you have a very good memory, which counts me out! Personally I have a note book which contains among other things contains colour mixes. For a novice there is another way, which will give a visual reference along with text. To make this handy tool you will need some A5 card and a ring binder or a notebook. To record your colour mixes give each card a

title of subject such as 'Greens, Cool Blues or Dark Colour then the recipes, followed by a 'painted' visual reference of the tints and shades that can be made from the basic mix. *Note: Colours are only examples not true representations*

Greens:

Viridian + Lemon Yellow or the Cadmium Yellows, will produce a range of warm toned greens.

Viridian + Lemon Yellow



Dark Colour

Mix Cadmium Red with Pthalo Green to get a colour that is very near to Black, add white to get a nice gray.

Cadmium Red + Pthalo Green



Add white = Gray



As your colour mixing knowledge develops it won't be long before a card is full, with many variations of colour some good and others not so good. Spending an hour or so experimenting with colour is time well spent and can be a very rewarding exercise in its own right.

Hints and Tips:

Try not to Use more than three colours in a mixture:

The more pigments you mix together, the muddier your colours will become. To keep your mixes looking fresh and clean use just two colours

Use Complementary Colours Side-by-side:

Complementary colours are 'opposite' colours. For example, the opposite of red is green; the opposite of blue is orange. Place two opposite colours next to each other on your figure and the eye will perceive both colours as more intense. Don't just think of this phenomenon in terms of bright, primary colours; try it in subtle tints and shades.

Excessive amounts of oil in the paint:

Colour coming out of the tube along with runny oil is a common problem. When this happens either soak up the oil with a tissue or squeeze out a little more until the oil stops then start again. I will be coming back to this in part three.

Red:

Dark greens are by far the best way to darken red:

Conclusion:

If you have got this far! 'Congratulations' have yourself an ale and a pipe of Long Bottom leaf'. Colour theory and colour mixing is a complex subject but it is a worthwhile study. I suppose its like learning to drive a car or use a computer for the first time. At first all seems to be disorder and confusion but as the training progresses it all clicks into place and a new skill is learned.

One closing thought: To quote from the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "Artists and designers have been studying the effects of colours for centuries and have developed a multitude of theories on the uses of colour. The number and variety of these theories demonstrates that no universally accepted rules apply; the perception of colour depends on individual experience. Which basically means that if it 'looks good to you' who is going to argue?"

Introduction to part 3

Here I will explain the techniques and procedures needed to paint successfully with artist's oils. I appreciate that the modern trend is to use acrylic paints and in some cases working with oils can be a bit daunting. Hopefully after you have read part 2 you will become a little more comfortable with the medium.

Links:

If you are looking for an online art supplies shop then try this one. Most of what you need to paint figures can be found here, and the site is very user friendly.

Ken Bromley Art Supplies

Artists Materials on Line Shop: www.artsupplies.co.uk

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Curzon Road,
Bolton,
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