

How to...

FREE
information

Paint In Oil Colour

Introduction

The history of oil painting goes back to prehistoric times when man endeavoured to capture his world and experiences in paint.

In modern times, oil colour is one of the most popular choices of expression by artists worldwide, because it offers great variety & technique, strong depth of colour vibrancy and permanence that enable paintings to last thousands of years.

It is also one of the most forgiving mediums – the paint can be easily manipulated on the canvas and if you make a mistake you can always wipe the colour off the canvas (with a cloth dipped in turpentine), due to the length of drying time.

The extraordinary flexibility of oil colour lends itself perfectly to the traditional painting techniques of blending and glazing, impasto and scumbling on a multitude of surfaces, giving the artist excellent results.

Getting started

To begin painting in oil colour, you need three simple things;

- Some good beginners' materials
- A subject to paint
- A basic technique

Equipment Needed

A beginner's palette of oil colours could consist of the following colours:

- Cadmium Lemon Hue
 - Cadmium Yellow Hue
 - Cadmium Red Hue
 - Permanent Rose
 - Permanent Alizarin Crimson
 - French Ultramarine
 - Phthalo Blue
 - Viridian Hue
 - Raw Umber
 - Yellow Ochre
 - Burnt Sienna
 - Titanium White
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- Brushes
 - Surface to paint on – paper / canvas



Additional Supplies

- Palette
- Palette knife – to mix paint and for application of oils straight onto canvas. Can also be used for moving the paint around the surface.
- Charcoal – for drawing an outline of the subject before you begin to paint.
- Easel
- Overall
- Cloth

Choosing a palette of colours

The main practice is to maintain a broad palette of about twelve colours and add to it for specific requirements.

Once you have this initial palette, the next stage is to find suitable brushes and surfaces.

Which Brushes?

Fine Hog brushes have corrosion resistant ferrules. The natural curve of the bristle is utilised to retain the shape and point for fine detailed work.

Most beginners need four brushes to start painting in oils.

Brush Type

A large or medium sized FLAT brush Nos. 6 (medium), 10 or 12 (large)

A medium sized ROUND brush No.6

A small sized ROUND brush No.2

Which Surface?

Paper

Oil Colour Paper has a traditional canvas textured surface which is specifically designed for use with oils and acrylics. With a specially formulated primer applied during the sizing process it has the right degree of absorbency for oil application.

Canvas

Stretched canvas has been the most common support for oils since the 17th century. The weave of the cloth combined with the spring of the stretched material are the features that maintain its popularity.

Canvas Board

Canvas boards have traditionally been used for sketching outdoors. Boards take up less room and are less easily damaged than stretched canvases.

Other surfaces

Often artists like to use alternative surfaces rather than canvases and papers. Oil can be applied to MDF, wooden furniture & panels, glass, hardboard, walls and plaster. When painting on an unconventional surface it is important to ensure the surface is prepared properly with a suitable primer.

Brush Use

For large areas of colour. The tip can also be used for thin narrow lines. Also useful for blending and manipulating the colour around the canvas.

For broad areas of colour. Also good for scumbling and dabbing on small patches of colour.

For fine detail and highlighting

What to paint – Finding a Subject

Many artists find it difficult to be inspired by the ordinary everyday things. However, true artists can turn the very ordinary object into something special by simply looking at it creatively. You do not have to travel to find the perfect view or the ideal image – simply look around and decide what you want to paint and PAINT it.

Painting an Oil Colour Landscape

Landscapes are arguably the easiest for beginners and the following basic technique can be applied. The general principles that apply when painting a landscape are your view and the ariel perspective. Colours become less vivid the further away they are and as objects recede their tones become paler and less contrasted.



Ensure you set out a horizon, middle and foreground within your landscape as shown in the diagram above.

Painting Composition

Paint the first layer of colour thinly for each part of the painting. i.e. The sky, the mountains, the trees etc. Allow it to become tacky or touch dry.

Put a second coat of colour on top of the first coat but add the light and shade – making the picture become three-dimensional. The second paint layer should add more depth to the subjects in your picture.

Using the small round brush, paint in the detail of the subject i.e. the fine branches on trees or the jagged edges on rocks. Or if you have a building in the painting then the chimney pots, window frames etc.

Finish the painting off with highlights on the edges of subjects. For example, a fine touch of Titanium White on top of a mountain where snow has landed or on the edge of rooftops where the sunlight catches.

Oil Painting techniques

Which technique to use for creating effects?

Whilst developing your own painting style you could try one or all of these techniques in a single painting, or simply choose one depending on the effect you want to achieve. Alternatively you can paint without using any of them, the choice is yours.

Fat over Lean (or flexible over less flexible) – Recommended for landscapes

The method of oil painting in which each layer of paint is more flexible than the ones underneath. Adding more medium to the colour in each layer achieves greater flexibility per layer.

Thick over Thin – Recommended for still life and portraits

The method of adding thick layers of paint on top of a thin background layer to produce a 3D effect.

Wet into Wet – Recommended for botanical painting

The process of adding fresh colour into existing still wet layers. The technique can be used to bring great immediacy and interest to the image. It can also be used as a technique for blending, and can be accomplished with the colour in virtually any state of viscosity (thickness), from thick and stiff to fluid.

Glazing – Recommended for seascapes

A technique that builds up layers of transparent or semi-transparent colours over dry underlayers. The effect is one of great depth and spatial atmosphere. It is a lengthy technique, but the effects in oil are unmatched when compared with other media.

Impasto – Recommended for contemporary art

This is a painting method where the colour is applied stiff and thick leaving brush and knife marks as a central element in painting. An impasto surface can be dynamic and powerful. For thick impasto, build the texture in several layers, allowing each to dry before applying the next.

Scumbling

With a stiff brush, work a thin film of opaque or semi-opaque colour loosely over your painting, allowing colour from the layer below to show through. The effect is highly atmospheric.

S'graffito

This is a technique of scraping into a wet oil film, usually with the handle end of a brush, or a painting knife. It is an expressive effect, and is also effective for defining outlines.

Hints and Tips

It is useful to follow some helpful hints as listed below:

Constantly refer to the subject you are painting and to your work of art.

Start painting from the top left (or top right if you are left handed) of the surface – this will save your shirt sleeves from picking up paint and avoid accidental smudging.

Experiment with different brushes and/or palette knives when applying the paint to the surface.

Look out for light and shadow and highlight with light colours and dark tones.

Paint loose; don't get hung up on accuracy. Remember it is a painting not reality.

Be patient with drying times. Oil can take between three and six months to dry to finally varnish and frame.

These are just some of the oil painting techniques used by artists worldwide. There are many styles that can be adopted using oils such as Impressionism and Abstract.

Give yourself time to develop your own style and try as many techniques as possible to find which one suits your creativity.

Finally, read any books and magazines on oil colour or watch television programmes which feature oil painting.

The important thing is that you enjoy it and are proud of your work of art.

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