

Tip #128

Using a Limited Palette

So what, exactly, does using a limited palette mean, and why would you want to do that, given the hundreds of gorgeous, tempting pigments there are, these days?

It means whatever you want it to, of course! You can use a monochromatic color scheme and just go for a value range to help you see (and simplify) better. You can use colors closely related on the color wheel (remember analogous colors, those adjacent to one another?), or you can choose only the primaries – either as close to pure as paint can get, or muted.

And *why*? Lots of reasons. Creating a mood, cutting expenses, making your plein air or travel kit lighter – and as mentioned, helping to simplify what you're painting. We can get *lost* in that brilliant forest of color!

128-1



One of my favorite reasons to use a limited palette is to keep it light, and to learn how to mix pretty much any color I need. I was happy to find that Quinacridone Red (Or Quin Rose, or Permanent Rose), Phthalo Blue, and a nice clear yellow would do almost anything I wanted. A tiny touch of red will give you a more ultramarine cast to your blue. A bit of yellow in that same red will warm it to a Cadmium feeling – more will give you orange, and still more yellow leans to yellow-orange. It's fun!

(It's also easy to make mud if you try to use too many colors, or you can create a spotty, camo-looking paintings with too many colors in them.)

128-2

"Keep it simple" works!



128-3

For my small muted-primaries set, I usually use Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet (or Burnt Sienna, or Indian Red), Indigo or Indanthrone Blue, and Quinacridone Gold or Raw Sienna. It's an entirely different effect, but very atmospheric! Handy for quick sketches like this one, too ... not so much hunting for "the perfect brick color"!

128-4

I've also found that if I'm using a waterbrush, with its very limited water supply, I'm more likely to end up with mud if I have too many colors – just too hard to clean the brush between pigments! And yep, that's all the brush holds -- water's precious!



128-5

You can see some limited-palette images in my Etsy shop – for instance, this one called "Not Today – Snow" at <https://www.etsy.com/listing/115243399/not-today-snow-print-of-original>. It was mostly subdued primaries plus opaque white for the falling snow.

Check out all my YouTube videos for lots more art tutorials, [youtube.com/user/KateJosTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/KateJosTube).

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