

Tip #64

More Exploring your Pigments

I'll admit there's a lot to know about pigments, and color theory and all - whole books have been written on the subject! We'll keep it relatively simple, though - that's why this is art *tips*, not art *book*. This should be plenty to get you started, or to act as a refresher for you old hands out there.

Good art supply stores, like Daniel Smith (<http://danielsmith.com>) have color charts in their catalogs and online. There, they tell you all sorts of useful information, like how transparent a color is, if it granulates or not, if it's lightfast, staining, or whatever. But there's no substitute for making your OWN show-and-tell demos to keep on file in your studio. Learning, hands on, is fun, interesting, plus it stays with you!

Art 64-1, Staining colors

You can get interesting effects with staining and non-staining colors ... but you need to know which are which. Some colors lift easily, allowing you to come close to regaining white paper, others sink into your paper.



Art 64-2, Making semi-opaque watercolors work for you!

Some watercolorists avoid the more opaque colors, but I find them quite useful in some situations-where I want a small bit of color in an otherwise dark or drab spot where a transparent pigment would just disappear, or when I want to add a soft glaze of fog. So, you need to know which colors are transparent and which are semi-opaque. Make a stripe of black-India ink is best-and allow it to dry, then paint over it with a strong, saturated stroke of each of your colors. You may be surprised at the result!



Art 64-3, Granulation

Some colors are ground from minerals or earths, and tend to granulate or separate more readily. That can be a very interesting and atmospheric effect, as you can see in these clouds. In this case, ultramarine blue was used as the granulating color, but manganese blue hue and others will also give lovely effects. Some of the new mineral (Primatek) colors from Daniel Smith will granulate nicely, and Winsor & Newton even makes a granulating agent to add to other colors!

Art 64-3



Art 64-4, Test drive your colors

I often suggest that people REALLY get to know your colors, particularly if there's one that is giving you trouble. Usually that color is green, but recently one of my students asked about the difficulty of getting a variety of reds, including darks.

It helps to start out with a red of a deeper value, of course-Cadmium Red Light wouldn't be the best choice, but Alizarin Crimson, if mixed fairly strong, would be.

Then, try out a variety of mixes, with complementary colors (greens), blues to cool and deepen, even a Payne's Gray to just add a bit of depth.



Art 64-4



There is much, much more on the basics on my new CD, *Watercolor Basics*, from pigments to paper and brushes to washes and more -- available in my Café Press store, http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson, and on my website, <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/cdfolder/cd-2.html>.

© Copyright Cathy Johnson Graphics/Fine Arts, All Rights Reserved
Website: <http://www.cathyjohnson.info>, Email: graphicart@epsi.net