

Tip #82

Pigment, Paint and Color

You may think of these three terms as interchangeable, and many artists who write the how-to of art seem to use them that way. Technically, though, the terms mean different things. In working on my new book for North Light - an updated version of *Watercolor Tricks and Techniques* I originally did 20 years ago - I decided I needed to clarify just what is meant by these familiar words.

Pigments (and dyes, which appear in some liquid watercolors) are what go to make up your paints, whether they be watercolors, acrylics, or oils. What makes a tube (or pan) of watercolor a different animal from a tube of oil paint are the binders and other ingredients with which the pigment is combined.

82-1, *I'd just gotten a tube of Daniel Smith's Natural Sleeping Beauty Turquoise paint and it seemed the perfect illustration for this tip, since most of us are familiar with the gemstone - it's recognizable in all its forms and makes a lovely color when ground into paint.*

PIGMENTS

Pigments are finely ground raw materials which can be made into usable paints with the addition of a binder like gum arabic, honey or sugar, plasticisers, humectants and other ingredients.

Pigments don't dissolve in water-they're in suspension in the additives that help them disperse in liquid and adhere to your paper. (Think of silt particles suspended in a muddy river to picture this suspension.)

Pigments are organic or inorganic, and may be further classified as natural or synthetic. Both types are useful to the artist and essential to some of us.

PAINTS

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Art 82-1

Note: Pigment designations can be found on most tubes of paint and on manufacturers' charts. Look for the name and identifying pigment code (e.g. "Pigment: Cobalt Blue, PB28" which stands for Pigment Blue #28). All brands use the same code for specific pigments, even though the paint names may vary by brand.

82-2. Here, you can see one of my travel palettes, full of some of the most versatile paints - it's an old metal Prang box, re-fitted with full pans in some of my favorite colors.



Art 82-2

COLORS

I may refer to "your colors," meaning the watercolors you've chosen for your palette, but in the context of terminology, the word usually refers to the color itself - red, yellow, green, blue, purple, etc. Learning how to handle those colors, and which mix well with others, is the subject for another tip, though!

I'm delighted with the response to my newest how-to CDs for artists in the new slide-show format! Find them on my CafePress store, http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson, or on my website, <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/books.html>.

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