

Tip #90

Make your own tiny travel watercolor kit



I thought we'd take a break from talking about artists' blogs, since it's travel and vacation time for so many, and explore making your own small travel kit! It's easy, quick, inexpensive and fun.

There have been lots of versions of the Altoids* box watercolor kit - and here's one more that really works for me. (And of course any tin box you rescue from the trash bin can work for you. Keep your eyes -- and your options -- open!)

The nice thing is that you CAN so easily customize to fit the way you like to work. I don't try to have a dozen or so half-pan colors, because I don't like working with tiny half pans that only allow me to use a small brush -- I'd rather keep things simple and lightweight, and challenge myself to mix the shades I need!

I've painted for so long that it just seems like a Real Watercolor Box should be black on the outside, like the early Winsor & Newtons, and white on the inside for judging color mixtures, so I used spray enamel paint to make it so. Some artists use appliance paint or epoxy paint for durability. (I really need the white for mixing, but the outside could stay whatever it started! Might be kind of fun, if you find a neat old tin box.)

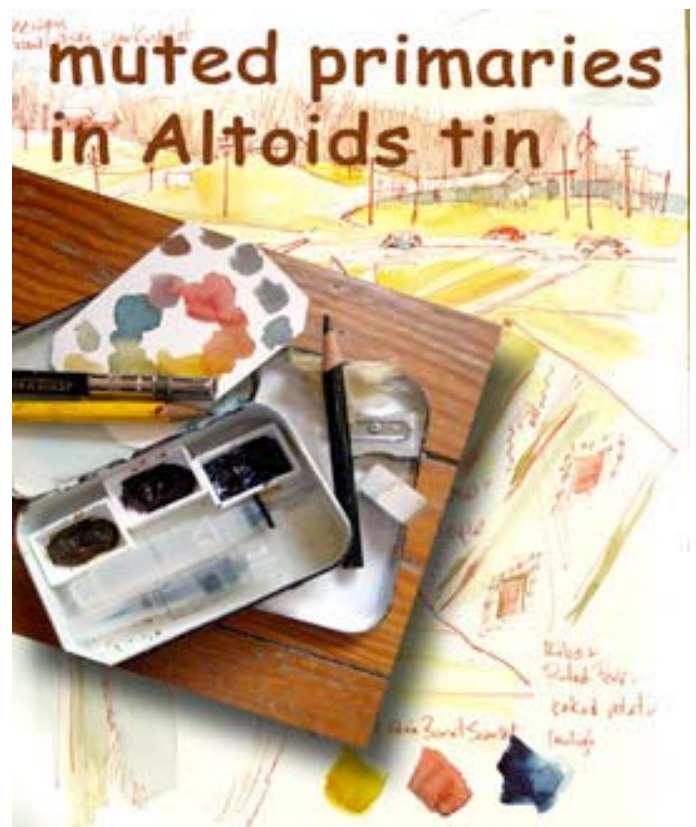
I buy empty full pans online, usually from <http://danielsmith.com/> or <http://www.jerrysartarama.com/> - they're quite inexpensive. (You can buy half pans both places, too, if you prefer -- or make your own wells with polymer clay!)

You can fit 3 pans across in two rows, if you like; in the muted primaries set I just use three colors.

I stick my pans in with rubber cement, which holds them firmly in place but will allow you to switch them out easily if you decide one color or another isn't working for you. It seems to be simpler than magnets or heavy-duty glue

Art 90-1, Muted Primaries Tin

I usually go for the muted primaries, like this box, currently holding Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet, Indigo, and Yellow Ochre ... it's versatile, but subdued...



Art 90-2, Complete Altoids Tin



...or try the brighter primaries with just a couple of convenience colors, like this little box, which is my favorite-it usually goes everywhere with me!

For now, I've settled on Transparent Yellow, Quinacridone Red, Phthalo blue, with Payne's Gray and Burnt Sienna for convenience. You can see I'm also trying out a small pan of cobalt, to give me a range of blues for mixing.

I felt the need for extra mixing areas, so I cannibalized two more lids from extra Altoids tins -- they come off easily, and then friction-fit on the bottom of my little watercolor box. They pull right off when it's time to mix my washes.

For a key to the rest of the supplies visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/cathy-johnson/3570602981/>.

Art 90-3, Antique Cigarette Box Paint Set



I made a much more complex box from an antique cigarette box I found on eBay - I need to tweak the process a bit more before sharing, though! I was inspired by the terrific Dr. Sketch set, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/drsketch/sets/72157600044286742/>.

Art 90-4, Sucrets

And since I already had some leftover half pans of watercolors from a Winsor & Newton set I retrofitted with full pans, I made a tiny glove-box set from a white plastic Sucrets box and a tiny folding travel watercolor brush - that way I ALWAYS have my paints!

* I'm just sorry Altoids started embossing their name on the top of their tin! Doesn't work as well as a mixing area ... so although it sort of defeats the lovely idea of recycling, you CAN buy similar tins, online, in a number of places. Here's a handy one, though their smallest order seems to be for 12: <http://www.sks-bottle.com/340c/fin7b.html>. You can sometimes find the empty tins on Amazon or eBay, too, so if you don't have a supply of small, hinged-lid tins, look around!

Please feel free to visit my original blog, <http://katequicksilvr.livejournal.com/>, or my new gallery blog at <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/>!

