

COLOUR MASTER CLASS

INTRO

DI

Welcome to colour master class. You <pointing> paint fantastic paintings. We are going to be even better after this evening! We will be using the rainbow and the colour wheel. Along the way we'll look at home some Old Masters used colour. We'll look at paintings by Turner, Monet, Rembrandt and Reubens.

. By 9.30, you will have a better idea how colours interact and therefore be able to mix them more easily, you will have learnt 4 important principles

- We are going to put the WOW factor into your paintings with complimentary colours
- You will find out what makes colours harmonious with analogous colours.
- We'll solve the puzzle – why a colour like yellow can be both warm and cool.
- You will understand why distant hills are usually blue or purple
- I'll show you how to make a colour map for any painting using tracing paper. This is a brand new technique and it has cut the time it takes me to paint a picture by half. I love it!!

We will start with the basics and explain everything as we go along. Please ask questions and throw in your comments. If you have brought some art materials with you can use them to make your own colour scheme after the break and we have spare crayons for those that haven't.

Let's begin at the beginning with the rainbow. Do you remember the colours of the rainbow? Look at the strips with the rainbow colours on it. [Show rainbow strip]

Isaac Newton bent light through a prism in 1665 and discovered the spectrum. He also studied the relationships between the colours and he developed the colour wheel diagram to explain them. It is based on the colours of the rainbow bent into a circle.

An artists' colour wheel has three primary colours red blue and yellow which theoretically can be used to mix any other colour. Our pigments are not as pure as light so we usually need more than just three colours. Colours mixed from two primary colours are called secondary colours. Here is an example for a traditional colour wheel with three primary colours and three secondary colours. Of course it is just a diagram and there is no real division between colours, they actually blend into each other.

We'll now look at four important principles of colour:-

Complimentary Colours – opposites on the colour wheel,

Analogous Colours – next to each other on the colour wheel,

Warm and Cool Colours –their position in relation to each other on the colour wheel

Aerial Perspective –using your rainbow strip to create the illusion of distance

1 COMPLIMENTARY COLOURS

When we look at a beautiful painting there is often a colour in it that makes us think Wow! Often they are the brightest red, orange or yellow, because our eye is drawn to warm sunny colours. However there is usually a second colour nearby that we haven't noticed – the complimentary colour. Colours that are opposite to each other on the colour wheel are called complimentary colours: red and green, blue and orange yellow and purple and so on. Wow colours come in pairs! Notice that I said near to, not next to, because colours look brighter when separated by a neutral colour.

Let's look at Turner's painting The Fighting Temeraire. This painting definitely has the wow factor! Can you see the pair of complimentary colours? The orange and blue is separated by a strip of neutral grey. Orange sunsets and blue seas, red poppies with green leave are common subjects with complimentary colours used by artists. Your paintings will have the WOW factor when you use pairs of complimentary colours.

2 ANALOGOUS COLOURS

Analogous colours are colours which are adjacent to each other on the colour wheel. A painting can include both analogous and complimentary colours. Sunset scenes often include reds, oranges and purples which are next to each other on the colour wheel. Colours that are next to each other are called analogous colours. Monet used purples blues and greens in this example of his water-lilies. They create a harmonious background for the pink flowers. Use primary and secondary colours next to each other on the colour wheel and that part of your painting will be harmonious.

3 COLOUR TEMPERATURE

Does the colour wheel show us colour temperature - which colours are warmest and which are the coolest? Different people have different ideas about which is the warmest and which is the coolest colour. You tell me what you think.....

I find it easiest to remember the hottest colour as being the orange-red of fire and the coolest as being the blue-green of the sea. Pairs of colours can be compared according to their relationship on the colour wheel.

Yellow is warmer than green because it is nearer to the hottest colour. However it is cooler than orange because it is nearer the coolest. So yellow is warm or cool according to its context. Violet is cooler than red because is nearer the coolest spot

on the colour wheel which is green/blue. However it is warmer than blue because it is nearer to the red-orange hotspot.

When we talk about a warm red and a cool red we are talking about an orange red and a purple red. We call a greenish blue a cool blue and a purplish blue a warm blue. So talking about warm and cool colours requires us to know where they are on the colour wheel.

Rembrandt uses warm and cool colours in this self-portrait. The warm reds and oranges are used for the important parts of the face and the cool blue mixes for the shadow areas. There is a rule of thumb that says “warm colours cool shadows, cool colours warm shadows”. However don’t follow it slavishly. Reflected colours break this rule. Only the other day I noticed a blue carpet throwing blue shadows on a white door while, at the same time, brown shadows were reflected from the wall on the same door.

4 AERIAL PERSPECTIVE

There is a way of suggesting distance in a landscape painting using colour. It’s called aerial perspective. We need the rainbow strip for this. Hold the strip with the red nearest to you. This is your handy guide to aerial perspective. Use warmer reds and oranges for things in the foreground and cooler blues and purples for things in the background. This is why distant hills are usually pale blue or purple.

Reubens uses this for his landscape called Chateau de Steer. The layers of colours appear to recede through the use of tone, size and colour. The warmer more reds and oranges are in the foreground, the fields in the middle are yellow and the distant hills are pale blue and purple. Once again it’s just a rule of thumb and intensity of colour can also suggest distance.

COLOUR MAPS AND COLOUR SCHEMES

We have used a simple colour wheel to explain four principles of colour. We are now going to move on to the advanced stuff! How can the colour wheel help us to choose colours for a painting?

Last year I really struggled to find the best colour for the background to this painting (May Day). I tried greens, blues, purples and nothing looked right. As you can see I ended up with sludgy colours. How much easier it would have been if I had known which colours to use before I began. This year I have used a technique that I told you about at the beginning. It needs a colour wheel with more colours in it so here is one that I created with Inktense and watercolour pencils. As the colours get nearer to the centre they take on more and more of the complimentary colour. By the time that they blend in the centre, they become a sludgy brown. I have used cross-hatching so that you can see moiré clearly what happens when colours are blended together. It’s not so easy to show grey white and back as real mixes because our pigments do not behave like light, but in theory, they are there in the centre. Bear in mind that mixing

complimentary colours cancel each other out to produce grey. **These neutrals are very important for making your colours stand out. Using the brighter colours without neutrals confuses the eye. Include the neutrals and the brighter colours have much more impact.**

I suggest that you create one with your own colours at home. I learnt a lot about individual colours while preparing these wheels for you. While researching colour earlier in the year I found out more about the colour wheel and about the spectrum. I also discovered a technique using a piece of tracing paper and the colour wheel that helps an artist isolate a range of colours to use in a painting. I found this in a book called "Colour and Light: a guide for the realist painter" by an American artist and illustrator called James Gurney published two years ago. This summer I have been using it and I have brought those that I have made for you to see this evening.

Why am I suggesting that you use choose your colours before starting your painting? Have you noticed how much longer it takes you to shop for the ingredients for a special meal but have no idea what you going to make? Instead of wandering around the shop, it's much quicker to pick up a recipe card and buy those ingredients listed.

It's the same with a painting. If you mask off a selection of colours on the colour wheel, it makes choosing and mixing colours so much easier. You know that certain colours are going to be prominent – they are likely to be the ones in the corners of your shape. You can also see at a glance other supporting colours. Just like picking up a Jamie Oliver recipe card or going to the Indian food section. You don't have to think so hard. When you come to create your colour scheme, you are combining the selected colours – mixing from a limited palette has long been used by artists.

Firstly I'll tell you briefly how the technique works. Then I'll demonstrate using one. After that you can try it yourself! There are three stages to the process.

1. First mask a standard colour wheel.
2. Secondly paint some of those colours onto a circle shape.
3. Thirdly mix the colours and paint rectangles of the main colours that you would like to use for the painting.

Take the masking sheet with the cut-outs and try each shape in turn over the colour wheel, looking for a range of colours that would suit your reference. At home you can experiment with different shapes.

- You might use the diamond shape if you wanted two complimentary colours as the most important.
- I like to have strong contrasts in my work so when I use a triangle, I try to include some of the neutrals in the centre because they will show off the more intense colours.

- The four-sided shape potentially allows you to use more of the colour, but in that case I advise using fewer colours, in other words, a limited palette.

Leave the masking sheet in position and mix your wow colour. What's your wow colour? This is colour number 1. It's the most attractive colour in the photograph and it will be a one of the tips of your shape. Paint it in the correct position on your blank colour wheel and also paint a rectangle of the colour on the right-hand side. I like to add a note of the names of the colours that I have used.

Now look at the colours near to it on your shape. Pick one that you could use for your painting. This is colour number 2. Being near to your wow colour means that you can use the wow colour as your starting point for the mix. You will know how to mix number 2 colour by seeing where it is on the colour wheel. If it nearer to yellow, you will need to add yellow to your number 1 colour. When you have mixed it to your satisfaction, paint it in position on your previously blank wheel and another rectangle on the right-hand side.

This process is repeated until you have enough rectangles on the right-hand side and a selection of the colours of your shape. I like to include some neutral greys and browns in my colour schemes, but you might like to experiment with alternative colours. This is your colour scheme and colour map. Here are some that I did for my exhibition paintings. They saved me time choosing colours and they were very useful when I re-started the painting after a break of several days.

STEP-BY STEP DEMONSTRATION

Colours were added to a blank colour wheel and rectangles of mixes from some of the colours in the colour map were added on the right-hand side.



MEMBERS' WORKSHOP

Now we come to the practical workshop. You can try the exercises on the worksheets then do the colour map and scheme using your own photograph. Watercolourists may prefer to use pieces of watercolour paper for their colour map

and colour scheme. I have extra sheets of watercolour paper and reference material here.

CONCLUSION

Here are two versions of the same scene painted with different colour schemes. You can change the mood by selecting alternative colours. We hope that you have enjoyed this evening.

When you are at home, paint a colour wheel using your own paints. Then you try the masking sheet with it for one of your paintings that you have already done.

Bring your colour wheels to the next demonstration meeting and we'll compare notes. I want to know how you got on! I hope that you enjoyed this evening.

COLOUR MASTER CLASS © Di Alexander 2012

<http://www.oldenglandfineart.com>