

Kate began asking how many know the term 'Tempera.' This is the American term for Gouache and not to be confused with Egg Tempera. She showed us a picture she began 5 years ago during her last demo for the club, where she built up layers of gouache. Preferring to cover some of her gouache paintings with varnish, fixative or wax to protect it rather than glass.

For this time demo she had drawn up a tree scene with foliage, a stream and rocks. Traced through chalk onto an acrylic red background on watercolour paper. She works from photos taken and tries to capture in black and white, tonal values en plain air, while the light is static. She mixed white and ultramarine for a first coat quite thin, known as 'staining', to block in colour. At home she will often start a painting, go away and come back for a fresh view. Kate was open, sharing personal details about her son's wedding, dancing etc as she painted. Talked about 'Layering' on non porous surfaces, when you get bubbling that can offer welcome texture.

Kate has painted since childhood from the age of being able to hold a pencil, went to Canterbury College to study Graphic Design but really wanted to change to Fine Art. Graphic Design taught her all about composition which she feels is key. Her Grandmother bought paintings with influence from Bauhaus, Scottish Colourists and the Glasgow Boys, which has been formative in Kate's approach.

She talked extensively about different gouache pigments (notes attached) and Gum Arabic to thicken texture giving flexibility and sheen. This offers the same characteristics of 'Open' acrylics and watercolour. Light colours dry darker while dark colours dry lighter. Gouache will mix with watercolours and with acrylic paints and can be applied with brush, pallet knife or rubber brush (colour shaper) each implement moves colour differently. When mixing light colours, add colour pigment to white rather than white to colour. The work was not completed - she estimates it would take her around 15 hours to do so. Instead she brought in a smaller version of the same picture completed earlier.

Kate belongs to Artist 303, A303 Painters and is exhibiting in Shaftesbury in May.

Art Demo for Wareham Art Society

Gouache on paper

I've drawn and painted since small: studied Graphic Design at Canterbury. I concentrated on becoming a fine artist, plus some design work of home accessories, brooches and cards. I have exhibited and sold my work over a number of years. My influences are Scottish Colourists and the Bauhaus. As a colourist I often use strong hues within the composition.

Gouache paint is composed of a mixture of colour pigment, water and a binding agent usually gum Arabic or dextrin. Although it is similar to watercolour, gouache contains more pigment making it a heavier paint with a thicker texture. Its matt finish makes it ideal for opaque methods of painting. Gouache is a medium that expresses characteristics of watercolour and acrylic. Gouache can be used for quick concepts and studies to final full paintings. It's been used in film and animation industries for decades for layouts, concepts and backgrounds.

You can layer it light to dark, or dark to light and unlike watercolour, you can paint in whites instead of masking them off. It is affordable with a small number of colours required. Dilute with water before applying to a surface as it is quite dense. Gouache's drying tricks: it dries quickly, with lighter colours tending to dry darker and darker colours drying lighter - so it does need plenty of practice.

Brushes - basically watercolour brushes either natural or synthetic - a variety of shapes and sizes, the shape of brush isn't so important. Keep your brushes wet as you work to help spread the gouache and keep it workable.

Paints - Like acrylics, there are lots of pigments available. Use straight from a tube or mix on a palette. It can be watered down to look like watercolour or be applied opaque like acrylics.

Staining - a base is needed to work from and can be done by staining: covering the area with watered down colour. Using a wet brush and even strokes, you will quickly have a foundation ready to build on.

Opaque layers - used to hide layers underneath. Gouache can be used roughly to give texture. After applying the staining base, cover with opaque paint. Not much water is needed to add to the paint while moving it around.

Softening edges - gouache can be reworked hours + days staying workable almost indefinitely. To create a gradient between strokes, load up the brush with water and apply it to the already dry gouache. Pull one pigment into the other to blend & push from side to side to achieve a good blend.

Dry brushing - layering colour to create texture. Load brush with semi-wet gouache. Brush it out a bit, emptying brush until about 30% is left. Use quick strokes lightly across the surface. The paper texture and brush create a ragged effect.

Blurred brushstrokes - similar to scumbling. Use brush and pigment to mix colours on the paper. This offers a looser look in colour and texture - be careful not to over work or it begins to look muddy.

Blooms - gouache can be watered down to use like watercolour. Blooms can be used in the base layer.

History of Gouache - Gouache is actually both a technique and a product. The technique, dating to before the Renaissance, refers to the use of white to achieve opacity in water based colours. Originally used for illuminating manuscripts, it was Paul Sandby in the 18th century who first used the painting technique extensively and later, the Pre-Raphaelites. Opaque techniques were further popularised by the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists in their use of pastel, lithography and wood cuts. Gouache, the product, was a result of this interest in both opaque and water based products.

Gouache is used by designers & illustrators for the ease of use, brilliance, quick drying and matt finish. The opaque matt finish makes more accurate reproduction at artwork stage as it minimises reflections. Fine artists use gouache in conjunction with water colour or on its own: its brilliance and opacity give it solidity, so is excellent for abstract work and details. Strong effects also result from the contrast of working on coloured backgrounds which are left partly exposed. Calligraphers use gouache because of its excellent flow, opacity and permanence. The high pigmentation and gum arabic base make it a common choice with professional marblers.

Gouache is a very versatile paint which can make a wash like a water colour, blend like an oil colour and dry brush like acrylic. It can be used thinly for a wash at the start of a painting then applied in thicker layers towards the end. Due to its opaque nature it can be applied in solid colours, allowing application in layers from dark to light. Some bleeding can occur and the staining properties are indicated by some brands on their colour chart. It is a direct and quick drying paint with superb covering power which is achieved by the high levels of pigmentation rather than using fillers or opacifiers. Unlike transparent water colour, where you need to plan and reserve the white of the paper, gouache is more controllable and enables you to remove mistakes and re-paint.

If you are using watercolour, gouache could add an extra dimension.

It's an ideal paint for oil-painters who would like to use an opaque paint that is quick drying and easy to transport with no solvents or oils. It is designed to be used more thickly than traditional watercolours and the paint is generally applied in a solid film of colour. If you apply the paint too thick, the painting may crack off, especially if the colours have a high percentage of chalk. The colours can be thinned with water and made to soak into the paper, so good for underpainting.

Gouache paintings are often done on coloured paper or board helping to unify the painting.

It can be used to create paintings with solid areas of colour or with layers. Light colours can be painted over dark once it has dried, (though may bleed through over time). Water colour papers are recommended for the widest variety of techniques and to ensure long term stability. Designers tend to use illustration board or hot pressed watercolour paper for a flat finish which reproduces well. Gouache can be mixed with acrylics though there is a tendency for some colours to alter or to become lumpy or glutinous.

Pigments

Pigments come from many different places, some are natural products - notably the earths (umbers, Ochre's etc); some are from metal compounds and are often referred to as 'traditional' or 'genuine' (cadmiums, cobalt's, titanium) and there is an ever growing range of organic pigments available as a result of the distillation of petrol, often termed modern.

When buying gouache there are single pigment colours as well as mixed colours. It is difficult if not impossible to consistently mix some colours by hand and time consuming. Mixed colours ensure the widest spectrum without compromising brilliance and opacity.

Gouache Properties

Permanence

AA and A rated colours are recommended as permanent for fine artists. Some of the brighter, Designers' Gouache colours are only available as B or C rated. For some colours, particularly magenta, pigments are not available to achieve permanence as well as brightness and opacity. As the designer's original work is unlikely to be required after reproduction, brightness takes priority.

Recommended Colour Palette

Lemon Yellow, Permanent Yellow Deep, Scarlet Lake, Cadmium Red Pale, Alizarin Crimson, Phthalo Blue, Ultramarine, Winsor Green, Burnt Umber, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Zinc White.

Permanent White is the whitest and most opaque. Not recommended for mixing as it can reduce the lightfastness of some colours. *Zinc White* produces the cleanest and most lightfast tints and is good for colour mixing.

Bleedproof White is used by designers to prevent under-layers from bleeding through, but is a temporary solution and not appropriate for fine art use as bleeding will occur eventually. *Laser White* is similar in colour and opacity to *Permanent White* and can also be used for colour mixing. *Process White* is designed for use in photographic retouching, where it will reproduce its true value.

Jet Black is a rich, deep, opaque black which makes blue greys when mixed with white. *Lamp Black* is a less opaque with lower tinting strength, giving paler blue/cool greys when mixed with white. *Ivory Black* is also less opaque with lower tinting strength and makes brown/warm greys and sepia tones when mixed with white. *Process Black* is designed for use in photographic retouching where it will reproduce perfectly black.

