

Core Masterclass Notes

These are our standard core notes for all Masterclass Courses at Norfolk Painting School Live. ***Not every course will feature every process in these notes.***



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Key Principles

Norfolk Painting School Live is based around learning principles which may be applied to your paintings, irrespective of genre.

The principles included:

1. **Value:** Value is the dominant force in vision and therefore visual art. It is analogous to light and dark and therefore using it creates an illusion of Form
2. **Opacity:** Opacity is inherent in certain pigments and can be increased and decreased by the use of oil media and simple physical application. Opacity will advance when it is juxtaposed with a translucent or turbid passage of paint, and is therefore central to the modelling of Form and creation of atmospheric perspective.
3. **Range.** Range means difference or contrast. A wide range will create an edge, a lesser range will make an edge transitional and no range will create a truly lost edge. Range can be created by any parameter of paint, for instance opacity, value or texture. Using colour adds more range options such as hue family temperature and saturation

Standard Method A :Grisaille and Glaze (AKA oil over distemper)

This is our standard pre baroque method and is suitable for emulating early painting styles as well as contemporary artists who draw on them (e.g. Richter). It may be done traditionally (oil over distemper), or as an all oil method. In the latter case the picture will have a greatly extended drying time, but exhibit a higher unvarnished lustre.

The steps are:

1. Prepare a Gesso or Bole (as per our standard ground recipes)
2. Sketch the design lightly in pencil

3. Paint a *grisaille* using distemper or oil as preferred
4. When the grisaille is dry, oil out and rub dry with a disposable towel, using general purpose painting medium
5. Glaze in the local colours using tube oil and general purpose painting medium, and lightly wipe until workably dry
6. Block in working from large to small, using bodied (semi opaque to opaque) oils
7. Add any detail or impasto you require.
8. Once dry, optically unify with a varnish

Stages 4-6 may be repeated as many times as you wish, ensuring the painting is dry between sessions. I recommend that you keep stage 7 to one working, placed on top of any optical glazes to ensure it looks 'fresh'.

If using Distemper, choose suitable dry pigments. Traditional choices are:

- *Verdaccio* (Terre Vert + White and sometimes Terra Rosa {Red Ochre})
- *Grisaille* (Ivory Black, Titanium White)
- *En Brunaille* (any earth pigments e.g. Raw or Burnt Umber, Sienna etc)

Three Glaze Levels

Try to create three optical levels or effects in indirect work as above.

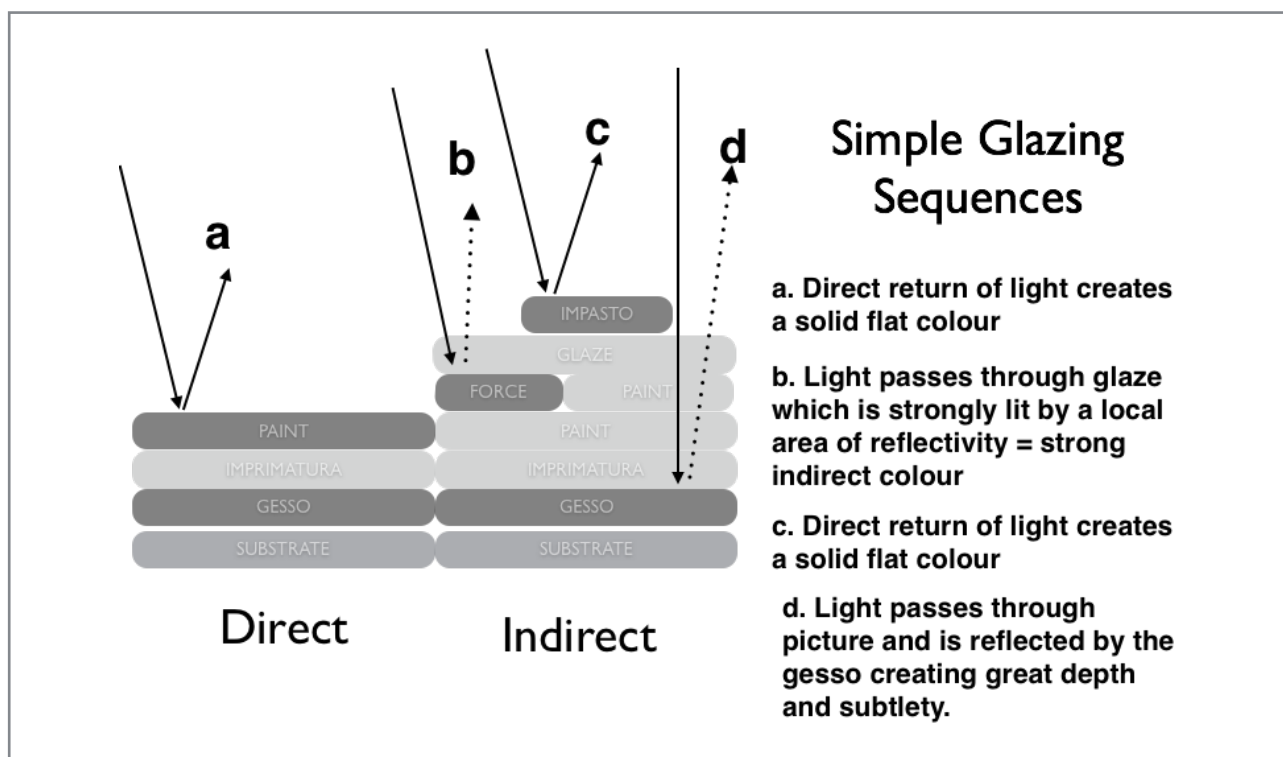
1. A glaze over force (b)
2. A deep glaze(d)
3. No glazing (c)

Adding Optical Depth

To create deeper glaze colour, stack multiple glazes, keeping them thin.

Colour Temperature

The **top** glaze in a sequence sets the colour temperature of an optical colour. This is most easily controlled with simple colours (a glaze over another colour), the more glazes you add the less control you will have.



To determine the relative temperature of a colour consult the School colour wheel, where Red Orange (RO) is the warm axis and BG the cool one. Example:

Red over blue = warm optical violet
 blue over red = cool optical violet
 B over Y = cool optical green
 Y over B = warm optical green
 R over Y = warm optical orange
 Y over R = cool optical orange

Example of *selected* secondaries
 O over B = warm optical grey
 Y over O = cool optical orange

Standard Method B :Ébauche

Ébauche means 'blank or outline, and refers to the way this method develops Forms from a loose translucent mass sketch, traditionally executed in a dark viscous glaze upon a short ground. Ébauche is our standard baroque to Impressionist method and is suitable for emulating the later old masters and any academic oil painting up to and including contemporary painters. In the late 19th century it became the core upon which most post Impressionist *realists* based their method, and has remained so

through the 20th century (e.g. Zorn, Sargent. Schmidt, Seago etc are Ébauche/ Impressionist painters). It may be freely blended with Impressionist painting ideas and techniques to create your own style, although I strongly recommend that you preserve its optical qualities.

The steps are:

1. Prepare a **short** Gesso or Bole (as per my standard ground recipes)
2. Sketch the design loosely in fluid paint, concentrate on *masses* rather than details
3. Block in the masses using viscous translucent paint (usually but not necessarily a de-saturated dark), and lightly wipe it *workably* dry. A short ground will take in the ébauche so it generally will not need to be wiped.
4. Work up the shade planes in semi opaque body colour. Blend lightly into the ébauche.
5. Work up the lit planes in opaque colour. Blend lightly into the shade planes.
6. Add any high impasto you require.
7. Once dry, unify with a varnish.

The Ébauche *may* be executed in distemper, but ensure it is oiled out to facilitate transitional blending. If possible I

recommend you use Ébauche as an all oil method.

Colour Beginning

A tonal ebauche may be replaced by a loose and chromatic imprimatura. This is termed a *colour beginning* and is useful for both contemporary painting as well traditional works which employ an *Italianate* palette (eg Claude, mid - late Turner)

Standard Method C :Direct

This is our standard 20th century wet into wet method. To emulate earlier direct painters such as Constable, Cox, Corot, early Monet or Turner - use an Ébauche technique. The key challenge is to keep the paint fresh and clean. To do this work the blocks methodically - trying not to rework them, use a short ground, and try to make any accents of impasto touches in one stroke *which must not then be touched or reworked*.

The steps are:

1. Prepare a Gesso (as per my standard ground recipes)
2. If required start with an Imprimatura (of any type), but wipe it workably dry before you proceed
3. Sketch in your design with fluid oil or pencil
4. Block in using large brushes - work over the entire support
5. Repeat using medium brushes
6. Finish using small brushes
7. Add any impasto using 'bright' brushes or knives.
8. Direct paintings are generally presented unvarnished.

If the painting sinks in when dry you may wish to varnish it, and then wax it out when dry to regain an 'unvarnished' look.

Subtractive Mixing

Read this in conjunction with a my colour wheel diagram. This is a system for simplified and logical colour mixing developed by the Norfolk Painting School from various alternative methods.

Subtractive mixing means making colours from two or more wet paints as opposed to optical colour which relies on (translucent) layers of colour, wet over dry.

The terms for colour are:

1. Hue : One of six families
2. Value
3. Temperature
4. Saturation

Any colour may be defined by the above, and therefore reliably mixed from a starting point elsewhere on the colour wheel.

Simple Colour Plans

Good colour plans are selective and reductive.

Base your colour planning on sound principles such as:

1. A mono plan of warm - neutral - cool eg RO-R-RV
2. A simple harmony of three hues, eg O-R-V
3. A simple complement R-G
4. An off complement eg RO-BG
5. A split complement of a mono plan *and* a complement , eg RO-R-RV and G

Good advice

Colour is not a fixed thing. It is both proximate and relative. Assess your planned colours when they are placed and adjust them accordingly.

Studio Craft

The following techniques are common to all of my courses:

Oiling Out

Oiling out prepares a dry painting to take a fresh layer of paint. It is a standard interim remedy for sinking in (the apparent dulling or matting of paint films as they dry). I oil out with my standard 50/50 general purpose painting medium medium. Use a thin even coat and wipe it until it feels touch dry before painting upon it. Oiling out also provides a good *couch* for fine gazing effects or the painting of details such as rigging. To oil out:

- Apply some 50/50 general purpose painting medium onto the dry picture
- Wipe it touch dry with a disposable kitchen towel

Tonking

Tonking is a method for removing excess paint, whilst leaving a workable underpainting in situ. To Tonk:

- Apply a clean piece of kitchen towel **flat** to the support
- Rub gently with the palm or back of your hand, until the excess paint is absorbed.
- Gently peel away and check for workability

Sgraffito

Sgraffito means scratching into wet paint to create marks and textures. This can be done with a fingernail, brush handle or silicon tipped clay shaper tool.

Basic Glazing

A glaze is a viscous wash of translucent oil paint mixed with medium, applied over a dry underpainting. To glaze:

- Choose a translucent colour
- Mix it with a little 50/50 medium

- Apply to a dry painting

Basic Scumbling

A scumble is a dry brush technique, which creates subtle gradations of broken colour. It is often combined with glazing in traditional painting, but the two methods must be done separately as scumbles must be dry, and glazes wet. To scumble

- Choose a colour, but do not thin it in any way
- Apply a little of it to a dry brush
- Lightly apply or scape the brush across the picture surface.

Varnishing

A varnish is a removable, archival and protective topcoat for a dry oil painting. To varnish:

- Lay the painting flat
- Apply the varnish with a large area brush along the long dimension of the picture support
- Repeat along the short dimension
- Allow the picture to dry in a dust free area

To prepare a matte varnish dissolve a little COLD WAX MEDIUM into GAMSOL, until it is fully combined (a simple *bain marie* is useful to speed up this process).

Norfolk Painting School Core Mediums and Grounds:

1. 50/50

50/50 general purpose painting medium replicates a traditional mix of oil and solvent, using a modern resin and low odour thinner combination. Fast drying, versatile, archival and low toxicity it is my standard general purpose medium. To make it simply mix GALKYD and GAMSOL in equal quantities in a clean screw cap jar or stoppered bottle. Combine well before first use, and **top off with a little**

GAMSOL after use, if the medium is to be stored for any period of time.

2. Cold Wax

I use Gamblin COLD WAX MEDIUM as both a base and modifier for oil painting mediums. On a rigid support it may be used up to 1:2 with tube oils (a third, medium two thirds paint), but will not set reliably if used in greater quantities. If used on a flexible support it must be plasticised by adding a resin to it such as our 50/50 medium. GALKYD or NEO MEGILP, in this case use more resin and paint than wax (use as little wax as possible to get the effect you desire)

3. Distemper

My distemper is GAMBLIN CANVAS SIZE, which should be combined undiluted with dry pigment to create a sound base for distemper and oil painting. As with all modern polymers it should be applied gently to minimise foaming. Used correctly it is non hygroscopic, non yellowing, has very low toxicity and is archivally sound. IMPORTANT: Do not substitute the CANVAS SIZE with inexpensive general purpose adhesives, my tests show this will create problems with the longevity, workability and stability of the resulting paint film.

4. Short Ground or School Gesso

Historically distinct, Ground and Gesso are used interchangeably by modern painters. To make my standard School Short Ground:

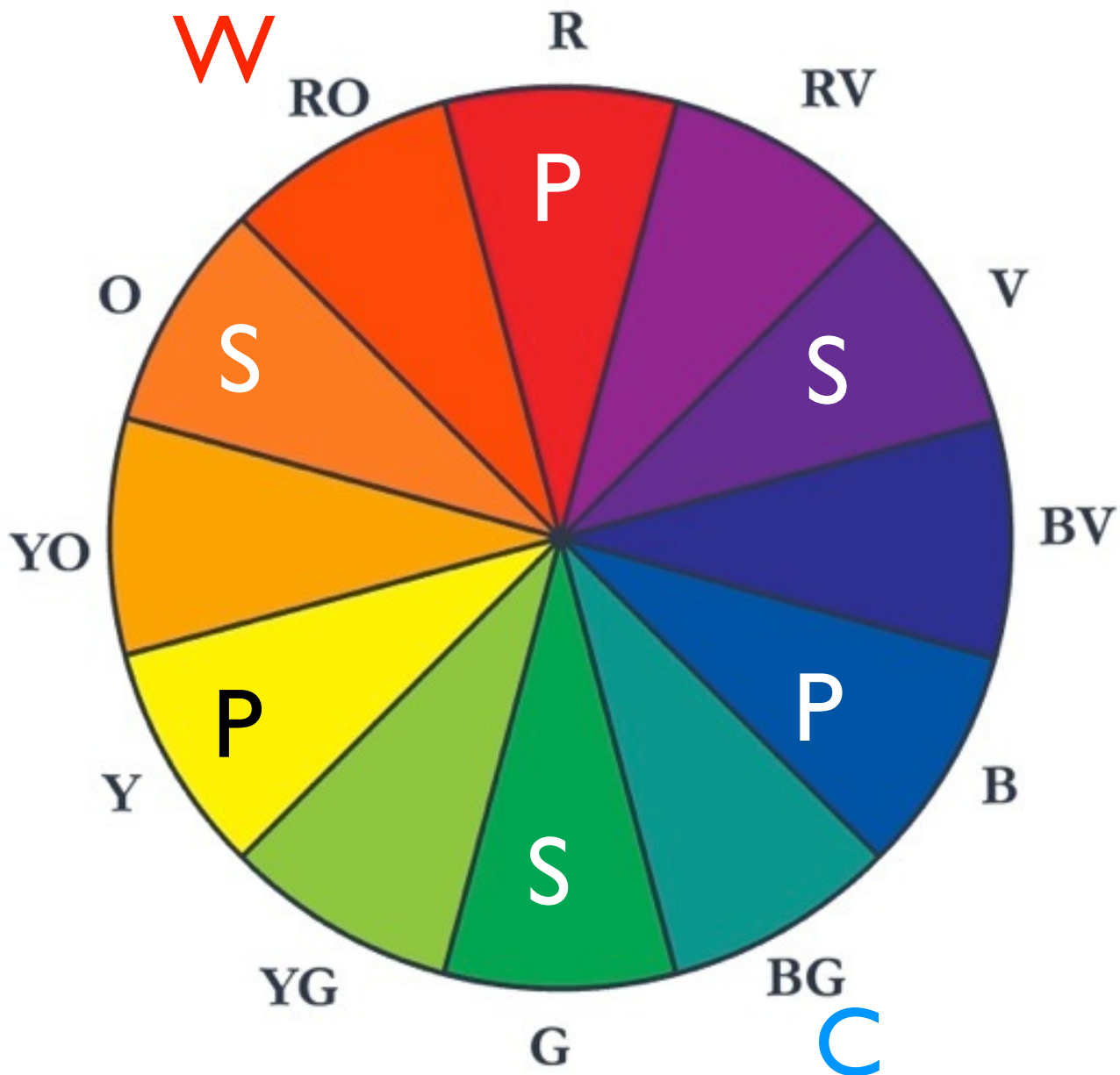
- Obtain a quantity of decent quality white acrylic paint
- Prepare one part chalk (whiting) to 3 parts acrylic by volume
- Add a little water to the chalk to form a paste
- Mix the chalk paste into the acrylic
- Store in a tub with a lid
- This ground is suitable for oil or distemper

- To make a whiter ground substitute chalk with fine grade marble dust.
- To make a bole, substitute it with a natural earth pigment e.g. Red Ochre, Raw Sienna
- To lengthen the ground saturate it with 50/50 medium before use. Allow to dry. Long grounds are not suitable for distemper.

5. Gamsol

GAMSOL is the trade name for my low odour thinners of choice. Gamsol is a modern solvent which has a very low volatility, meaning unlike turpentine it doesn't get into the air quickly. This means the studio is healthier, and the solvent may be recycled, making it more economic than traditional solvents in the longer term. More importantly Alkyd resins such as GALKYD must be thinned with modern solvents, as traditional ones will cause them to spoil. IMPORTANT: Never combine traditional solvents with modern alkyd resins and vice versa. To recycle gamsol you will need several clean capped jars:

- Pour the dirty Gamsol into a clean jar. Cap it tightly
- Let it settle, this may take a while - hence several jars.
- Decant when clear into a clean jar - reuse as you would fresh solvent



This Standard School colour Wheel, shows P (primary), S (secondary) colours, along with their temperature variants as determined by the W (warm) and C (cool) axes of the triadic colour wheel. The printed colours are nominal and can vary in saturation, tinting strength, opacity etc. Value is not represented, although colours may be raised to Value 9 or lowered to Value 2 using white (tint) or black (shade). Values 10 (White) and 1 (black) are *achromatic*.

The standard temperature sequence is (clockwise): Cool red to warm violet, cool violet to warm blue, cool blue to cool green (cold axis), warm green to cool yellow, warm yellow to cool orange, warm orange to warm red (warm axis). Therefore RV (Red Violet) may be a cool red (e.g. Alizarin Crimson), or a Warm Violet (e.g. Cobalt Violet).

Basic Groupings: Contiguous colours are Harmonic, opposite are Complimentary. Therefore B is Harmonic to V and G and complimentary to O.

Addendum: Professional Studio List

About this List

For my Masterclass program I am drawing upon the materials at hand in my fully equipped teaching and demonstration studio. This is an indicative list of those materials.

The masterclass program is delivered with experienced oil painters in mind, it is not within the scope of the program to teach core skills (making up a *cool* or a *warm* green for instance) and these are assumed.

Note that I teach a wide variety of techniques and styles - Old Master, Impressionist *and* Contemporary painting styles, and my materials at hand are therefore much wider than one would expect to use if one had a mature style which broadly correlated to a single style.

With this in mind I have grouped my full studio list into three broad groups - Old Master, Impressionist and Contemporary.

My core list is Impressionist - which covers most 19th century and Modern painting, I've noted extras to encompass Old master and Modern work below

I will generally bridge two adjacent categories in any session - old master and Impressionist or Impressionist and contemporary but *not* old master and contemporary. This is for subtractive mixing reasons.

The reason for this is to maximise my access to 'colour space' (see gamblincolors.com), and stay on style whilst minimising my need to reset the palette in my studio to avoid wastage of paint.

Equivalents

I commonly use equivalents to reduce wastage - making up a cool green rather than opening a new one for instance. By doing this you will significantly reduce your studio requirements.

Where no suitable equivalent exists I've noted that in my studio list.

A Note on Terminology

My standard descriptions(eg short ground) mediums and grounds are as taught at The Norfolk Painting School, please refer to your course notes or attend a hands on workshop course if you need more information.

Paint List by Hue Family and Period

All are tube oils by Gamblin at 1980 or Artist grade as appropriate. Each Hue family is allocated a warm + and a cool - pigment. Incremental colours are listed as options.

Red

+Cadmium Red

-Alizarin Crimson

Add Perylene red for Contemporary

Add Quinacridone red and Quinacridone Magenta as a contemporary cool red option.

Add Naphthol Scarlet **in tint** to replace Vermilion for old master

Add Venetian Red **plus calcites** to replicate Red Spanish earth, Venetian Red for semi bodied earth colour and boles in Old Master.

Add Transparent red iron oxide for Red Lake colours (Baroque to 19th century)

Violet

General note : Violet is a weakly represented pigment category, with no pigments offering a sound combination of tinting strength *and* temperature bias.

+ Cobalt (NB can't be replicated) **or**

+ Quinacridone Magenta (modern but weak enough for Impressionism)

-Dioxazine Purple (caution strong for Impressionism) **or**

- Ultramarine Violet (caution - tends to neutral temperature)

Old Master - Cobalt and Ultramarine are weak in mixes and useful for replicating traditional hematite if calcites are added to them.

Blue

+ Ultramarine Blue

- Cerulean Blue or Turquoise

Gamblin Cobalt Artist Grade is essential for some works as the colour cannot be replicated by mixing.

Gamblin Cobalt Blue 1980 is a useful equivalent to Smalt as it is weak in mixes Phthalo Blues are useful for Contemporary work

Green

A note on greens - the obvious candidates for a clear temperature bias here have mismatched tinting strengths *and* are both translucent, so for *bodied* oils consider nuancing your palette towards contemporary pigments to allow for the degradation of saturation by white.

+ Sap Green (caution strong tinting strength)

- Viridian (caution weak tinting strength)

Add Oxide of Chromium for bodied warm mixes (all periods)

Note Cobalt Green cannot be replicated

Add Emerald Green for Impressionist works (arsenic green)

Add Phthalo for contemporary

Add Terre Verte for Verdaccio (old master)

Yellow

+ Cadmium Yellow Medium or Deep

- Cadmium Yellow Light

Add Hansa Yellow for contemporary work

Add Yellow Ochre for Old Master work

Add Indian Yellow for contemporary optical painting

Add transparent yellow oxide for old master optical painting

Orange

A note on Orange: this encompasses most of the earth colours both raw and calcined.

+Cadmium Red Light

- Cadmium Orange (note: weak in tinting strength at 1980 grade)

Add Burnt Sienna for Old Master

Add Raw Sienna for Impressionist and Old Master as a core colour for imprimaturas Add Burnt Umber to old master

Add Raw Umber to old Master.

Add Asphaltum for Baroque and 19th century optical painting and as a warm lignitic earth. Note: very high tinting strength!

Add Transparent Earth Orange for old master to 19th century optical painting

Blacks

A note on black: all blacks are by definition achromatic, so choose them primarily for opacity not temperature, although all actually differ in temperature and opacity. Most display some weak chroma in undertone, which is often inconsistent in temperature with their masstone.

Translucent: Ivory Black is my standard black for optical painting

Opaque : Mars Black is my standard opaque black for bodied painting.

+ Ivory Black is a warm black

- Payne's Grey is a cool black

Add chromatic black for creating shades with delicate pigments (all periods) Add Van Dyke Brown for a cool lignitic earth (old master)

Spinel Black has a unique optical quality which cannot be replicated. Payne's Grey has a cool undertone, useful for old master grisaille

White

A note on white: all whites are by definition achromatic, so choose them primarily for opacity not temperature, although all actually differ in temperature and opacity.

Opaque Titanium White

Translucent Zinc White (with reservations, and only ever as a **top** glaze)

For an archival translucent mixing white add 1980 grade Transparent white or add calcites to Titanium.

Add Flake White replacement for lead white (note this also simulates rheology)

Mediums

General Purpose Painting Medium

Galkyd thinned with Gamsol

For Old master consider classic Van Eyck medium (*base* of half oil half turpentine) For

Contemporary use peinture d'essence (solvent only)

Bodied Glazes

Neo Megilp as a base

Add Stand Oil for old master sfumato (Burnt Plate Oil no 2 for Baroque).

Soft Encaustic

Cold Wax paste as a stand alone medium and as a base for Parriss's Medium Cold Tempera

Canvas Size

Solvents

These are necessary for making up mediums, general studio jobs and as dilutents. **Do not mix old and new in media**

Gamsol (modern solvent for general purpose painting)

Rectified Pure Gum Turpentine (old master solvent for making resinous media) Spirit of Wine (methylated spirit)

Dry Pigments and Misc

Traditional underpainting pigments

Titanium White and Ivory Black for en grisaille Burnt Sienna for Venetian Bole

Raw Sienna for Flemish bole

Earth pigments inc Boles above for En Brunaille **Colour Beginning System**

Add some chromatic translucent primaries to the above

Calcites

Extra Fine Marble Dust (painter's grade)

Whiting

Rottenstone

Tools

Filberts for general painting

Large Area brushes for glazing and underpainting etc

Brights and flats for direct painting

A small round for spotting

A small rigger for laying detail over couching glazes

Clay shapers and scrapers in varies sizes (Grey, medium or black, firm grade)

Disposable paper towels for tonking

MDF panels pre gessoed with standard school short ground at 10x9, 16x12, 20x24 and 20x30 inches

Canvas (medium weave cotton, re-primed to school spec) at 40x30 and 48x36" Standard school colour wheel (triadic not Munsell).

ENDS

