

Weekly 2 hour assignments. Superimposing colour. (take more time over this session if needed)

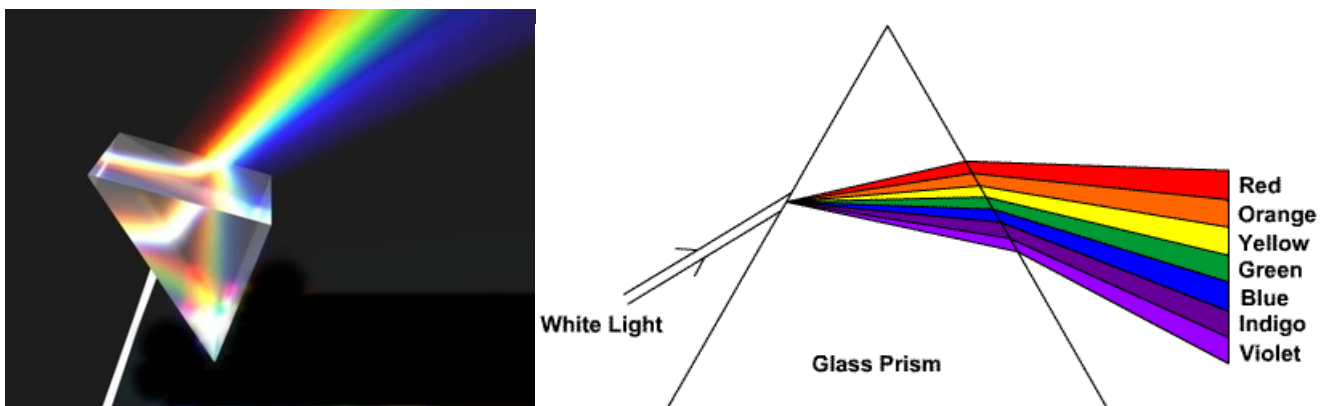
Studying colour takes a lifetime and beyond. The more you find out about colour, the more you realise, the more there is to learn. Colour is **your** subject as an illustrator, you need to understand it. Last semester the exercises that were set were to give you tools to see and record. These tools can be applied to many aspects of life. To **really truly observe** is to understand, to understand is to know. Leonardo said;

'An average human looks without seeing, listens without hearing, touches without feeling, eats without tasting, moves without physical awareness, inhales without awareness of odour or fragrance, and talks without thinking.' Don't be average.

You have made a book/visual diary/sketch book now make sure you use it to explore life in its entirety. Become curious about everything in life. Allow your curiosity to lead you where it will along the roads that interest you. Everything can influence your illustration practice in ways you cannot yet imagine.

Introduction

What exactly is colour? Research it. How do we see colour? Colour is a miracle, colour is vibrant, it contains the potential to create heightened emotion, it is inspiring and exciting and used alongside tone can take you into virtual worlds.



Basically, colour is when white light hits a material surface and the atoms in that material absorb some of the wave lengths and reflect others that it cannot absorb. The resulting reflected light, depending on the wave length, is what we see as colour. Surfaces that absorb all the wave lengths are black/dark and because the wave lengths are interacting with the atoms and produce energy, that surface gets hot. That is why all materials that absorb more of the wave lengths feel warm/hot to the touch. It is extraordinary to think that without light everything is actually black. The light that is reflected are the light waves that are not absorbed by that particular material.

Often we take no notice of colour, we apply it to our work, it is just there for us to use ready made in paints, crayons, felt pens or a digital palette etc. But what was colour made from in the past and what are the names of colour and their properties? You need to know your tools as an artist and understand what colour is and how it has been utilised by artists, currently and in the past. Over the years lecturing, I have noticed that many students don't know the names of the colours that have been used in the past or the ones they use themselves. Carry out this simple task and test yourself what hue do you think each colour is in the list below.

- Azurite; Burnt Siena
- Burnt Umber; Ultramarine;
- Cadmium; Woad;
- Smalt; Cerulean;
- Realgar; Vermillion;
- Viridian; Quinacridones;
- Madderlake; Aureolin;
- Phthalocyanine; Gamboge.

How many colours did you honestly get right? **Learn your colours**; it is important to know what colour is what when you are researching/reading about artists/illustrators work and the different properties of your colours. There is a list of books at the end of this brief which are excellent books describing the different colours used by artists and what they are made from and where they originate. <https://www.naturalpigments.com>

The best colours are always labelled as Artists colours. They are of the highest quality and usually the most expensive, they are generally also light fast. You need to have light fast colours to work with as a professional artist as your original illustration work

may one day end up selling for hundreds of thousands of pounds if you become famous! Look at Chris Beatles Gallery <https://www.chrisbeatles.com/> there are famous illustrations for sale in this gallery by E. H. Shepherd, Beatrix Potter, Arthur Rackham etc. Also look up the House of Illustration <https://www.houseofillustration.org.uk/>, the Fashion illustration Gallery <https://www.fashionillustrationgallery.com/artists> and the Cartoon Museum <https://www.cartoonmuseum.org/>.

Brief

You will be starting with a simple superimposing exercise in watercolour today. You will be using the paints you have been given in the Cotman Watercolour box handed out by the college. (if you don't have this box you can use your own watercolours) This box of watercolours is known as 'Student' quality they are not as pure or as vibrant as 'Artist' quality they contain filler and a lot of gum-arabic and sometimes are not made of pure pigments but made out of dyes (you will notice that the names often printed on the side of the pan say "hue", this means it is not the genuine original colour). Student quality paints are good but are slightly 'muddier' than artists colours and can have a tendency to fade. However, some artists will only work with these quality paints because they like the slightly muted tones see Jill Barklem's work Brambly Hedge.



Illustrations by Jill Barklem showing her use of Cotman student quality watercolours

I am not sure which colours you have in your paint box this year but I want you to make sure they are set out in an order that is easy to work with. You can always rearrange the watercolour pans back to their original positions at a later date if you wish. The names of the colours are on the sides of the pans. Please lay them out in the order below and make sure the paints are very clean.



Water colour pans laid out on order; Sorry they are a bit blurred the scanner could not cope with 3D and there is plastic on the paints as they will mark the scanner bed. There is also an image of what is known as a 'flat' watercolour brush. I am assuming you all know about brushes.

Top row left to right; This row will consist of six main primaries. Lemon yellow (a cool green yellow), Cadmium yellow (a warm orange yellow), Cadmium red (an orange red) Alizarin crimson, (a cool violet red), Ultramarine (a warm violet blue), intense blue (a cool green blue)

Bottom row left to right; This row will consist of two greens and the three earth colours and white. Viridian, (a cool green) Sap green (a warm green), Yellow ochre (an earth yellow), Burnt sienna (an earth rust/orange) Burnt umber (dark Brown)

Note if you don't have the exact same colours that will be fine use what you have in a similar order. The reason I am asking you to put them in an order is so that you can easily see the subtle changes in hue when similar colour/mixes are sitting next to each other.

Exercise 1; duration 45-60 minutes. Superimposing colour (laying one colour over the other).

Having sorted out your box of colours make sure you have a piece of watercolour paper, (if you have it), or a heavy quality cartridge paper or stretched lighter weight watercolour paper, (if you know how to stretch paper). A paint brush, a watercolour

flat is good if you have one. A white plate and two containers of water. It is very important to keep your paints and brush clean when doing this exercise so you need two water containers.

Now you will do a careful grid of colours superimposed one on top of the other. The resulting sheet will be used as reference for your painting today. Try to make each colour you place on the paper an even intensity and even tone.

- Starting from the top left of your paper, mix a pure pool of lemon yellow and lay it in a vertical column, twelve even strokes of lemon yellow. Clean out the brush in one jar of water and rinse it in the second jar. You don't want any traces of lemon on your brush.
- Next; beside the vertical column of lemon yellow, having mixed up a pool of pure cadmium yellow, paint a vertical column of 12 strokes of cadmium yellow, clean your brush thoroughly. And so on....
- Paint a vertical column of cadmium red, clean your brush thoroughly
- Paint a vertical column of crimson red, clean your brush thoroughly
- Paint a vertical column of ultramarine blue, clean your brush thoroughly **If your water gets dirty change the water.**
- Paint a vertical column of intense blue, clean your brush thoroughly
- A vertical column of viridian green, clean your brush thoroughly
- A vertical column of sap green, clean your brush thoroughly
- A vertical column of yellow ochre, clean your brush thoroughly
- A vertical column of burnt sienna, clean your brush thoroughly
- A vertical column of burnt umber, clean your brush thoroughly
- **Do not use the white in this exercise**

Now, leaving the top row you have painted as a line of unmixed colours, you repeat the same process, working horizontally with each colour in turn, superimposing the watercolour on top of the colours you have originally laid down. Don't try to mix it or work to the exact edges just lay the colour on top. You can do this wet on wet or wait for the first layer of paint to dry. Just make sure that to the left of the columns you lay a stroke of pure colour before you superimpose each colour across the row. You must make sure your brush is cleaned before you go on to the next colour. You need to keep your colours pure with no contamination, especially if you decide to work wet into wet.



Above left to right are examples of the initial pure colours laid out in vertical grids and the second image showing the mixes when the colours are laid one on top of the other along the horizontal rows. In the second image, you can see that the top row and the far-left column are the pure colours in your paint box. Having these as pure colour you can easily work out which colour laid on top of which produces the colour you want to work with. Please note these are quite pale you can create this grid to be more intense if you wish.

Exercise 2; duration 1hour to 1hour 15 minutes. (take longer on this exercise if you wish) Do a painting using your superimposed watercolour sheet/grid as a reference.

Materials;

You will need your watercolours, watercolour brushes, two containers of clean water, a piece of good quality paper (200-220 gsm of watercolour paper if you have it or cartridge paper), a pencil and a white plate/plates/palette for creating pools of colour.

Paint something from life;

Set up a still life, paint a view from your window, a part of your room, a self-portrait, or paint someone in your family. The subject you decide to work from is your choice but it must be from life. Make sure that what you decide to paint interests you visually and has a good variety of different colours (natural colours are good) and tones. Don't make it too complicated. As a suggestion, you could use fruit and vegetables and/or flowers set up on a table. This is a painting exercise in colour mixing/superimposing simple colours. You are not trying to produce a masterpiece; it is an exercise in looking. Make sure your subject is lit in an interesting way and that you are sitting comfortably.

The process

Work out your composition carefully. You can either paint directly onto the paper or do a simple accurate outline of your subject in pencil first before you attempt to paint it.

Now using the sheet of superimposed colours that you have done I want you to use this as a colour reference guide for defining the paint colours and tones you use for your painting. Try to use the watercolours fluidly, don't be too worried about getting a

clearly defined edge on your painting. Trying to represent the tones and colours as accurately as you can just using the method of superimposing two colours only, as you work on your painting.

This exercise is designed to make you really look at what colours you can create when you only superimpose two colours together. It is designed to teach you to be aware of what colour mixed with what produces what. At times, you won't find an accurate match on your painted superimposed chart but the aim is to get you to judge colour and work as closely as possible to matching colour and tone. You will notice when only two colours are mixed together you can produce a huge variety of amazing colours. Also, because they are laid one on top of the other they create a vibrant image as the white of the paper shines through the paint and the paint acts like stained glass.

This is not an easy exercise as you will have to judge the tone of the paint you apply as well as the colour matching. Take your time and enjoy the process and what you are observing. Don't get too worked up about the final image you produce. These are exercises and take a lot of concentration.



Examples of watercolour work. Top left to bottom right; Arthur Melville, Emil Nolde, Babara Rae, Jennifer Tyers, Sara Khan, Jackie Morris, Emma Larson.

Submission date Sunday 28th February 12:00 midnight

Please send me images of your superimposed grid of colours and your finished painting.

Materials needed for next week

Watercolours or other coloured mediums such as inks, pastels etc. you must be able to mix them, you could use mixed media on this piece or even digital if you wish. Remember to use good quality paper if using traditional materials. Keep in mind that you will be working from life and that the exercises this semester are to encourage you to work in colour, experimenting with different types of media and combinations of media.

Books; Artist guide to selecting colours, Michael Wilcox; Artists colour manual, Simon Jennings; Colour making and using dyes and pigments, New horizon; A closer look at colour, the National gallery; Colour mixing bible, Ian Sidaway.