

A Glossary of Painting and Drawing Terms, Botanical Art Online with Dianne Sutherland

A

Accent colour: a detail or brushstroke of a contrasting complementary colour used against another colour for emphasis.

Achromatic: without colour, i.e. white, black and grey mixes.

Analogous colours: closely related colours. Those next to each other on the **colour wheel**.

Acid free: refers to papers and matts with neutral or low pH. High acidity papers degrade quickly by foxing and should be avoided.

Alla Prima: Italian for "first time". Painting directly onto paper or canvas without producing drawing or under painting first.

Analogous colours: groups of related colours on the colour wheel. E.g. Yellow, Yellow Green, and Green.

Aquarelle: French term for the process and product of painting in transparent watercolour.

Archival Paper: Watercolour paper which is pure 100% rag, cotton, or linen, of neutral or slightly low pH, i.e. alkaline.

Atmospheric or Aerial perspective: suggests perspective in a painting by using changes in tone and colour between foreground and background. The background is usually blurred, and more blue in colour, the hues are less intense. The look is created in reality by the effect of the atmosphere over distance. It is not only used in landscape painting but in other works to create distance and depth.

B

Back runs: if a brush stroke is laid upon a damp wash it will lift the original wash creating an uneven finish. A back run can be used as an effective technique but can also be used to refer to an error where the first wash has not been allowed to dry sufficiently, creating an unintentional effect. See **blossoms, blooms and bleeds**.

Background: The most distant area within a painting. In a landscape this would include the sky and horizon. In a floral it can refer to the leaves at the rear also see **Foreground and Middle ground**.

Backlight - light coming from behind the subject, such as where light shines through the petals of a flower.

Balance: refers to the visual equalization within the composition of a painting. Can be: symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial (circular, radiating for a central point).

Bead: a tiny pool of paint formed by gravity at the bottom of a wash when applied to tilted paper.

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Binder: The medium which is used to suspend the pigment and 'hold' the paint together, in watercolours the primary binder Gum Arabic.

Blocking in: using rough simple shapes to compose a painting at the planning stage.

Blossoms/blooms/bleeds: also see **Back run**. Fractal type cauliflower looking marks created when extra moisture creeps back into a damp or partially dry area of a painting. Excess water allows the pigment to accumulate at the outer edge of the watermark and pushes the edge creating this pattern. This effect can ruin a botanical painting but is used to good effect in other types of painting.

Blotting: lifting away moisture and pigment with an absorbent material, such as a sponge, or paper towel used to lighten areas in a painting.

Blocking out: preserving the white of the watercolour paper using any material such as masking fluid, to prevent paint from making a mark on the paper in that area.

Blending: creating a smooth transition between colours achieved using a soft brush. It can also refer to mixing two or more colours on your paper where the original colours remain and other colours are created.

Blending off: moistening the paper next to a wet brushstroke to soften an edge by allowing the wet paint to bleed into the moistened area.

Body colour: mixing of opaque white paint with transparent watercolour.

Broken colour: where two complementary colours are unequally mixed.

Buckling: bending and warping of paper caused by the application of water which causes the paper to expand unequally. Also see **cockling**

C

Cast Shadow: the dark shadow area that results when the source of light has been obscured by an object.

Charge: to fill a brush with colour. **Charging** is a term for adding thick intense colour to a wet wash.

Chiaroscuro: the use of high contrast light and shade in painting to create dramatic effect, using deep shadow. Rembrandt is considered a master of chiaroscuro.

Chroma: the degree of saturation or purity of a colour and relative absence of white or grey in a colour.

Cockling: the distortion of the surface of watercolour paper when wet, which causes warping. Can be prevented by stretching the paper in advance or working on heavier weight paper. Also see **buckling**.

Cold Pressed: watercolour paper that is Cold Pressed (CP) has a slightly rough texture. **See Hot Pressed, Rough**

Complementary colours: colours at opposite points on the colour wheel, for example, red and green, yellow and purple. (See Primary and Secondary Colours)

Composition: the arrangement of elements of form and colour within an artwork.

Colour: what the eye sees when light bounces off an object.

Colour Key: the dominating tone or value range of a painting. Also see **high-key, medium-key, low-key, and full-contrast** paintings.

High-key painting: a value range of medium to light values, creating a light bright work.

Low-key painting: using the darker end of the value scale ranging from medium to dark values. Creating a more subdued look.

Full-contrast painting: using the full range of the value scale, from light through to dark. This creates the most contrast by using the lightest values next to the darkest.

Colour properties: are hue, saturation, tonal value and temperature.

Colour temperature: the warmth or coolness of a colour in relation to another colour:

Warm colours – generally hues ranging from yellow to orange to red.

Cool colours – generally hues that contain blue, including greens and violets.

Note: that colour temperature is relative, so although all blues are cool some blues are warmer or cooler than others

Colour wheel: primary, secondary, and tertiary or intermediate colours arranged in a circular pattern with each colour's complement located directly across from each other on the wheel

Note: there are various different colour wheels and theories.

Continuous line: a method of drawing when the pencil tip stays in contact with the paper and not lifted from the paper. To create smooth lines without hesitation in the flow of the line.

Continuous tone: a technique used in tonal graphite work, whereby different grades of pencil are used to create the values by using a technique that involves using small elliptical movements of the pencil to create an even finish.

Contrast: the use opposites beside one another to create interest and impact e.g. light/dark, warm/cool or the use of complementary colours.

Cross-hatching: a technique used for shading using overlapping parallel lines ink or pencil. Used in traditional egg tempera technique; drawing in pencil, chalk, pen and ink; and engraving, etching, and other printmaking techniques.

D

Dampening the paper: moistening the paper with water but not so much that when held at an angle the water will run.

Dampen: referring to the brush, so that it is wet enough or loaded with sufficient paint to make marks but not so wet that it drips.

Deckle - the irregular edge on watercolour paper. The deckled edge is created when the pulp is poured into a mould or formed by hand.

Disappearing edge: where the brush strokes at the outer edge of an object fade away, such as in an area of reflected light. Used to create form.

Dry brush - a technique which used very little moisture with either thick or thin paint on a brush to create a modelling or textured effect. There are several different dry brush techniques e.g. modelling, drawing or stippling. The angle at which the brush is used and type of brush will result in different finishes. This effect is usually used in the last stages of a painting or when painting on vellum.

Dyad: colour scheme with two colours

E

Earth colours: pigments | paints made from earth materials, such as clay and minerals
example: siennas and ochres

F

Fugitive Colours: pigments that are prone to fading in high light but can also changing colour by darkening. Use lightfast ratings I & II if possible.

H

Hard edges: sharp lines or edges that do not blend into adjacent areas. Also see **soft edges**

Highlight: a point of intense light on a subject where the light hits it directly, such as the reflection on a round shiny form such as a berry. This is the lightest area on a subject. Also see **reflected light**

Hot Pressed Paper: hot pressed (HP) watercolour paper is pressed for a very smooth surface. Ideal for botanical work.

Hue:- A pure colour such as red, blue or green etc.

G

Geometric - the use of geometrical shapes in a design for composition, e.g. circle, oval, triangle, and rectangle etc.

Glaze - a transparent wash of colour overlaid on another dry colour to modify the underlying colour. Often used towards the end of a painting to brighten, to add warmth or to cool and also bind elements together.

Gradation: a gradual change in hue, value, or intensity.

Granular wash - a wash made with watercolour pigments that settle creating a natural textural pattern. Check your paint properties to identify granulating pigments.

Grisaille: a monochromatic painting with a base painting in black and white followed by glazing it with transparent colours.

L

Lightfast: pigments with high resistance to fading when exposed to sunlight. Watercolours are rated lightfast on a scale of I-IV. Ratings I and II being the most resistant.

Line: a continuous mark made with pencil or brush.

Linear: a work composed of multiple line or line work or straight edges and angles as demarcation of areas can be described as linear.

Lift: to take out or remove paint from an area of a watercolour painting. Used to lighten by sponging, scrubbing, using a clean wet brush to press against the paint in order to lighten or remove it. Also by scraping with a knife. Lifting techniques should be used with care because they can damage the paper surface by disturbing the size.

Linking: connecting areas within a painting such as those with the same or similar values.

Local colour, basic hue or mid- range of an object viewed in natural light without the effect of shade and or reflected colours.

Lost and found or disappearing edges: where the edges of a brush strokes in a painting fade away or blend into each other but then reappear.

M

Mixed media: the use of two or more media, such as watercolour and graphite, used together in a work.

Mingle: the blending and merging of colours on the paper or palette without deliberate mixing.

Modelling: colour, light and shade effects which make an image appear to be a three-dimensional form.

N

Negative space: the space in a work that is not occupied by the subject matter, yet is still part of the overall composition.

Negative painting: where the spaces behind, around and in between the object are painted to bring the object to the forefront. Also see **positive painting**.

Nuance: the subtle shift in colour or tonal value.

O

Opaque colours: watercolours that reflect light rather than letting light pass through it. Opaque paint also has the effect of blocking out colours beneath, although no watercolour is completely opaque. Some watercolours are also **semi-opaque** and therefore somewhere between **transparent** and opaque. Also see **transparent**

Organic: opposite of geometric. Use of free form shapes and flowing lines such as those found in natural objects.

Ox Gall: can be added to paint as a surfactant to allow paint to flow more freely. It is made from the bile of bovines.

P

Palette: a paint mixing surface of various shapes and being made of plastic, metal, glass, ceramic, in trays, plates and dish shapes. Also refers to the selection of colours an artist uses.

Perspective: the representation of three-dimensional forms within a space in two dimensions. Representing depth, height and width.

Pigment: powder or granular substance suspended in a medium of gum Arabic and other binders to manufacture paint.

Plein air: painting outside rather than in a studio. From the French *en plein air*, meaning 'in the open air'.

Pointillism: applying dots of colour next to each other for optical mixing, for example placing red dots next to yellow dotted area to create orange.

Positive painting: refers to painting the actual object as the primary subject of the painting or drawing. Whereas negative painting refers to painting behind the object or in between spaces within the object. See **negative painting**.

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Primary colours: relating to light, red, yellow, and blue, mix to make all other colours in the spectrum but themselves cannot be produced through a mixture of other colours. However with paint pigments, although this theory is broadly true, the paints are not true primaries therefore other 'brighter' manufactured colours are needed to create realistic natural colours found in nature. Also see **secondary** and **tertiary** colours.

R

Reflected light: the light that bounces off other nearby surfaces, and reflects back on to an object. Reflected light is lighter than mid tones and shade but always darker than highlights. It can have a variety of colours present depending on the surroundings.

Resist: any material, usually wax or oil that acts to repel paint.

S

Saturation: the strength of a colour

Sgraffito:- scratching into dry paint to reveal the white of the paper, using a razor, knife or sand paper.

Secondary colours: The colours obtained by mixing two primary colours: (yellow + blue) green, (red + blue) violet, and (yellow + red) orange.

Shade: A pure hue plus black pigment to create a neutralized darker version of a colour.

Size / unsized: refers to the gelatine coating on watercolour paper. Unsized paper is very absorbent and soft sized paper is more absorbent than hard sized. The size allows paint to remain on the surface of the paper and depending on the degree of sizing, various techniques such as blending, blotting, and lifting can be carried out.

Soft edges: allowing an edge to blend into nearby areas without definite lines of separation. Soft edges are created when painting wet –in- wet or by blending a brush stroke.

Spattering: used to create texture, spatter paint onto wet or dry ground; use a loaded brush against your finger; drops landing on dry surface will keep their hard edges; for softer spots, spatter on damp paper; mask of areas where spatters are not required

Staining colours: those that cannot be fully removed from your paper because they breach the surface of the paper leaving a permanent mark.

Stretching paper: pre-stretching watercolour paper prior to painting on it to prevent cockling or buckling when water is applied. Usually for 140lb and under. Stretch by soaking in water to allow it to expand, and then fasten the paper at all edges to a board with gum strip and allow to dry.

T

Tea wash: essentially the same as a flat wash but in a very dilute form, so called because of the watery nature similar to that of a 'cup of tea'.

Tertiary colours: the colours that fall between primary and secondary colours on the colour wheel, i.e yellow- orange, red – orange, yellow – green, blue – green, red- violet, blue violet.

Thumbnail sketch: A very small sketch usually with some tone used as a quick method of trying different compositions and ideas.

Tint: pure colour with water added to dilute the colour and create a transparent wash.

Tone: pure colour plus grey (black mixed with white) pigments creating a neutralized version of a colour of a lighter value than a shade.

Transparent colours: transparent watercolour allows light to pass through the pigment allowing the white of the paper to show through. Also see, **opaque**.

V

Value: relates to the lightness or darkness of a colour or tone.

Value scale: a scale used to evaluate the light value of a colour. Ranging from light-to-dark, starting with white, the lighter greys, the darker greys, then black. Usually numbered 0 - 10 with 10 representing black.

Vibration: placing two colours of maximum intensity and equal value side by side to create a visual effect. Such as where small separate strokes of different colours are placed side by side and give the optical illusion, when viewed from a distance, of a third colour without actually being mixed on the paper.

Vignette: a painting that has a painted edge that fade into the white of the paper using the paper to create a border around the composition. Often oval in shape.

Viewfinder: a small cardboard frame use to isolate and area of a subject to aid with composition.

W

Wash: a watery application of watercolour applied to either wet or dry watercolour paper. Often refers to larger areas of the area to be painted.

Flat wash - is an area of evenly distributed colour. "Flat" meaning the colour remains the same hue, value (or intensity) and textural quality with no sign of brush stokes visible.

Graded wash - a wash that gradually changes in value from dark to light or vice versa. A graded was can be a single hue or a combinations of hues that make a

smooth transition from
light to dark or dark to light or bright to dull

Blended or Variegated wash - a wash starting one colour gradually adding and blending into a second colour in a single application on either wet or dry paper

Overlaid wash- The application of a wash on top of another wash. In the same colour to build up colour or of two different colours to create a third colour e.g. Red overlaid with yellow produces orange. Used for **glazes**.

Wash out: to remove paint from a painted area of the painting using a sponge, brush, or paper towel.

Wet- in- Wet: the application of wet paint onto wet paper and also to describe adding colour into an area of wet paint of the same or different colour.