

For Sam and Joe, my greatest teachers.

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Introduction

Colour is a vast and complex subject. In the process of writing this book, I have become obsessed with colour. I wrote my first book on colour in 2006, and since then I have spent countless hours thinking, planning and deciding how to present to you my personal approach to colour. As time goes on and I write more about colour and paint new pictures, my fascination with the subject increases. It has been a great joy to be able to look into the subject in more depth and with fresh eyes.

I have a huge admiration for artists who use bright and bold colours successfully; my own use of colour is often very subtle. Our colour choices are transient, however, and will often also depend on where we are, the weather conditions and how we feel. Last summer, the weather in Cornwall, UK, was more like the Mediterranean, and the watercolour paintings I created then were very bright – a true reflection of the weather and of

my mood. I had also recently visited an exhibition of the work of Patrick Heron (1920–1999) at the Tate St Ives gallery. I greatly admire Heron's use of colour and was undoubtedly inspired by looking at his work. By looking, learning and trusting my own response, I became much more confident with my own use of colour. I encourage you to visit as many exhibitions as you can and examine your own response to the paintings and the colours you see. You may only get to see some of these paintings once in your lifetime, so take your time and have a good look at them while you can. Art transports you to another place, informs you in new ways and can literally move you to tears.

Contemporary painters become colourists through a long process of growth and learning. This involves studying the works of the great masters, reading about colour and experimenting with their palettes. Inspirational paintings by several artists are included in this book to give you

TEN GREEN BOTTLES

Lillias August, RI

89 × 30cm (35 × 11¾in)



The artist's palette

Over the following pages, I have included a selection of paintings featuring a variety of subjects and colour palettes by contemporary watercolour artists. Each of the artists that I feature has a unique style and each artist uses colour in a very different way; you will notice that colour choice is a very personal matter – for example, Lillias August never uses Payne's Gray whereas Varsha Bhatia regularly includes Payne's Gray in her palette.

CLAIRE HARKESS

I first saw Claire Harkess's beautiful bird paintings at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London, UK. I was struck by her interesting and sensitive use of colour.

In her own words: 'I instinctively grab whatever colour is necessary. I do a lot of mixing on the palette and I avoid using black, greens and white straight from the tube. I work with the white of the paper for the lightest highlights.'

I relate strongly to Claire's use of colour as I also work very instinctively: I will also 'grab' whatever colour I feel like using. This will vary depending on the subject and how I feel on that particular day. An instinctive approach to colour gives a very personal and authentic touch to your painting.



GHOST OWL

Claire Harkess

35 x 35cm (13¾ x 13¾in)

The palette: Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Cerulean Blue, Alizarin Crimson and Transparent Orange.

The artist's palette

A LIMITED PALETTE

LILLIAS AUGUST, RI

Lillias August paints exquisite still life pictures; here she explains some of her working methods and the colours that she uses.

'My painting is done in layers, building up tone and colour along the way. Sometimes I need to wait a day or two to let things set. I use masking fluid to give me freedom and consistency with my washes and to help me put down the painting's layout – these areas are often washed over and blended in later when the mask is removed.

'My palette is limited: a basic six (two of each primary) and a few extras. I use the most transparent, stain-strong [colours] I can get. Neutrals come from mixing three primaries (I never touch Payne's Gray): most of my neutral colours are mixed using a blue and Raw or Burnt Sienna. Sometimes I use all four and sometimes I add a touch of something else like Quinacridone if it needs it, testing and adjusting as I go. It's very instinctive.'

The six basics that Lillias uses are:

Blues – Ultramarine and Cerulean;

Reds – Cadmium and Quinacridone;

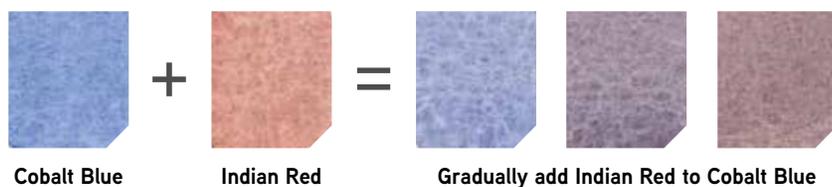
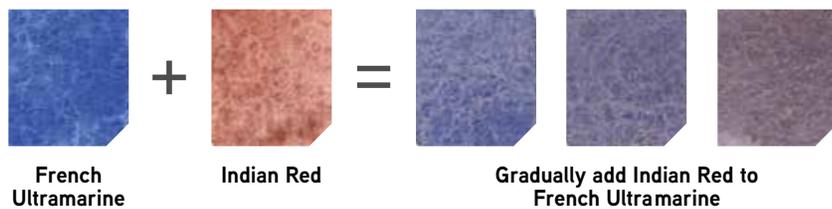
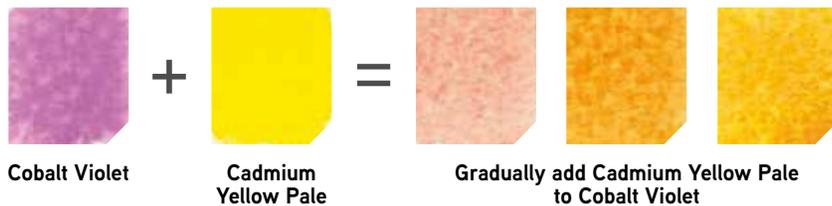
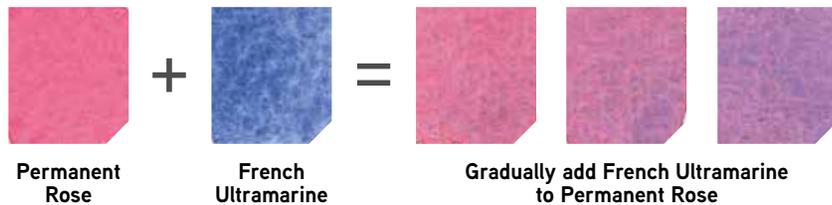
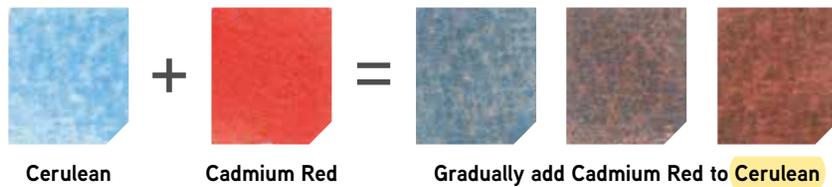
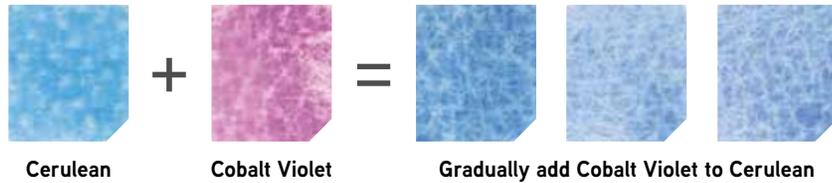
Yellows – Cadmium Yellow and Lemon Yellow.

The extras are usually Viridian, Burnt Sienna and Raw Sienna.



CREATING TEXTURE WITH GRANULATING PIGMENTS

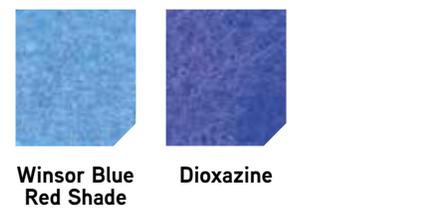
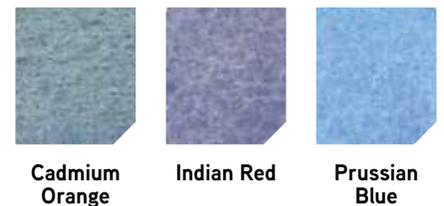
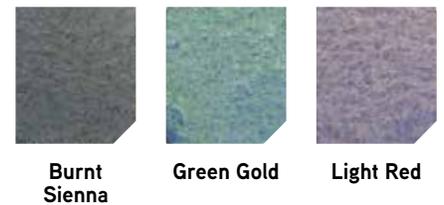
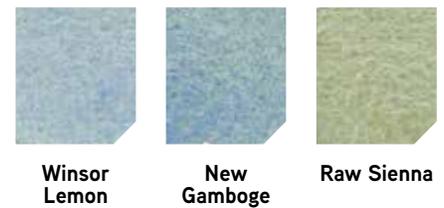
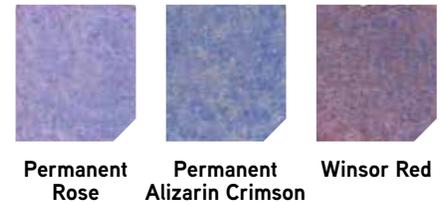
Granulating pigments are fabulous for making texture in your watercolour paintings and there are some great examples here, in these mixes of two granulating pigments. These are painted on Saunders Waterford, Bockingford 535gsm (250lb) Rough watercolour paper, which creates fantastic textures.



MIXING GRANULATING AND NON-GRANULATING COLOURS

Mixing a granulating colour with a non-granulating colour also creates texture in a mix. Below, I have mixed French Ultramarine with other colours to show the granular effect that results even if the other colour is not granulating.

FRENCH ULTRAMARINE +...



UNUSUAL COLOURS WORKING TOGETHER

Experiment here with mixing these watercolours on the paper rather than in the mixing palette. You will find that some combinations mix fairly evenly, and others become unstable and move uncontrollably.



Blue Apatite Genuine with Permanent Alizarin Crimson (Daniel Smith)



Electric Blue with Iridescent Garnet (Daniel Smith)



Rhodonite Genuine with Electric Blue (Daniel Smith)



French Cerulean Blue with Bismuth Vanadate Yellow (QoR)



Sodalite Genuine with Electric Blue (Daniel Smith)



Rhodonite Genuine with Electric Blue (Daniel Smith)



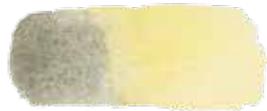
Ultramarine Pink with Bismuth Vanadate Yellow (QoR)



Iridescent Garnet with Cadmium Yellow Medium Hue (Daniel Smith)



Iridescent Sunstone with French Ultramarine (Daniel Smith)



Ardoise Grey with Bismuth Vanadate Yellow (QoR)



Iridescent Garnet with Quinacridone Crimson (Daniel Smith)



Iridescent Sunstone with Transparent Pyrrole (Daniel Smith)



FLORAL TRIO
13 x 15cm (5 1/8 x 6in)

This floral trio has been painted using unusually-named QoR watercolours in Bohemian Green Earth, French Cerulean Blue, Quinacridone Crimson and Diarylide Yellow, on Saunders Waterford 425gsm (200lb) Hot-pressed watercolour paper.

GLAZING WITH MIXES

Moving on from glazing with pure colours, this chart shows the effect of glazing with mixes. In the top row, begin with a mix of Burnt Umber and French Ultramarine and layer the pure colours on top.

Painted on Saunders Waterford 425gsm (200lb) Hot-pressed watercolour paper.

UNDERLAYER

French Ultramarine +
Burnt Umber



French Ultramarine +
Burnt Sienna



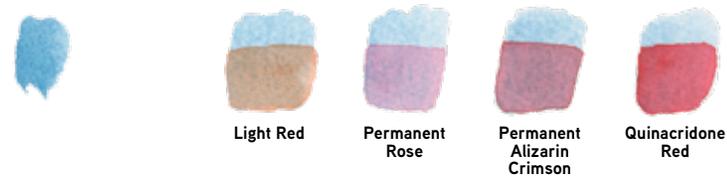
Cobalt Blue +
Burnt Sienna



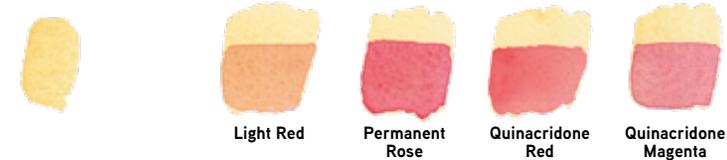
Cerulean + Raw Sienna



Cerulean



Raw Sienna



Burnt Sienna





1. First, apply the background with the Permanent Alizarin Crimson and Raw Sienna mix using the size 2/0 squirrel mop brush. Prop your board on a slight angle so that the paint runs down, giving you a wet edge to work with. When you have completed a section of the background, gently bang the board against your work surface to settle the pigments on the paper.



2. Use water to fade the colour to the bottom of the paper, then merge the tones to avoid hard lines. Mop up any wet areas with kitchen paper and leave to dry.



3. Sketch in some extra leaves on top of the wash, then paint the leaves with the assortment of green mixes. Begin with the number 6 brush but keep numbers 4 and 1 close to hand. Apply a Viridian–Raw Sienna mix first.



4. Use a Viridian–Burnt Sienna mix for some darker greens – keep in mind that this plant is lit from the left, so the leaves on the right will be darker.



5. Work each section in the same way, but alter the tone slightly each time. Rotate the paper if you need to.

Inside, Outside

Shells are a perfect subject for luminescent and mineral watercolours. Areas of subtle colour typically seen on the surface of the shell lend themselves to being painted wet into wet with a touch of iridescent sheen. The blooms created by the wet into wet technique are used to recreate the markings on the shells.

Both the inside and the outside of a shell are shown in this painting – hence the title of this project. The larger area, the outside, is painted first.

This painting is the only project that does not need to be worked on a board

WHAT I USED

Paints: Daniel Smith Extra Fine watercolours in Shadow Violet, Cobalt Blue, Iridescent Sunstone, Quinacridone Rose and Sepia.

Brushes: Sable brushes – numbers 6, 4 and 1.

Other tools or materials: Pencil and putty eraser.

Support: Saunders Waterford 638gsm (300lb) Hot-pressed watercolour paper.

THE PALETTE



Iridescent Sunstone; Quinacridone Rose; Cobalt Blue; Shadow Violet and Sepia.

THE MIXES



Iridescent Sunstone with Quinacridone Rose gradually added



Shadow Violet and Iridescent Sunstone



Iridescent Sunstone with Quinacridone Rose + Cobalt Blue – mixes ranging from pink to violet



Pure Shadow Violet, with Cobalt Blue gradually added



Sepia, with Shadow Violet – medium, medium dark and dark mixes

The full-size finished painting can be seen on page 147.

