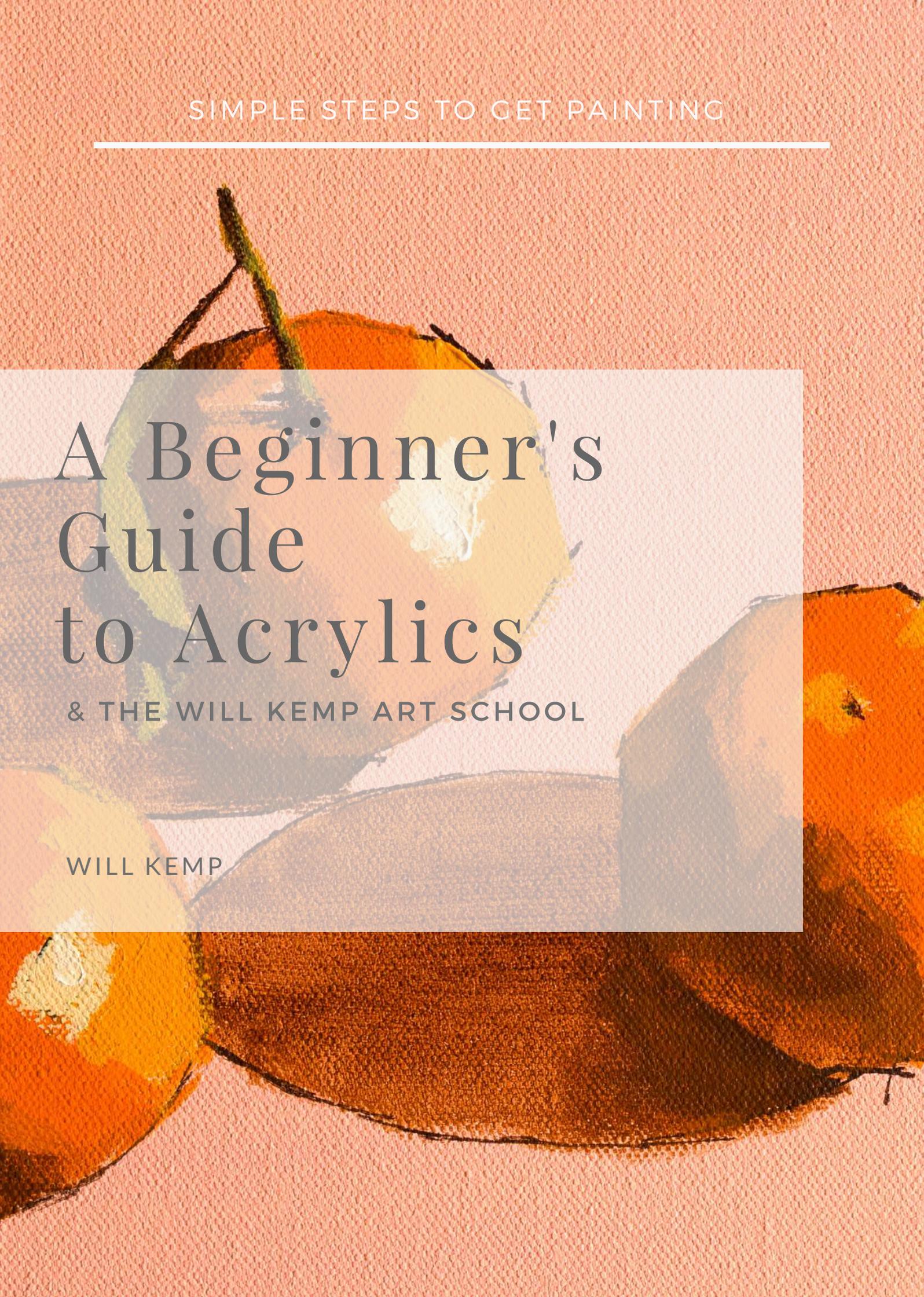


SIMPLE STEPS TO GET PAINTING

An acrylic painting of several oranges on a textured, light pink background. The oranges are rendered in various shades of orange, from bright yellow-orange to deep, dark brown, with visible brushstrokes and texture. One orange in the upper left has a green stem and leaf. The painting is partially obscured by a semi-transparent white rectangular box containing text.

A Beginner's Guide to Acrylics

& THE WILL KEMP ART SCHOOL

WILL KEMP

contents

- **1 WELCOME** - An introduction to Will Kemp & The Online Art School
- **8 WORKING WITH ACRYLICS** - The importance of flow
- **10 PAINT COVERAGE** - Opacity vs transparency
- **12 PALETTES** - Tear off & stay-wet
- **13 SUPPORTS** - Canvas, paper or board?
- **15 BRUSHES** - The difference between a flat and a filbert
- **17 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS** - Jam jars, paper towel & easels
- **19 COLOUR PALETTE** - My suggested basic acrylic colour palette to get you started
- **25 FREE TUTORIALS** - Free step-by-step video and written lessons
- **28 THE TEACHING METHOD** - Where to start on the website?
- **33 7 PAINTING PRINCIPLES** - Principles that will give you a solid foundation for any subject
- **38 PAID COURSES** - Which paid course is right for you. Drawing, Painting, Still Life or Portraits?





hello

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO ACRYLICS &
THE WILL KEMP ART SCHOOL

Morning class!

I'm Will Kemp, founder of Will Kemp Art School & I'd like to welcome you to my website!

If this is the first time you're visiting, you may be wondering where to start, so I've put together this beginners guide to show you how the different areas of the Will Kemp Art School fit together and answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

One of the biggest myths in art is that only some people can paint & draw.

People say it's just too hard for anyone to paint and only 'real' artists born with talent, can produce good work.

I started the Will Kemp Art School to prove that this is just not true.

So if you've ever dreamt of picking up a paintbrush and filling a canvas with colour but you don't know where to start, let's go on a creative journey together so you can discover how to 'see' like an artist.



"I love paint, I love colour and I love teaching people how to paint"

WILL KEMP

On the website I write simple, step-by-step tutorials based on Classical painting fundamentals. I cover materials, colour mixing and pigment choice, brush handling and palette knife techniques, giving you a great understanding of acrylics and painting principles that lay the foundation for all your future works.

With over 12 million Youtube views and 140,000+ subscribers, you can join other aspiring artists who are unlocking their hidden painting skills by learning the secrets of the Old Masters (but with new materials)

So grab a brew, maybe a biscuit and join me in the studio!

About Will

I started painting at the age of 9 with my first success featuring on the gallery section of Tony Harts TV show, winning a set of colouring pencils for, dare I say, a stunning rendition of the Taj Mahal. I was hooked!

After art school, I followed my passion and worked within the Museums sector for the Arts.

This enabled me to work on projects alongside The National Gallery, London & The Tate Gallery,

It meant I could give people unprecedented access to masterpieces they wouldn't normally see and inspire the hidden creativity within themselves.

I'd always painted at home at the weekends and handling Turners and Goya's during my day job, reminded me of my true love of painting, so I left the museum and set up a studio gallery with my wife Vanessa.

We found ourselves at the front of an old teapot factory with no heating or natural light but it did give me the creative freedom I'd been missing.

It was our painting paradise.

Adapting my Methods to Acrylics

Open to the public with mounting bills to pay, the 6-month drying time and fumes of the oil paints I'd always worked with, didn't seem so attractive now so I embarked on methods to adapt my oil painting techniques to acrylics.

Acrylics had always suffered from a reputation of bright, oversaturated pigments but I began focusing on simple, natural colour mixing and varied my painting techniques using classical and contemporary methods.

I found acrylics gave me great flexibility, thin transparent washes like watercolors enabling me to build up multiple layers of colour and thick impasto swathes creating texture and movement.

The colour palette could be vivid and luminous but it could be also muted and subtle.

Acrylics dried quickly but I found taking techniques and colour palettes from the past Masters and combining them with the qualities and properties of acrylics, turned the 'disadvantages' into an advantage and the best bit.....

They diluted and cleaned up just with water.

Over the next few years we expanded into bigger, warmer and brighter studio spaces where I could paint professionally full-time and in early 2010 I received a Queen Elizabeth Scholarship to study classical painting techniques in Florence, Italy.

Learning in a city that holds so many of the Old Master paintings I admired was a great privilege.

It was on this journey that I learnt such a huge amount, some of the painting approaches I'd created for myself were just too complicated.

I'd been using too many colours and working too hard.

This was the inspiration that led to me to create the educational website resource Will Kemp Art School, to help other aspiring artists not make the same mistakes I had and share my professional art secrets with them.

Using acrylics is the simplest way to learn how to paint successfully

Many students come to me with a real passion for learning how to paint but just don't know where they should start.

Using acrylics is the simplest way to learn how to paint successfully, so I've put together free tutorials with procrastinating painters in mind!

On the website you'll find simple projects, perfect for the absolute beginner, encouragement for days when you're facing a blank canvas and feeling a little bit daunted, lessons that doesn't only teach new techniques but inspire you to start.

By working within a framework, you'll have a clearly defined goal and can develop a painting habit, rather than putting off your painting aspirations any longer!



a simple approach

I used to buy hundreds of different colours, try to research magic 'formulas' and constantly be looking for secret painting recipes. But the more I painted, the more I realised.

Simplicity was the key.

I found I could get better results using a limited palette, my paintings came together quicker and were more harmonious.

As a professional artist, I'm often asked what materials do I use, and nowadays it's actually very few, but they're a really well chosen select few.

When you go to the art store, especially with acrylics, there's a such a large range of different paint colours, mediums and gels, it's easy to become overwhelmed.

So throughout the lessons, I'll show you how to build creativity, concentrating on painting skills and learning many of the fundamentals of how painting works rather than thinking the solution lies in a new paint tube.

working with acrylics

Before we get started, it's handy to have a general overview of the materials that'll we'll be using and why I've chosen them.

Most paints are made by mixing dry paint pigment together with a wet binder. The difference between the type of paints you see in the art store, for example, oil paint, acrylic paint or watercolour, is simply due to the different type of binder used.

Acrylic paints use an acrylic polymer emulsion binder, which means they are water-soluble when wet but become water-resistant when dry.

This allows you to build a painting in layers, without disturbing the layer underneath (also perfect for hiding any mistakes!)

Acrylic's dry by evaporation and tend to dry quite quickly.

Artist's refer to this as having a short 'working time', however, this can vary depending on several different factors, the main ones are:

- How thick or thin you apply or layout the paint (on the palette and canvas)
 - Absorbency of the surface your working on
 - What you dilute the paint with, either water or a specialist medium
 - The heat and humidity of the environment you're painting in
-

Evaporation can be controlled by:

- Using a stay-wet palette that has been designed specifically to keep acrylic paints wet and workable for longer. It will stop the air getting to your paints, the longer they're out in the atmosphere the quicker they dry off. The stay-wet palette will keep the paints wet for a good few days, in comparison to if they were just left out in the open air where small mixes can dry off in a few minutes
- There are specialist acrylic polymer mediums you can add into your paint mixes to dilute and keep them wetter for longer or extend their 'working time'. They can change the consistency of acrylic paint and allow you more flexibility and creative freedom than any other type of paint. The trick is to use the right ones for the right situation
- Using OPEN or Interactive Acrylics specially designed to stay wet or open for longer
- Misting the paints with water



paint coverage

The most common acrylic paints are available in artist quality, student quality, and hobby-grade and usually come in tubes.

I mostly demonstrate using artist quality paints as they offer the highest pigment levels, the widest choice of colour with a limited colour shift when the paints dry.

Student quality give less paint coverage and have a greater colour shift but the more affordable price range makes them good for large scale painting and under-painting.

The main difference between the ranges, is the ratio of pigment to binder.

The cheaper the product, the less pigment is used and this usually results in less opacity and thinner consistency, so artist quality paints are always worth the investment - particularly Titanium White.

The other thing to consider is a pigment's covering power - in other words it's inherent opacity or transparency. This is something all pigments vary in, by nature, depending on their chemical make up.

For example, an earth mineral pigment such as an Ochre, is made from finely ground rock, when mixed with the binder, it makes an opaque paint that has pretty good coverage.

In comparison to a pigment that has come from a modern dye or a man-made synthetic, such as Quinacridone (called synthetic organics) which is more transparent with translucent qualities.

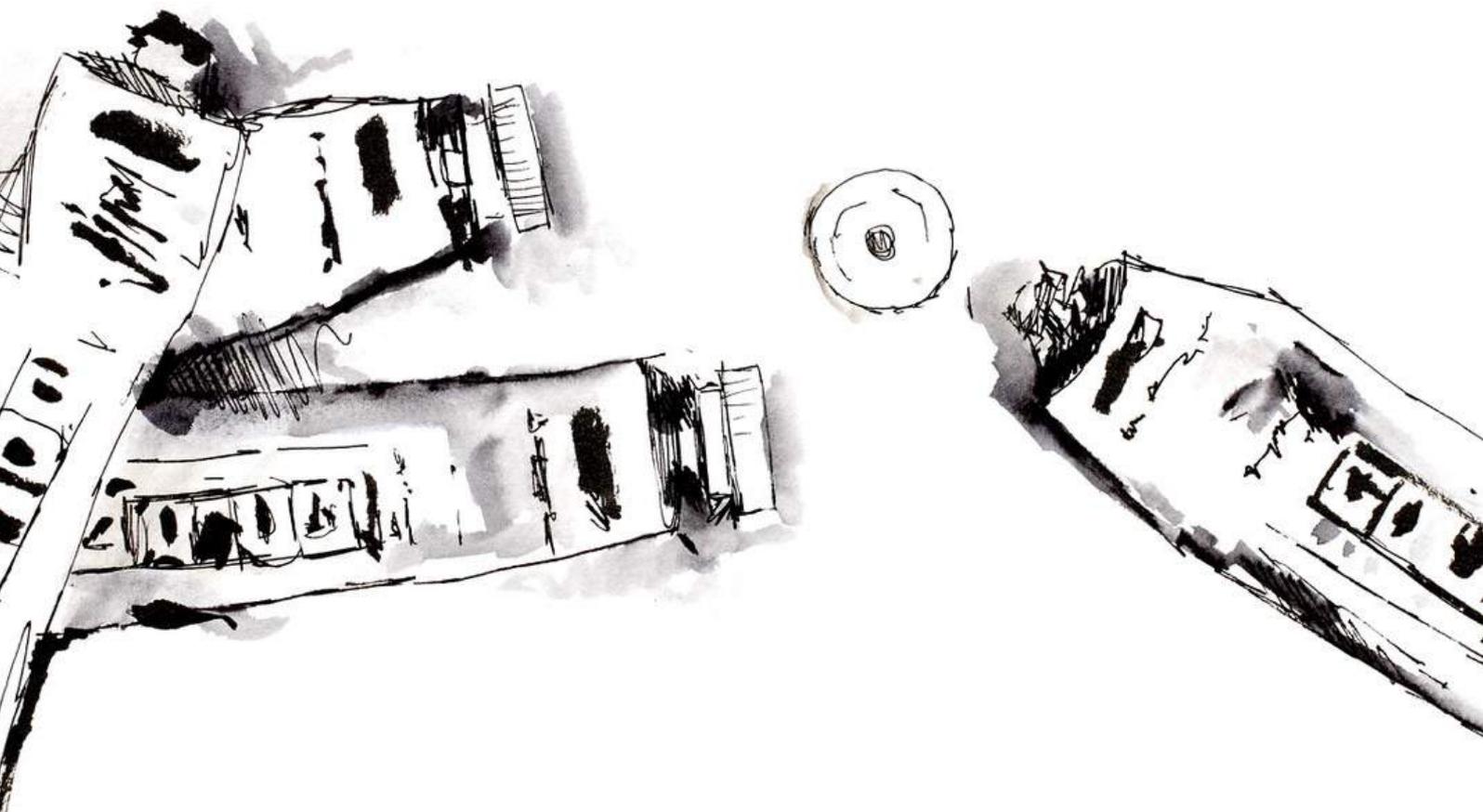
It is very handy to understand these differences so you utilise their qualities to your advantage.

Opaque colours cover other paints easily and are great for making solid, flat areas of colour and covering up any mistakes you've made.

Transparent colours are used for luminous glazing and subtle tinting usually at the later stages of a painting.

They are often labelled on a paint tube to guide you, for example, Winsor & Newton use the following abbreviations:

- T for transparent colours
- ST for semi-transparent colours
- SO semi-opaque colours
- O opaque colours



palettes

"IN TERMS OF PALETTE CHOICES, I TEND TO USE A TEAR-OFF PALETTE OR FOR LONGER PAINTING SESSIONS, A COMBINATION OF A TEAR-OFF AND A STAY-WET PALETTE"

A tear-off palette is made up of many thin layers of a specially coated disposable smooth paper, which makes it excellent as a mixing surface. This is small and light enough to be hand held.

You can mix on the top layer and when you've finished your painting session, just peel it off, throw it away and you've got a fresh clean surface underneath, ready to start again.

A Stay-Wet palette has been designed specifically to keep acrylic paints wet and workable for longer.

I think of this palette as a 'holding bay' that I transfer my larger paint mixes into.

I don't tend to mix directly onto this palette as the surface of the grease-proof paper is slightly wrinkly and tears easy when using a metal palette

knife so it's really to keep my mixes good for a few days at a time, so I can come back to it and top up.

It's made up of a shallow lidded tray, a piece of blotting paper and a piece of grease-proof paper and is best kept horizontal on a flat surface.

The blotting paper sits snugly in the bottom of the tray and you soak it with clean water, next you lay the grease-proof paper on top and then lay your paints on top of that.

When you're finished painting for the day, pop on the lid so the paint is kept moist by drawing water up from the blotting paper as needed.

paper, canvas, board

The great thing about acrylics is that they're so flexible they can be painted on practically anything, paper, board or canvas.

When you're first starting, the most affordable options are acrylic paper, heavy-weight watercolour paper, or canvas board.

Acrylic Paper comes in pads, has a substantial weight 300gsm (140lb) to prevent buckling with water and slightly textured with good absorption so you can paint straight onto it. I like using this for colour mixing and small painting studies.

Watercolour Paper is available in sheets or pads, look for a 300gsm heavy-weight paper as cheaper paper buckles when you add water to it, tears when you try to erase it and rolls into lumps at the critical moment!

I like Cold-pressed paper, which is the texture in-between rough and hot-pressed paper, having a slightly textured surface this paper is sometimes called NOT. The Not stands for "Not Hot pressed" I find the surface is good when you're using Acrylic Markers or thin washes.

Canvas board is either thin cardboard with a slight texture applied to it or a piece of thin board with the canvas wrapped around the edges and glued to the back.

The ones with actual canvas wrapped around them are a far nicer painting surface with better 'grab' and absorption. They have a slight texture from the weave of the canvas but are super light yet strong, these are a great all rounder as they can handle thin washes and thick texture.

A box canvas you buy from the art store comes stretched around a frame, called a stretcher bar (usually wooden) and has already been primed in the factory with a white gesso. This prepares the surface of the fabric for a nicer painting experience, so buying a pre-primed canvas means you're good to go.

Stretcher bars can vary in depth, and what you'll often find on the back of the canvas is a little bag of canvas keys.

Canvas's can expand or contract with changes in humidity, leaving the painting surface a little bit baggy so tapping out the canvas keys keeps the surface nice and taut.

They slide into little slots on the back of the stretcher bars and you just tap them out with a hammer, which in turn stretches out the canvas.

Throughout the website I use different supports prepared in different ways to get the most out each lesson.

As a side note, you can buy raw cotton canvas or linen on a roll and stretch and prepare a canvas yourself.

Unless you want the satisfaction of stretching your own, going through the whole process can be tricky with lots of decisions - making it a bit of an energy zapper before you've even begun!



brushes

I find it's best when you're first starting just to begin with a few brushes and keep it really simple. This way you'll learn how to handle a brush and discover which brushes suit your style of painting.

I'm amazed at how attached I can get to some of my brushes especially with some of the older ones! You'll find the bristles start to go into the shape of how you paint, how you particularly hold your brush and how you make marks on the canvas. Throughout the website tutorials, I use four of the most common shapes.

A flat, a bright, a filbert and a round.

A flat is exacty that, flat edged with a very sharp angle to it and great for painting crisp edges.

A bright is a variation on a flat, with a shorter bristle length and slightly tapered edge which makes it good for moving thicker paint around the canvas.

The filbert brush is just a flat brush that has been trimmed at the sides so it's got a nice curve to it, making it excellent for blending colours together.

With a round brush, all the bristles come together in a point and I like to use a smaller round brush. They are absolutely perfect for getting details in your paintings.

Brush bristles are made from either natural hairs or synthetic fibres. As a general rule, I find synthetic brushes more manageable with acrylics because they don't absorb water as much as natural bristles which are much more porous. This is important as you'll be cleaning the brushes out in water throughout the entire painting process.

The synthetic fibres enable the manufacturer to produce a good priced, fine tuned commercial brush perfect for beginners.

But every bristle has its place so it depends on the job in hand!

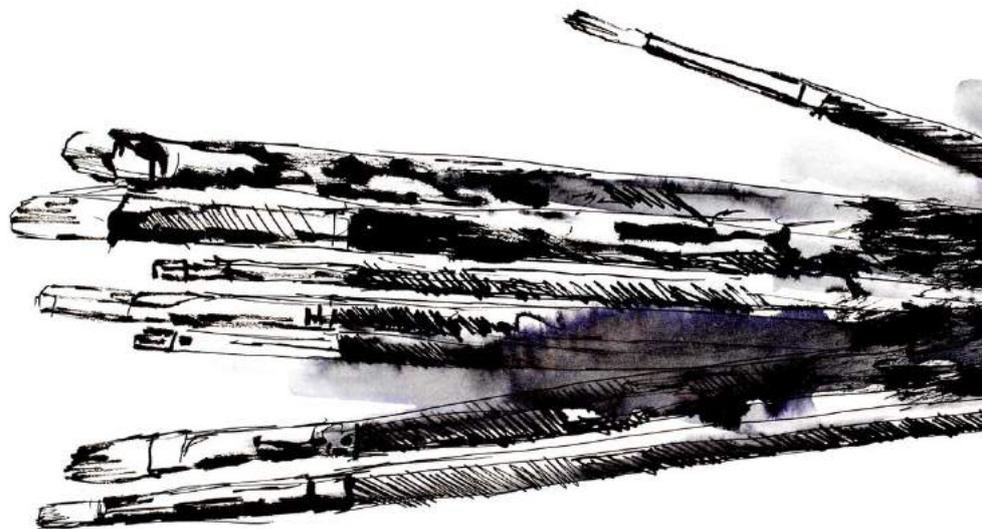
The stiffest natural bristles are usually from hog hair, so if you wanted to move lots of thick undiluted paint around a canvas, you could use a hog brush, as you can really scrub it in and push the paint around. However, if you used the same hog brush for a very watery wash, it would soak up the water and leave the bristles too soft and splaying outwards.

If you wanted something that was really soft and gentle for feathering edges you could invest in a sable brush. Sable holds loads of water and has a great spring making it ideal for precise watery washes, careful handling and subtle blending as it returns to its natural point after use.

These are the most expensive brushes due to the rarity of the hair, and you'll find manufacturers make sable brushes with a short handle because artists mostly use them for watercolour.

I use a short-handled brush for detailed work and a longer handled brush means I can stand back from the easel, hold it at arms length and make more gesture marks with it.

One of the last but most important things to remember when you're painting with acrylics, is to clean your brushes regularly and keep the actual bristles moist. This is because acrylics dry so quickly, they can easily ruin your brushes and if they dry hard on to your bristles, it's very difficult to get off - not that I'm speaking from experience....

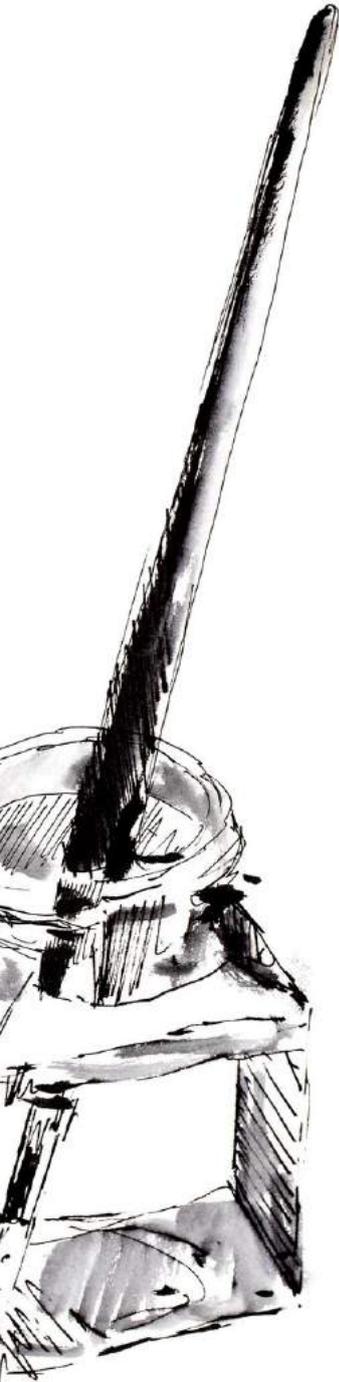


additional materials

For the additional materials, I keep things very simple:

- A jam jar of water
- Palette knife, I use a size 45 by a company called RGM. I really like the fact that it's got an angle to it, so when I scrape paint, I can really get all of the paint off the palette, and it's a great manageable size for mixing colours.
- A water spray that I occasionally mist over the acrylic paints on the palette. This just helps to keep them workable for longer
- Kitchen roll or paper towel, I use this all throughout my paintings. Often you'll see me with a bit of it scrunched up in my hand so I can just adjust the actual amount of water on my brush by blotting it into the kitchen roll
- Standing easel is called an "H" easel just because of the actual shape of it, but it's really handy because it gives a secure surface for me to paint against. You can use the grips that are on the top of the easel to hold your canvas or board in position. When you're working at an easel you can stand back from your paintings and move in close for details, and it just lets you use your arm when you're painting so you've got a nice gesture to your work.
- You can also use a table top easel or work on a flat surface onto a board, just angle it slightly towards you when you're sitting down.

That's all we need to get started!



colour palette

"I TRY TO PAINT EVERY DAY AND OFTEN ENJOY THE PREPARATION AS MUCH AS THE ACTUAL PAINTING, I REALLY HOPE YOU ENJOY DEVELOPING YOUR OWN PERSONAL DAILY PAINTING PRACTICE TOO"

WILL KEMP

choosing a basic colour palette

A great deal of things in nature are actually very muted, it is often the difference between light and dark and warm and cool colours, rather than the use of a bright colour.

If you want to paint subtle still life paintings, choose muted earth colours.

If you want very bright, vivid abstracts, you might need some more man-made pigments that have a higher colour saturation.

My suggested basic acrylic colour palette is somewhere in-between. It allows bright colour mixtures as well as subtle. The pigments are all light-fast (will not fade over time) and are a mixture of series (the price labelling system of paints) so the cost will be kept down.

In his book "Blue and Yellow don't make Green", Michael Wilcox talks extensively about the colour bias of paint.

Colour bias happens due to the trace colours found in paint pigments. They can cause trouble when trying to mix bright clean colours when you use the wrong paint pigments.

One way to overcome this problem is to have a palette that consists of two of each of the primary colours, red, yellow and blue.

- A red with an orange bias for mixing orange - Cadmium Red
 - A red with a violet bias for mixing violet - Quinacridone Red
 - A yellow with orange bias - Cadmium Yellow
 - A yellow with green bias - Hansa Yellow
 - A blue with green bias - Cerulean Blue
 - A blue with a purple bias - Ultramarine Blue
-

However, I find in practice, especially if you are just starting this can be a tad overwhelming and I recommend starting with a limited palette of 3 tubes of paint consisting of a warm and a cool colour:

- Burnt Umber (muted orange based brown) or Burnt Sienna (brighter orange based brown)
- Ultramarine Blue
- Titanium White

I know you might think this is a misprint and you may be asking what happened to the primary colours?

Moving from drawing to painting is hard enough without the distraction of trying to mix lots of colours if you force yourself to have less you will learn not only about mass tone and undertone but also a great lesson about the importance of value (how dark or light a subject is)

Mass tone & Undertone

Colour – has both a mass tone and an undertone

Mass tone – the appearance of a paint colour when squeezed or applied in a thick blob of paint without dilution.

Undertone – the colour produced when you scrape a small amount of paint over a white surface

eg: Phthalo blue has a dark blue mass tone and a yellow/green colour bias in undertone.

If you learn about value, colour bias and complementary colours (opposites) you will start to understand more fully the different qualities of paint.

You'd be amazed at the great paintings you can achieve with just a few colours, have a look at the [Simple Jug Still Life Lesson](#) to get started before extending your palette further.

“I am a simple man, and I use simple materials: Ivory black, Vermilion (red), Prussian blue, Yellow ochre, Flake white and no medium. That’s all I’ve ever used in my paintings

L.S.LOWRY

What other acrylic colours should I buy to start with?

When you're ready to move into colour, below I've listed a basic acrylic colour palette that will help you achieve the next level in your painting.

To create 90% of the colours you will need for realistic painting use the following:

- Titanium White
 - Cadmium Yellow Light
 - Permanent Alizarin Crimson
 - Burnt Umber
 - Ultramarine Blue
-

Why do I need these particular colours?

Burnt Umber – although this looks very dark and dull, it is really handy to have, both for blocking in the darks on portraits and for toning down colours. It is also invaluable in oil painting due to its quick drying time so it is a great pigment to get to know.

Ultramarine Blue – sometimes beginners steer away from this blue because it is mentioned so often in art books and seems, well a bit boring, but it has good opacity, great for subtle skies and mixed with Burnt Umber will make a dark very close to black.

Cadmium Yellow Light – good opacity for a yellow and just generally great!

Permanent Alizarin Crimson – this will look too dark when you buy it and you'll feel a bit disappointed, it also feels different than the other pigments because it has a gloss sheen to it and is very translucent. But a little goes a long way. Add some white to make a killer bright pink.

Titanium White – good opacity, good coverage, gooooooood.

Occasionally you will need an extended palette of:

- Yellow Ochre
 - Raw Umber
 - Ivory Black
 - Cadmium Red
 - Phthalo Blue (Green Shade)
-

Phthalo Blue (green shade) - very high tinting strength, great for making very bright blues.

Cadmium Red Light - if you want a really red red.

Cadmium Yellow Light and Permanent Alizarin Crimson can make a colour close to Cadmium Red.

Yellow Ochre - great for a coloured ground and good to start to mix more subtle greens, if you unleash Hansa Yellow and Phthalo Blue you will have luminous green disasters.

These pigments work well both with acrylic and oil paint which makes it very transferable when you are learning to paint.



free lessons

You can discover over 7+ hours of free acrylic painting videos ranging from the secrets of colour mixing to choosing the perfect brush.

With over 12 million views on YouTube, students have achieved some fantastic results!

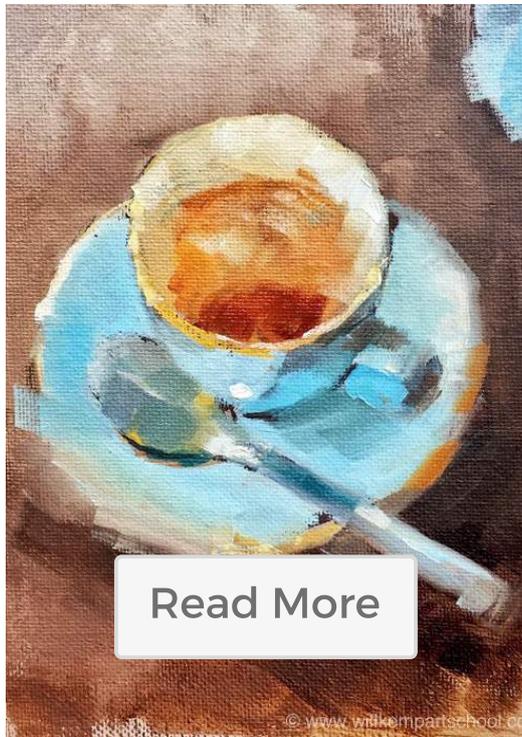
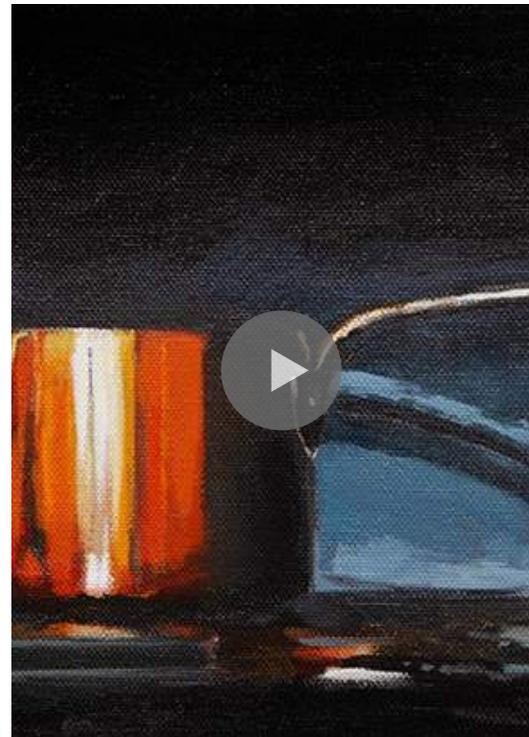
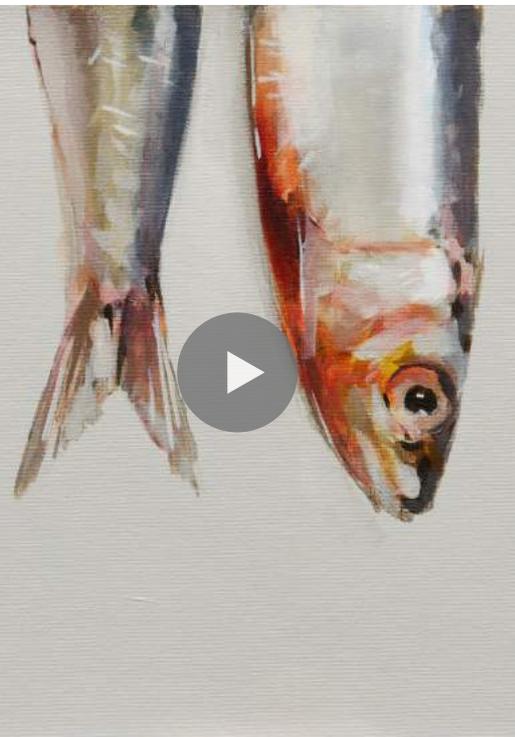
free lessons



Clicking the play button will link you to a video tutorial on willkempartschool.com

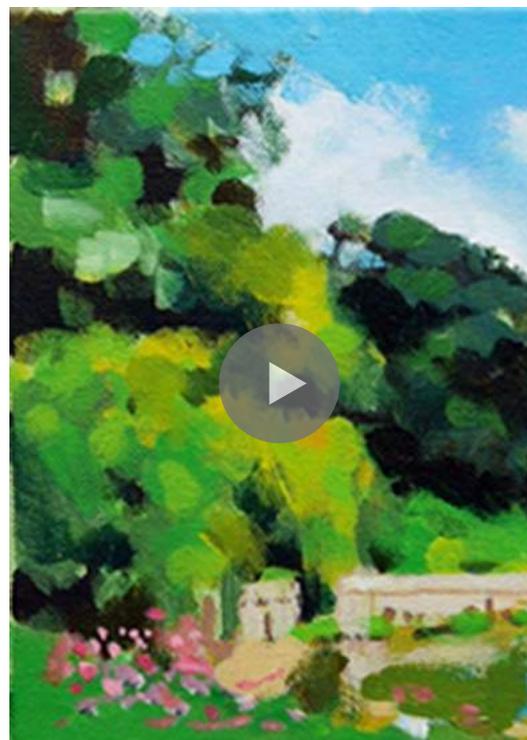
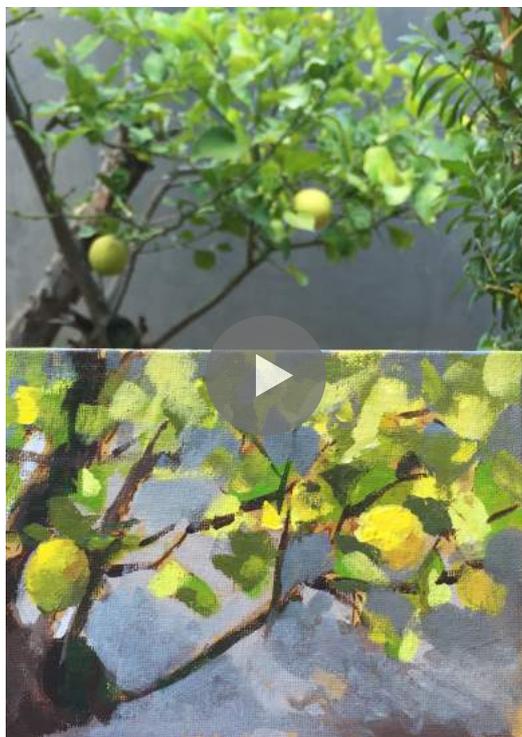
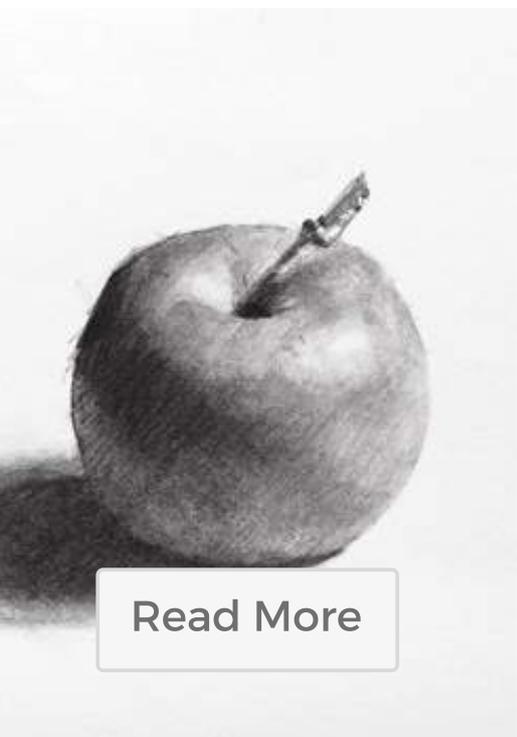
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Clicking the 'Read More' button will link you to a written tutorial on willkempartschool.com



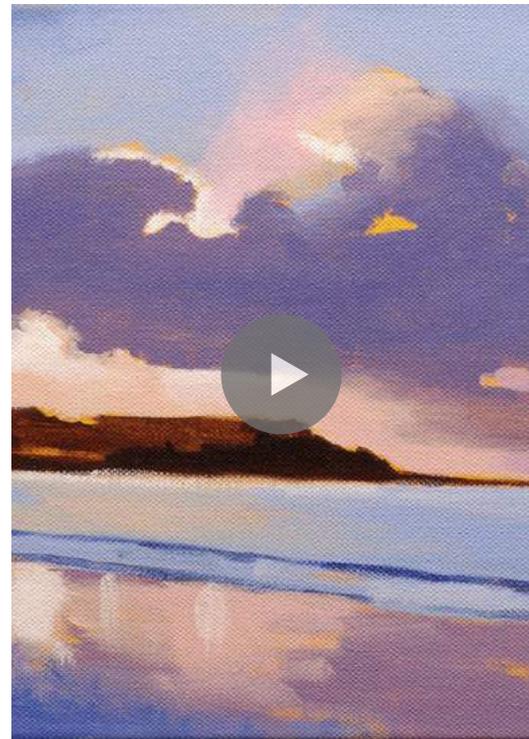
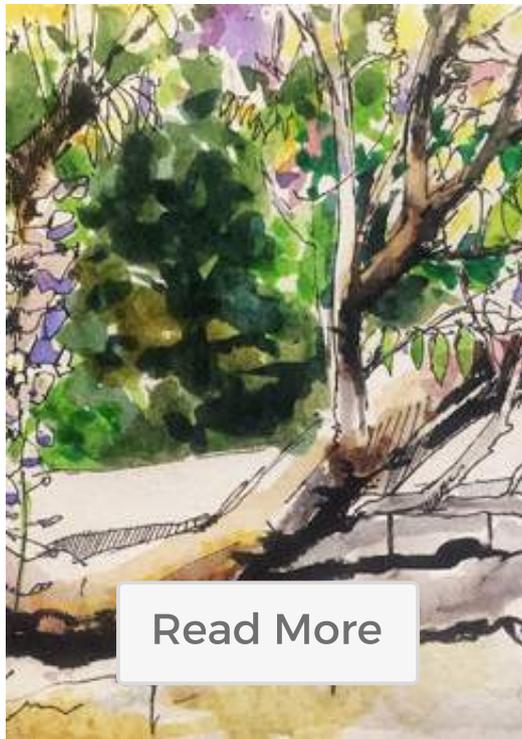
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The Teaching Method

I've often found when trying to navigate a new website for the first time it's the equivalent of trying to read a book that's had pages ripped out and arranged randomly!

You can dip in anywhere and extract something of interest without regard to what goes before or after it, each article, each technique, stands on its own.

But what if you want to know how everything relates to each other?

What if you might have missed a crucial step in your learning?

This part of the guide is designed to show you how the different areas of the Will Kemp Art School fit together. From the principles behind my teaching, free articles & free video lessons to how to find the perfect course for you.

So the first thing we need to look at is the method of the Art School

Q. What is the Online Art School, what does it teach and is it right for me?

A simple approach to classical painting.

The website guides you through the complex world of drawing & painting by showing the fundamentals you need.



“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who had practiced one kick 10,000 times.”

BRUCE LEE

Q. Do you work with watercolours, acrylics or oils?

90% of the lessons I demonstrate with acrylic paints.

Why?

Because I've found this to be the most effective method for beginners to learn about colour mixing, the properties of paint, brushwork, blending without ending up in a sea of mud!

I've painted in watercolours, acrylics and oils and my styles have ranged from abstract, impressionistic to realistic portraiture in order to realise my own personal style.

You can make mistakes with acrylics and easily paint over them.

Learning about glazes and impasto techniques quickly and easily without worrying about the chemical properties of Oil.

Once you have these skills you'll be able to move into Oils with ease (it's like learning classical painting techniques by stealth - think Karate Kid, 'wax on wax off!')

Q. Do you recommend a starting point and why?

Each student comes to painting with a different set of experiences and skills, so there isn't a 'one size fits all' approach.

When you're first starting to learn a new skill it can often be overwhelming, you can easily get information overload which leads to 'paralysis by analysis' and a blank canvas.

Here are some of the most common questions I receive at the art school.

Where do I start with drawing?
Should I concentrate on colour-mixing?
Where do I start with your courses?
Where do I start..... first ??

Take a deep breath, grab a brew (and a couple of chocolate biscuits) and we're going to walk through the layers of learning and the perfect lesson for you, even if you've never picked up a paintbrush before.



In an ideal world we'd start with a Cioccolato gelato and then get drawing!

Q. Is there any order to how I approach the articles on the blog?

First in pencil, then in charcoal, then black & white paint. (In Classical Atelier's these studies can last two years so don't feel too pressured to rush through to get to the colour!) but often when you first have the urge to put paint to canvas, colour is the thing that's exciting.

So why spend the time on drawing?

80% of a painting's success comes from the drawing.

Maybe even 90%.

Even abstract paintings have an underlying balance of structure and composition, so when trying to create a realistic painting effect, your drawing is even more important.

Drawing skills are key to understanding how to 'see' and learning the importance of tonal value & contrast.

Q. What if my drawing is pretty sweet, where do I start with painting?

I recommend you have a look at the free video lessons I've listed above and you can find more articles about getting started under the 'Acrylics tab' at the top of the Home page.

7 painting principles

"PAINTING IS DRAWING WITH THE ADDED COMPLICATION OF TONE AND COLOR."

HAROLD SPEED - THE SCIENCE & PRACTICE OF PAINTING

Q. What are the 7 Painting Principles (and why do they matter)?

My philosophy is, less is more.

By focusing on the '7 Painting Principles' I offer a distilled approach to classical painting.

I teach lessons for improving your artistic potential in the simplest way possible (and the quickest time) sharing the best tips, techniques and ideas from my years as an artist to make sure you can fulfil your artistic potential.

I want to take you on a journey from amateur to an artist.

- Fewer brushes for quicker painting.
- Fewer paints for easy colour mixing.
- Fewer techniques for optimal results.

The following principles will give you a solid foundation for anything you chose to paint, regardless of subject or medium.

These are the why behind the how.

You'll discover why you should be selective with composition, why colour mixing 'works' (and why it doesn't), and see the benefits of dramatic use of contrast. Whether you want to paint portraits, abstracts, still life's, the same principles apply.

- 1: Coloured ground
- 2: Contrast & value
- 3: Composition
- 4: Colour mixing
- 5: Perspective
- 6: Negative space
- 7: Glazing

Below are links to posts and free video tutorials that fall under the 7 principles so you can work through the articles chronologically, as if you were in my studio.

1. Coloured Ground



How a prepared canvas can drastically improve your painting

Use an Old Master technique to rapidly improve your painting



How to apply a coloured ground with acrylic paint + video

Video demonstration of how to apply a coloured ground



The Immersive Power of Painting

A painting truth you can learn too late

2. Contrast



The Importance of Contrast in Drawing & Painting

How tone & value are one of the most important things to learn when painting



How to instantly add depth to your mountains in landscapes

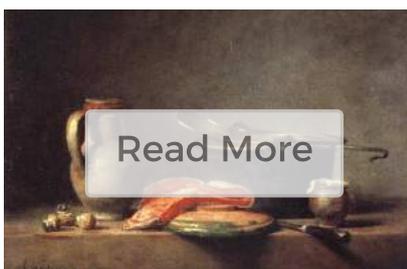
Learn how Da Vinci used science to create depth



Landscape Sketching in the Highlands

On location sketching, looking for the shapes, spaces and the differences between lights and darks

3. Composition



The secret of good composition

How variety is key to creating interesting compositions



The Rule of Thirds in Landscape painting + video

The simple rule to ensure a balanced composition



Are You Making Any of These 7 Compositional Mistakes ?

How to avoid common issues when drawing still lifes

4 Colour Mixing



[Read More](#)

How to choose a paint starter set for beginners

Without making an expensive mistake



[Read More](#)

How your hairdresser can teach you to mix colour

How hue, value & saturation are 3 keys to perfect colour mixing



[Read More](#)

The 3 tricks of complementary colours you can learn from Van Gogh

Understanding the colour wheel



The hidden hues of colour mixing + video

Mixing muddy colours? You might just be using the wrong pigment



How to balance warm and cool colours + video

How artists have used colour theory throughout history



[Read More](#)

Are these 3 black paint myths holding you back?

Don't use black? How your art teachers had it all wrong

5. Perspective



[Read More](#)

How to draw perspective for beginners

Simple techniques for adding depth in your drawings



[Read More](#)

Sketching the Light and Landscape in Venice

An inspiration Sketching trip through the streets and canals of Venice



French Café Scene with Acrylics + Video

Looking at an easy way to check your perspective when composing your image

6. Negative Space



Are you Unwittingly Creating a Compositional Cardinal Sin?

How to avoid a visual jarring in your drawings



How to Paint a Plein Air Sketch of a Lemon Tree with Acrylics + video

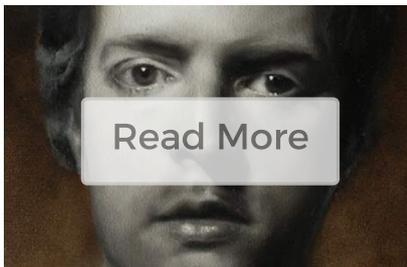
A lemon tree with some lovely negative spaces in-between the branches



Urban Sketching Tutorial for Beginners + Video

How surrounding shapes outside your main subject can add context to your drawings

7. Glazing



How to Paint a Portrait in Oil

Step-by-step black & white self-portrait tutorial using classical oil painting methods



Beginners Acrylic Still Life Course + Video

Glazing over parts of the cherry with paints that have a transparent nature



Acrylic Still Life Study of a Fish using Glazes + Video

Using colour glazes to create a luminosity in your acrylic paintings

paid courses

IN-DEPTH VIDEO COURSES



Drawing & Acrylic Painting Courses

In addition to the free videos, I've created a range of paid downloadable video courses.

I've taken care to film everything from my perspective so you can see exactly what I'm doing as we go through the entire painting process in real-time.

Most of the courses are over 3 hours of video instruction, alongside full-colour photographs and drawing guides. They are a systematic approach with a step-by-step progressive structure.

They have been designed with a beginner in mind, carefully going through the steps at a pace that introduces new colours and techniques slowly.

Each section links to the one before and at each stage, you can see your work progressing – and this can be the key to your painting success.

Below is a suggested route through the courses and if you click any of the '**learn more**' buttons below, it will send you to a page that contains more details on each specific course.

Q. Which is the best paid course for me?

It depends where you're starting from, but if you've never drawn before, or studied drawing, I would recommend the Absolute Beginners Drawing Course - even if you want to learn how to paint.

Why?

It will set you so far ahead, so quickly, it really is the most 'bang for your buck' for a set of principles that don't change. They will help your drawing, painting even photography.

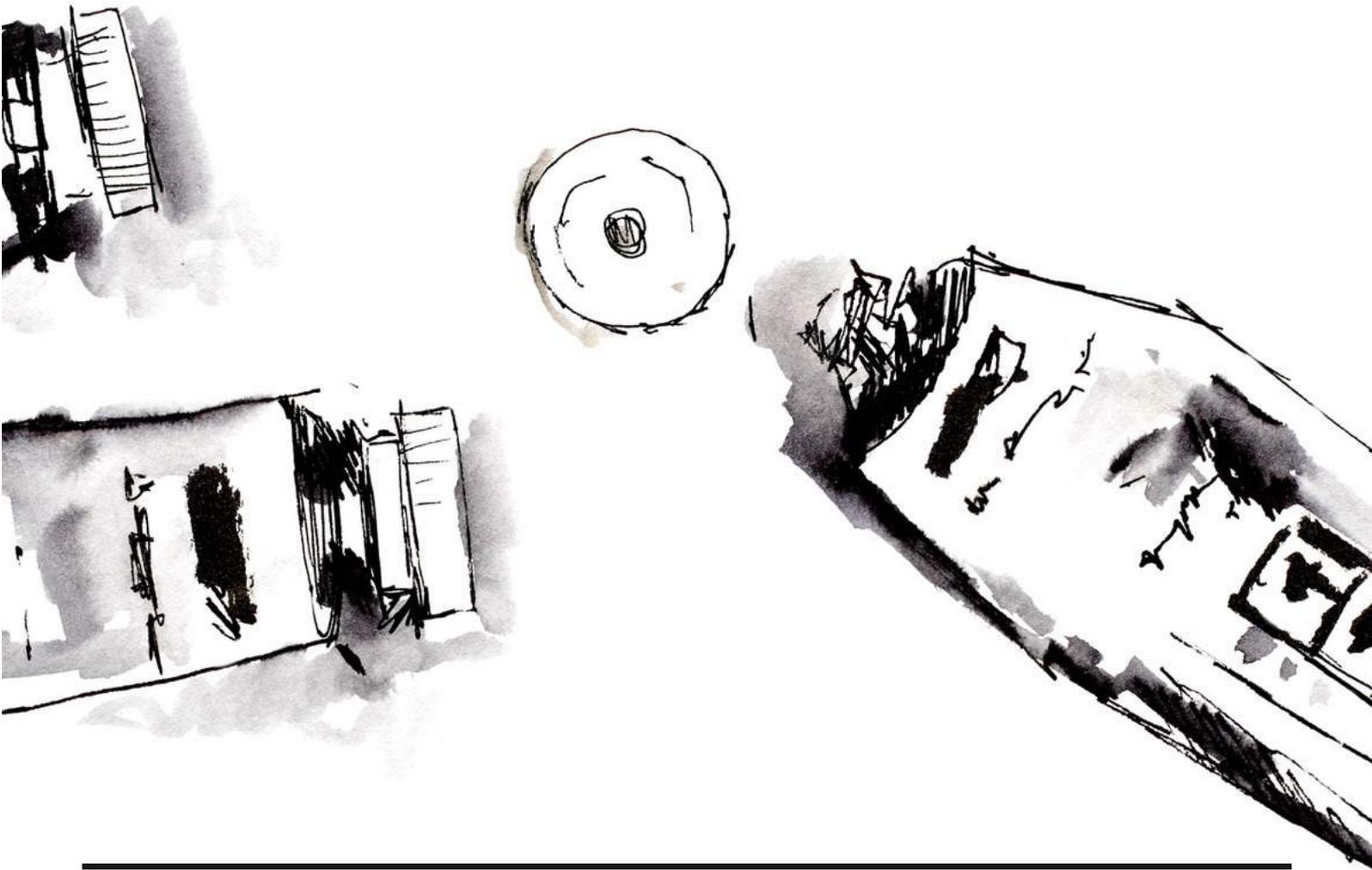
Once you start to learn 'how to see like an artist' it influences everything you create.

Often, beginners dive into painting and then get frustrated that their paintings look 'wrong' and give up.

But the truth is, their painting skills were actually pretty good, nice colour mixing, great impressionistic brushwork – the thing that let the painting down was the drawing.

If you don't know the basic theory of how drawing works, it will hold your painting back for years.

The drawing course has been 'designed with painters in mind', moving you from simple line drawings to more complicated perspective scenes.



beginner's courses

GETTING STARTED COURSES



how to draw

Beginners Drawing Course

Designed to help frustrated artists find a way to express themselves by drawing with confidence.

Over 3 hours of tuition you'll go on a creative journey to discover that you can pick up a pencil, wherever, whenever & actually start drawing

[Learn More](#)



how to draw

Light & Shadow Course

This course has been designed to help bridge the gap between graphite pencil drawings to charcoal, chalk and pens whilst subtly introducing colour.

We look at new materials, techniques and work on some figurative drawings

[Learn More](#)



how to paint

Beginners Acrylic Painting

A great starting point & overview to Acrylics learning Classical painting methods in simple step-by-step video lessons.

A logical progression, from handling a brush, achieving perfect paint consistency to creating depth and texture

[Learn More](#)

So after the drawing course, where do you go next?

You can either develop your drawing skills further or jump into painting.

Q. I'm handy with a pencil, but I've never tried charcoal

There can often be a missing link where accomplished drawers can become discouraged with painting due to the lack of control of a brush, confusion of colour mixing, and frustration with the quick drying time.

The Light & Shadow Course aims to teach techniques that bridge the gap. It looks at the stage in-between pencil drawing and painting.

There are hidden gems in this course.

Pro Tip: This is how a Classical Atelier painting curriculum would progress, from pencil to charcoal, before introducing painting.

This course can be particularly helpful for oil portrait painters looking to study the Classical black-and-white portrait course as many of the same principles for a good foundation of portrait painting apply.

Q. I'm eager to start painting..but I'm scared I'm not ready

The Absolute Beginners Acrylic Painting Course has been designed with painting procrastinators in mind! Inspiring artists who have been putting off their creative dreams and building confidence by slowly introducing painting concepts one at a time.

It goes through step-by-step practical painting demonstrations that introduce you to all the fundamental painting techniques.

Q. I always seem to mix mud and don't understand colour..help!

After drawing, colour mixing is the next important skill to master as a painter.

It doesn't matter if you're painting portraits, still life's or abstracts. Having a good foundation of how colours work together is key, and learning how to mix the colour you're after will help in all aspects of your paintings.

The Simple Colour Mixing Course expands on the limited palette we use in the Acrylic's Beginner Course

Q. I want to paint flowers but I struggle mixing greens

The Floral Still Life Course goes in depth, from start to finish with a single still life painting using Classical techniques.

From preparing the canvas, drawing out, to adding glazes to the final stages of the painting. You'll learn how to mix and balance naturalistic greens to create a subtle acrylic palette that will give contrast and a sense of sunlight hitting the leaves and the challenge of painting realistic whites within petals.

Q. I've enjoyed the Still Life's on the free lessons but want something a bit more challenging.

The Still Life Masterclass with Acrylics Course looks more in-depth at how to work with multiple layers of glazing with still life subjects. It looks at more complicated subjects of reflective surfaces such as silver, ceramic and mahogany.

The course looks at two studies, the first is a silver Goblet using only two colours so students at all levels can create some really fantastic results, the second study is more challenging using a wider range of colours and optical glazing techniques.

After learning the basic principles of colour mixing, brush handling and the working properties of acrylics you can move on to some more advanced lessons in portraiture.

still life courses

GETTING STARTED COURSES



colour mixing

Acrylic Colour-Mixing Course

Understanding how colour works in painting and learning the foundations of colour theory teaches you a simple approach that achieves perfect colour mixes and harmony in your paintings every time

[Learn More](#)



still life

Floral Still Life Course

This goes in depth, from start to finish with one single floral still life painting. You'll learn how to mix and balance naturalistic greens creating a subtle acrylic palette and a realistic scene of sunlight hitting the leaves & petals

[Learn More](#)



masterclass

Acrylic Still Life Course

This course looks at the more complicated subject of reflective surfaces such as silver, ceramic and mahogany. A silver Goblet using only two colours alongside a more challenging piece using a wider range of colours and optical glazing techniques

[Learn More](#)

Q. Can you paint realistic portraits with Acrylics?

Painting portraits with acrylics can be frustrating. Not only do the colours appear unsophisticated and garish but the paint dries too quickly to blend together successfully, especially when you're trying to mix subtle skin tones.

The Acrylic Colour Portrait Course looks at 3 different colour portraits taking you through the techniques and methods of how to paint natural looking skin tones. Developing your portrait skills and dramatically shortening your learning curve to create classical looking portraits with acrylics.

Q. What about Oil Painting?

Many of the techniques throughout the teaching stem from my training in Classical oil painting so if you've been working through the courses you've been developing oil painting skills by stealth!

The Black & White Oil Portrait Course guides you through the fundamentals needed to create a Classical Grisaille portrait.

If you look at any Classical portrait under the surface is a hidden structure, a Grisaille underpainting – a fully developed picture in tones of grey. This lays the foundation for future portraits if you want to move onto colour, but creates a stunning portrait in its own right. This course is perfect for students who have experience in drawing, want to develop their painting portraiture but don't know where to start.

Q. What if I want to add colour glazes to my oil portraits?

The Oil Colour Glazing Course looks specifically at colour glazing techniques for portraits working on two full colour portraits.

Each portrait tutorial looks at a different complexion and builds progressively so by the end of this course, you'll be creating realistic luminous portraits and have a really great understanding of how to utilise glazing in your own portrait practice.

Layers of transparency, keeping the freshness of the finished painting with layers of clear sparkling jewel-like transparent final colour glazes.

portrait courses

GETTING STARTED COURSES



acrylic portrait

Acrylic Portrait Course

This portrait course looks at 3 different colour portraits tackling natural looking skin tones.

You'll develop your portrait skills and dramatically shorten your learning curve to achieving classical looking portraits with acrylics

[Learn More](#)

grisaille portrait

Black & White Oil Portrait

This portrait course guides you through the fundamentals needed to create a Classical grisaille portrait with oils.

One fully developed painting in tones of grey, perfect for students who have experience in drawing & want to develop their portraiture skills

[Learn More](#)

oil glazing portrait

Oil Portrait Glazing Course

This oil glazing course looks specifically at colour glazing techniques working on two full colour portraits.

You'll look at different complexions, building progressively to create two realistic luminous portraits

[Learn More](#)

sketching courses

GETTING STARTED COURSES



urban sketching

Everyday Sketching

This course looks at how to develop the habit of Urban Sketching – sketching the everyday environment around you.

Creating a visual diary of the world, developing the daily practice of recording the story of your life through sketches

[Learn More](#)



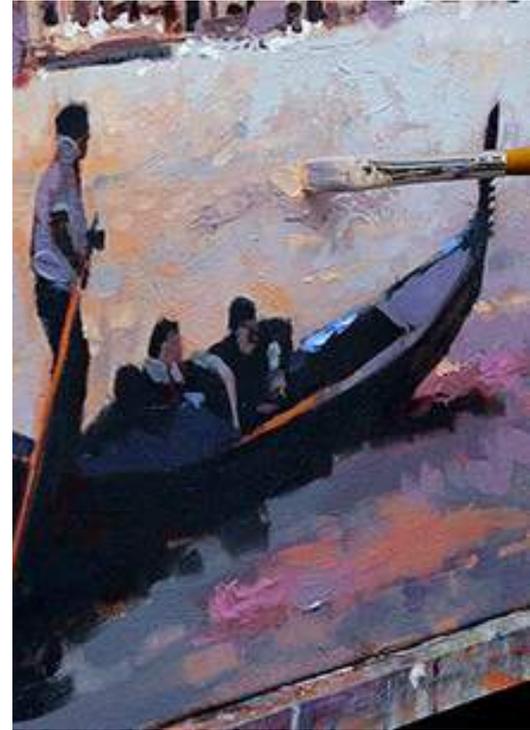
landscape sketching

Location Sketching

This landscape course is all about drawing on location, learning how to quickly capture the atmosphere and mood of a landscape like an artist.

You'll take the next step from sketching at home to sketching outdoors

[Learn More](#)



venice sunset

Impressionistic Seascape

Working larger scale with Acrylics observing the fabulous lighting conditions, amazing architecture and the warm pastel shades of the Venetian skyline, Capturing the vibrant reflected colours in the water in an Impressionistic style.

[Learn More](#)

Q. What about Sketching techniques?

I have two courses that help develop your sketching observation skills.

Urban Sketching for Beginners looks at how to develop the habit of Urban Sketching – sketching the everyday environment around you.

You'll create a visual diary of the world developing the daily practice of recording the story of your life through sketches. Learning to embrace the wobble, loosening your style yet still creating a drawing that looks realistic yet sketchy!

Sketching the Landscape Course is all about drawing on location, learning how to quickly capture the atmosphere and mood of a landscape like an artist, and taking the next step from sketching at home to sketching outdoors.

It includes an introduction to the materials needed, practical principles for creating successful landscape sketches, combining drawing theory, on-location drawing demonstrations, and studio-based drawing tutorials.

Q. What about Landscape Painting with Acrylics?

Light & the Landscape is an acrylic landscape painting course that looks at creating an impressionistic Venetian Sunset, working larger scale with Acrylics.

Capturing the fabulous lighting conditions, amazing architecture and the warm pastel shades of the Venetian skyline and observing the vibrant reflected colours in the water in an Impressionistic style.

Hope this helps to give you an overview of the courses and looking forward to seeing your completed masterpieces!

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Will Kemp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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Sketches by Will Kemp

