

Express Yourself with Colour

Colour in Abstract Painting

In this short demonstration I am giving you an example of the kind of exercises, teaching and materials you can expect from my international online abstract art course Directions in Abstraction.

In this short colour mixing exercise you will be able to begin to explore some of the following questions:

- How do you find your preferences and palette in how you use colour?
- Are you drawn to strong and unsaturated colour or more muted and unsaturated hues?
- Are there particular colours you keep repeating in your work?
- What range of colours do you notice in your work?

From the exercise in the video you will see how to use colour to create more harmony in your work and so use colour expressively.

Exploring Colour Harmony

This is an exercise in creating colour harmony by working with three colours. For this exercise choose three colours. I suggest that you do not use the three primaries yellow red and blue but a different combination. An example might be cadmium red, sap green and cerulean, or vermillion, yellow ochre and cobalt blue. The process is a simple one and begins with mixing a harmony colour from the three colours. You will then go on to create a wide spectrum of new hues using this fourth colour mixed in different amounts with your original three colours resulting in an exciting range of colours which harmonise.

Put a generous amount of each of the three colours on your palette. Roughly about a good tablespoonful of each. Then take an equal amount of each (about a teaspoon of each this time) and mix these together on your palette to create a fourth "harmony" colour.

You can use your sketchbook for this exercise or a large (A3 or bigger) piece of paper. Now divide your page horizontally into 5 segments. You are going to paint a series of small squares of colour, moving horizontally across the page using incremental amounts of each of your starter colours mixed with increasing amounts of your harmony colour.

Art Fluency

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Begin with one of your original colours. Paint a small square on the left hand side of the page using fully saturated colour straight from the tube. Next mix a small amount of the harmony colour in with this original colour. About 10% mix is a good place to start. Paint another square next to the first one and continue to add incremental amounts of the "harmony colour" to this mix, painting a square each time.

Experiment with adding this harmony mix to your other two original colours in small incremental amounts. Create another grid of small squares as you are doing this. With this exercise it can be useful to keep notes of what each row is and the proportions of paint added.

Other variations on this exercise is to repeat the process above with each your colour plus the harmony colour, then to add separately a row using white, black and then grey. The variations are many!

Sketchbook Practice.

Play in your sketchbook with more colour. You might like to repeat the this colour exercises with some different colours.

If you use Pinterest you might like to begin some boards about colour.

You might like to collect items with colours you like, or photographs of colours that appeal to you.

Reflections and Mindset Work

What did you find interesting or exciting from the colour mixing exercises?

What have you learnt from this exercise about the qualities that are important to you in your use of colour?

How easy or difficult did you find the exercise? What were you telling yourself as you were completing it?

Look at some of your existing work. What do you notice about how you have been using colour?

Are there colour combinations that you repeat? Are there colours that you don't use? What do you find yourself strongly drawn to?