

A BASIC COLOUR PALETTE

and the importance of Tonal Value

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.

A basic colour palette is somewhere in-between. It allows bright colour mixtures as well as subtle.

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.**
- He recommends a palette of 6 colours, two primaries each.

Cadmium Red A red with an orange bias for mixing orange

Quinacridone Red A red with a violet bias for mixing violet

Cadmium Yellow A yellow with orange bias

Hansa Yellow A yellow with green bias

Cerulean Blue A blue with green bias

Ultramarine Blue A blue with a purple bias

The importance of tonal value (how dark or light a subject is)

It is so much more important than colour. Try to learn about value, learn about complementary colours (opposites) and you will start to understand the different qualities of paint.

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 more.