

MCA ART CLASS ATERIALS LIST

OIL PAINTING IN AN IMPRESSIONIST PLEIN AIR SPIRIT
WEDNESDAYS, 1:00 - 4:00 PM

INSTRUCTOR: JOHN CURRIE

This is my recommended list of materials for our class. You don't have to follow it. You don't have to do anything, now that we have your money. But this will help you spend wisely and come prepared. I want you to spend as little money as possible while getting everything that you need to work comfortably. Am I a pal or what?

PAINTING SURFACE: You can use pre-stretched canvas, artists panels (those fabric-covered cardboard things) or linen-covered plywood panels. I recommend 8 x 10, 9 x 12, 11 x 14 or 12 x 16. If you're new, don't hesitate to buy the less-expensive choices (they're not precious so you can use them and toss 'em at will) or the better ones (because you never know when you'll make that first masterpiece). There isn't a "best" choice, only what is best for you.

If you have painted before and are comfortable with it, then bring any size you feel like using. If not, *please* start small. Any smaller, and you'll feel choked; any bigger, and you'll be working like a madman to fill your canvas. Plan on at least two or three for the course. THEN, bring 4, 6 x 8 or 8 x 10 panels for little studies and experiments. Feel free to bring more painting surfaces (or have them ready at home); this is just the minimum you're sure to need. If you can find surfaces primed with oil (rather than acrylic) paint, or have time to paint a white oil ground over the acrylic priming and have it dry before class, you'll be happier than if you don't. Oil paint tends to skip across acrylic priming. It "bites" into oil ground and keeps you from having to fight slipping paint while you're already busy wrestling with art.

PAINTS: Oils. We are going to MIX paint to get the colors we want—yikes!—so you'll buy the key colors necessary to do so. **Here is my recommended palette: Cadmium Lemon Yellow Light, Cadmium Yellow Light, Cadmium Red Medium, Alizarin Crimson, Ultramarine Blue, Cerulean Blue or Thalo Blue, Sap Green, Brilliant Green or Thalo Green, White (any variation), Unbleached Titanium** (hard to find; Utrecht makes it). Additional colors, if desired: **Raw Sienna, Cadmium Yellow Deep, Quinacridone Rose**. No Black. No Payne's Grey. Yuck. Any brand, any grade--professional or student. I happen to favor Winsor Newton and Utrecht Artists Oils but feel free to use whatever you like. If you are a new student, I recommend student-grade paints; they are not junk, only made with a bit less pigment and usually synthetic—rather than natural—pigments. Any paint color that has "hue" in its name uses synthetic pigments and delivers a lower price. These choices will reduce your costs significantly and let you slather on just as much paint as you like without worrying about how much that big thick cloud is costing you.

BRUSHES: Ah--here's a way to burn up lots of money! You don't have to buy the most expensive. **Just make sure that your brushes are for oil paints.** I prefer Monarch, a synthetic mongoose that's great for oils and moderately priced. Let some other sucker buy the sable for a zillion bucks a brush. I'm using white bristle more and more (pig hair) and finding them very easy to work with and as cheap as they come. **I recommend about 6-8 brushes, mixing ROUND** (the all-purpose shape), **BRIGHT or FLAT** (both have flat bristles, great for blocky strokes and sharp edges; BRIGHTS are shorter, less flexible, and make for sharper strokes; FLATS are longer, hold more paint, and allow more flexibility), **AND FILBERT** (flat, like a bright, but with a rounded end for excellent blending and soft edges). Sizes vary between manufacturers, so rather than focussing on the numbered sizes, look for 2-3 brushes of each type, one each that is approximately 3/16"-1/4", one 3/8" to 1/2" , and then one fine round for detail (1/8" or less) and one big juicy flat or bright that's 3/4" or so. Buy more if you want but this will get you started. Look for multi-brush sets at Blick or Utrecht; they will have great prices and get you brush sizes that are close enough for jazz.

palette: Wood, plastic, glass, disposable paper; you'll need something on which to mix your paints.

A resealable palette or palette cover is a boon, enabling you to keep your paints open and workable from class to class. It'll be like Menards. You'll save big money.

THINNER: Bring a spill-proof, break-resistant container of turpentine, paint thinner, or one of the processed substitutes. A pint would likely suffice. Save buying gallons for milk. Paint thinner/cleaner pots with locking lids and a built-in brush scrubbing tray/screen are the bomb and my best choice for you. I prefer a stainless steel leakproof pot with a brushwasher screen inside. A small one will be fine.

EASEL: Don't worry; MCA supplies them. See? We're saving you money already.

SUBJECTS: Ah, the tricky stuff. **We are focussing on natural outdoor landscapes.** Bring some photos of landscapes that you think you'd like to paint. Keep them simple. Look for a single, obvious subject; think of it as a movie scene that features a star with a supporting player or two in the frame as well. Look for something such as a tree or small stand of trees in the foreground and a supporting forest in the background. There will be time to paint the Grand Canyon later. I will supply some images, too. The better quality image you have to work from, including the quality of the paper and reproduction, the better start you'll have. Nothing beats painting *plein air*—from life, outdoors in natural life.

The next best thing to painting *plein air* is painting from a rear-lit image—one off of your TV or computer screen. Light in nature comes through things, surrounds them, and bounces off of them as well. In a printed photo, all you ever see is light reflected off of the surface of the print. So if you have one of those digital photo frames or want to bring in your laptop, you'll win the Best Runner Up Award.

I personally do not like painting from another painting, although you may do so. The good news is, you know that it can be painted! The bad news is, you will be reinterpreting someone else's reinterpretation of life; think of it as looking at life or art through two unnecessary filters.

CLOTHING: This the time to say, "Don't wear you Sunday best." Think of it as Casual Friday, only more casual. You'll get paint on you. What you wear on your upper body matters. Neutral, dull or dark colored shirts: grey, black, brown. Red, yellow, orange, bright green or blue? These colors can reflect onto your canvas, altering your perception of color. White is OK but can bounce light onto the canvas, shifting your perception of value. And you thought it was all about fashion.

BERET: I'll leave mine at home if you will. Although mine is really quite nice.

MISC: Bring a small or medium palette knife, some hand cleaner, perhaps a pencil and eraser. Master's Brush Cleaner & Preservative is a nice way to treat your brushes after you're done to ensure that they are ready for your next Assault on Color.

SHOPPING TIPS: I shop regularly at Blick and Utrecht. The former is generally more convenient, with stores peppered around town. The latter is only downtown but has terrific house brand oils (including the elusive Unbleached Titanium) at lower than average prices, knowledgeable customer service and also carries most everything else you'll need. Both have web sites and frequent sales. Both carry pre-stretched canvas and linen and canvas-covered hardboard panels. Jerry's Artarama is another good web site. My favorite panels are made by Source Tek (www.canvaspanels.com); others like those from Ray-Mar (www.raymarart.com). Ray-Mar also makes a terrific line of inexpensive wet panel carriers, perfect for carrying paintings back and forth. Open Box M sells great ones as well (www.openboxm.com) but the term "inexpensive" doesn't really apply.

