

List of Resources • John MacDonald

Below is a complete list of the materials that I'm currently using in the studio and the vendors through which I purchase them. However, I'm always exploring different materials and will update this as necessary. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Palette:

I use a limited palette. It simplifies color mixing and ensures color harmony. The palette I'm currently using consists of:

White. (Winsor and Newton Winton, Soft Mixing White.)

Cadmium Yellow Light HUE (*my mixture-see below*)

Prussian Blue [PB 27] (Winsor & Newton brand)

Permanent Alizarin Crimson [PR 177] (Winsor & Newton brand)

Dioxazine Purple [PV 23] (Utrecht brand)

Raw Umber [PBr 7] (Vasari brand)

Payne's Grey [PB29 + PBL9] (Old Holland brand)

More information on each pigment:

White: W&N Soft Mixing White is a 50/50 blend of titanium and zinc white.

Titanium dries quickly with a strong paint film but is opaque and so can be chalky, especially when used in creating very light values. Zinc dries slowly and is translucent and so produces clean mixtures but the paint film is weak and will crack if used pure. A 50/50 mixture is the best of both.

If I wish to speed the drying time of an underpainting, I will use Winsor & Newton's Griffin Alkyd, a titanium white.

Cadmium Yellow Pale HUE.

In the interest of creating a completely non-toxic studio, I've created a mixture of Winsor & Newton's "Winsor Yellow" [PY 74, also known as Hansa Yellow] and Winsor & Newton's "Indian Yellow" [PY 139 + PR 101]. Mixing approximately 40% Indian Yellow to 60% Winsor Yellow creates a very close match to a Cadmium Yellow Light.

Prussian Blue. Any brand will do—they're all nearly identical.

Permanent Alizarin Crimson, from Winsor & Newton. Any brand of permanent Alizarin Crimson is fine but be certain that it's permanent! The pigment traditionally used in Alizarin Crimson is NOT lightfast—do not use any Alizarin Crimson that is not specifically labeled "permanent." The pigment is PR177—Anthraquinone.

(Occasionally, I'll add 30% of Rembrandt's Transparent Oxide Red [PR 101] into the Permanent Alizarin Crimson to create a slightly warmer Alizarin Crimson.)

Dioxazine Purple, from Utrecht. Any brand will do. A rich, beautiful purple. It is nearly identical to the only slightly richer but vastly more expensive (and, in my mind, overrated) Cobalt Violet. This color can be mixed using Prussian and Alizarin but I use it so often that I've found it easier to purchase separately.

Raw Umber, from Vasari. I've tried other raw umbers from: Utrecht, Winsor & Newton, and Old Holland. All are too yellow. This brand, when mixed with white, creates a beautiful and versatile silver-toned neutral.

A good **substitute** can be made by mixing approximately 10% of any cool black into any other brand of raw umber.

Payne's Grey. I use Old Holland but any brand will do.

Transparent Gold Ochre, from Utrecht. If I feel the painting—either the entire painting or a section—needs to be warmer (golden), I'll apply a small amount of this color and work it into the varnish/medium when I apply it to the painting. Essentially, it's used as a glaze. I will also use Prussian, Permanent Alizarin Crimson, or Dioxazine Purple if I wish to make the painting bluer, redder, or more purplish respectively. All three of these paints are transparent and so ideally suited for this technique.

Lastly, I'll use *any* color if the painting needs it and I'm unable to mix it with my limited palette.

Brushes:

My favorite brushes are no longer available: Utrecht F-series flats, a bristle-synthetic blend. When my current supply is depleted, I'll look for a substitute and will update this list.

I also use:

Royal Langnickel Aurèa series brushes. These are pure bristle flats. They are softer and more pliable than the Utrecht bristle-synthetic blend. Being softer, they're barely adequate for scumbling but are perfect for loose brushwork.

Robert Simmons Titanium brushes, flats or Rosemary Evergreens. These are soft, synthetic brushes that I use for finishing touches. They are good for blending and creating sharp brushstrokes and hard edges. They are not used for scumbling.

Recipe for (retouch) varnish:

1 part safflower oil (**artists** safflower oil. Do NOT use grocery store safflower oil.)

1 part linseed oil

1/2 part stand oil

1/2 part Dorland's Wax.

Cobalt Drier (10-12 drops for a 16 oz. jar,)

In an empty jar, I add all the ingredients **except the Cobalt drier**, cover it, and gently heat it on a Mr. Coffee coffee mug warmer. You can also submerge the jar in a pot of hot water. Anything capable of gently heating the jar will do. When warm, I shake the jar to thoroughly mix the ingredients, add the drier, cover, and shake again. At room temperature, the medium will gel with a consistency similar to slightly softened butter.

When the painting (or acrylic/oil underpainting) is DRY to the touch and ready to be worked on, I apply the medium to the entire painting with a cloth rag, distributing it evenly and removing any excess by gently wiping the canvas with the side of a roll of paper towels. The surface should be slightly damp, not dripping and as thin as possible. I then paint directly into the varnish while it's wet. If I make a mistake and need to wipe off an area of oil paint, the varnish is also removed, but I'll simply wait until the next session and repeat the process.

I also apply the medium as a final varnish when the painting is finished and dry. This medium is not meant to be a final varnish—that is, it doesn't provide the impermeable and strong film of a Damar-based varnish—but it's better than no varnish at all. It also restores any matt areas of sunken color and creates a uniform, semi-glossy surface.

Why the Dorlands Wax? I find a medium consisting solely of oil or varnish to be too glossy for my taste. A glossy painting is particularly difficult to photograph or view under strong lights. The addition of Dorlands Wax gives the final surface a semi-gloss, or satin, appearance. Colors appear as rich as with an oil varnish finish but without the high gloss.

Painting panels:

Currently, I'm almost exclusively two types of panels:

Centurion OP DLX panels. - for Plein Air

Oil primed linen on board. Inexpensive. A nice, small weave in the linen. The boards can warp but are easily straightened when framed. Available at Jerry's and other online suppliers. These are very popular among plein air artists.

www.jerrysartarama.com

Raphael Oil primed panels - for Studio

Being oil primed, any underpainting on these panels must be done in oils. I use these for studio work in sizes from 12x16 to 24x30 and larger. The linen is similar to a portrait linen—a tight, small weave. It's a wonderful surface for painting.

www.jerrysartarama.com

I've also used and can recommend:

New Traditions Art Panels

These are very nice painting panels offered on a variety of surfaces. They are not inexpensive but the quality is high. I use the L28—oil-primed linen—on gatorboard. I tend to purchase them only for the largest sizes, 30x40 and 36x48.

www.newtraditionsartpanels.com

Multimedia Artboard

These also come in a variety of surfaces and backings. I use the Claessens #15 Primed Linen. These boards are perfect for traveling and plein air painting but the board

is thin and flexible. I prefer clipping them to a rigid piece of gatorboard when painting on them. The quality is very high.

<http://multimediaartboard.com/>

Pintura

These are of cotton canvas and gesso primed, perfect for an acrylic underpainting and for plein air painting, not being as expensive as the linen panels. The weave is small and close, similar to linen. These may be used for acrylic underpaintings.

www.jerrysartarama.com

Wet-Painting Carriers.

PanelPak wet canvas carriers. www.panelpak.com

These are simple, inexpensive carriers that work very well.

Markers for Tonal Studies.

I use Prismacolor Premier markers and a Sakura Gelly Roll pen for adding white.

For plein air, I use the Cool Grey markers, #108–#116. In the studio, I will also use the full range of the French Grey markers in addition to the Cool Grey so that I can play cool grays against warm grey.

Sketchbook for Tonal Studies (and general drawing).

Crescent “RENDER” sketchbooks. Very opaque paper that doesn’t bleed through, they’re perfect for markers, pencil, and ink.

Easel

For plein air painting, I’m currently using a Strada “Mini” Easel (www.stradaeasel.com) mounted on a MeFoto “Roadtrip” tripod (www.mefoto.com). I’m very happy with this combination. It packs easily and is relatively lightweight. The easel accommodates a panel up to 16 x 20.

For ultra-light traveling, I’ve also used the Strada “Micro” Easel with a MeFoto “Backpacker” tripod. The maximum size of panel with this combination is 9 x 12.

For years, I used a Soltek easel for plein air work (www.soltekarts.com). It may be the most user-friendly design on the market and I was very happy with it. But if sand or dirt enters the bottom of the legs, they will be ruined and will need replacement.

I purchase their plastic, 50% gray palettes separately and use for all my painting.

My studio easel is a Best brand, Santa Fe model (<http://richesonart.com/products/best/besteaselsmain.html>)

Frames:

ArtFrames.com

I prefer the Laguna (both the Gold and Dark Espresso) Their customer service is very good.

Kingofframe.com

Of these, I like the Craftsman and Arroyo, but have used and liked the Laredo (black and gold) and the Saratoga (Black w/ Gold). These frames are slightly more expensive than ArtFrames but I feel the extra cost simply reflects a slightly better quality.

Picture Hanging Hardware:

American Frame Company: clips, screws, thin wire. www.americanframe.com

Picture Hang Solutions: heavy wire and hooks. www.govart.com (HWR-709C, HWR-707C, BOX-740-6, HWR-129-BC)

Hand Protection

Rubber Gloves: Mapa Trilites 994.

I purchase them from ULine, product #: S-1715M (medium size). 1-800-295-5510 or <https://www.uline.com/Product/ProductDetailRootItem?modelnumber=S-17150>

If you don't like using gloves, you may prefer a barrier cream. It's applied like skin cream and protects the skin from chemicals. It's easily washed off with soap and water.

Travabon barrier cream

I order it from JD Industrial Supply. 1-734-426-2475

Here's a direct link to the Travabon page on their website:

www.jdindustrialsupply.com

Suppliers

Jerry's Artarama

www.jerrysartarama.com

Utrecht (Now owned by Dick Blick but still maintains its own website.)

www.utrechtart.com

Cheap Joes

www.cheapjoes.com

Dick Blick Art Materials

www.dickblick.com