

All the Colors of a Lemon

When life gives you lemons, paint a still life!



The lemon has a long, rich artistic legacy. Once considered a luxury product, its appearance in northern Europe some four hundred years ago represented a triumph of science and botany. Almost always depicted sliced open with a curl of peel, lemons appear in so many still life paintings that they are considered a staple of Dutch art in the 17th century.

Developed for high school grades, in this more advanced painting lesson students will gain a deeper understanding of color theory by creating two still lifes of a lemon. The first focuses on local color, which is the natural color of an object as perceived by the eye. The second focuses on invented color, which can be any color of the artists' choosing.

While ideal for learning the basics, student grade paints do not mix and behave in the same way as highly pigmented artist grade paints. For this lesson, artist grade paints are recommended. Utrecht Artists' Acrylic Colors have been handcrafted in Brooklyn since 1949. They are now available in Cadmium Free formulas, giving students and professional artists alike access to the same beautiful colors that have been a staple on palettes for centuries without risking exposure to toxic elements.

GRADES 9-12

Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.



Materials (required)

[Richeson Grey Matters Palette Paper](#), 9x12" 50 sheets (03092-2523); share one pad across class

[Richeson Plastic Painting Knives](#), (03105-); need one per student

[Blick Economy Canvas Board, pk 24](#), 8"x10" (07015-1012); share two across class

Recommended Utrecht Artist's Acrylic Colors:

[Utrecht Cad Free Lemon](#), 2oz (01654-4173); need two
[Utrecht Cad Free Yellow Deep](#), 2oz (01654-4293); need two

[Cad Free Orange](#), 2oz (01654-4533); need two

[Utrecht Cad Free Red Medium](#), 2oz (01654-3113); need two

[Utrecht Alizarin Crimson Hue](#), 5oz (01654-3075); need one

[Utrecht Viridian Hue](#), 5oz (01654-7515); need one

[Utrecht Cerulean Blue Hue](#), 5oz (01654-5175); need one

[Utrecht Ultramarine Blue](#), 5oz (01654-5235); need one

[Utrecht Raw Sienna](#), 5oz (01654-8065); need one

[Utrecht Raw Umber](#), 5oz (01654-8075); need one

[Utrecht Titanium White](#), 16oz (01654-1016); need two

Recommended Brushes:

[Blick Scholastic Wonder White Synthetic, Long Handle, Filbert, Size 12](#), (05379-1012); one per student

[Blick Scholastic Wonder White Synthetic, Long Handle, Bright, Size 10](#), (05377-1010); one per student

[Blick Scholastic Wonder White Synthetic, Long Handle, Round, Size 6](#), (05381-1006); one per student

Optional Materials

[Magic Palette Artist's Color Selector and Mixing Guide](#), (03403-1020)

[Artist's Color Wheel](#), (04951-0000)

[Plastic 10-Well Paint Tray](#), (03041-1010)



Step 1: Create a sketch and transfer to two canvases.



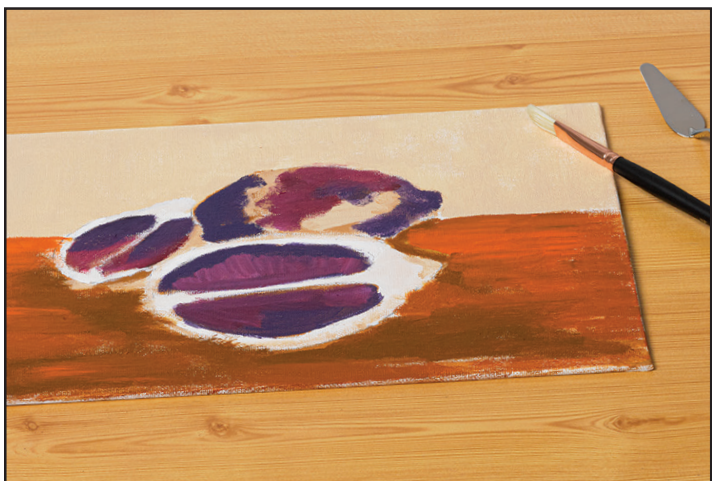
Step 2: Make an underpainting using Utrecht Artist Acrylic in white and raw sienna.



Step 3: Paint using local color first: fill in the darkest areas.



Step 4: Continue, painting the mid tones and lightest areas.



Step 5: Follow the same painting process in steps 3 and 4, using invented color.



Step 6: Follow the same painting process in steps 3 and 4, using invented color.

Process

1. Give each student a cut lemon to create a still life and sketch.
2. Transfer the sketch to two canvases using graphite transfer paper.
3. Create an underpainting using Utrecht Artist Acrylic in white and raw sienna. An underpainting is a tonal roadmap, showing all light and dark areas in the composition.
4. Mix three values to begin the underpainting. Mix three parts raw sienna with one part titanium white to create the darkest value. Next mix the mid-tone using three parts raw sienna and two parts titanium white. For the lightest value, mix raw sienna and white in a one to one ratio.
5. Begin painting the darkest areas, moving toward the mid-tones, then the lightest. Continue mixing colors, adjusting the values as needed. Use the original sketch and the actual still life, or a black and white photo as reference.
6. Repeat the same painting process to create a second underpainting. More advanced students may want to work on both pieces at the same time.
7. Set aside and allow to dry, because the paint is so thin, this shouldn't take long.
8. While it is drying, assemble a full pallet, and begin mixing a few colors.
9. Begin painting, using local color. Local color is the natural color of an object, in ordinary light, uninfluenced by surrounding colors. Use the same all-over painting technique used to create the underpainting. Begin with darker areas, working towards the lightest.
10. After completing a painting that attempts to describe local color and space accurately, students can choose a non-local color to paint their lemon. Consider touching, smelling, and tasting the lemon, assigning a color or colors to your perceptions. Apply these colors in the invented color composition. Once the new lemon color is determined, the same rules that applied to the first more "realistic" painting can be applied to create a wonderfully vibrant painting that will still feel spatially accurate.

Painting Tips:

- This can be a lot for a beginner to think about—but the good news is, acrylic paints dry quickly and can be built up in as many layers as needed!
- The key to a successful painting is accurately describing light and shadow, also known as value. If a student is struggling to describe values, it can be helpful to take a photo of their painting and filter it so that it reads as black and white. This will easily illuminate any problems and serve as a guide. Generally, darker values will spatially read in front of lighter values.
- Like so much else in painting, color temperature is always relative. Color temperature depends on what the color is next to and what is around it. For example—green is warmer than blue, but green is also cooler than red. Generally, cooler colors will recede in space while warmer colors will appear closer.

Color Mixing Tips:

- The key to a successful painting is accurately
 - Adding a touch of white to a color can help to determine whether it is warm or cool. Mix a small sample of each color with Titanium White to better understand how each color reacts. Some might surprise you!
- Neutral greys are enormously helpful. To mix a neutral grey use equal parts Raw Umber, Ultramarine, and Titanium White as needed. Sometimes adding white can make the color a bit chalky. To achieve a rich, dark grey, Cadmium Free Yellow can be used instead of white. Both of these mixes come in handy when describing shadows. They can also be mixed with another pure color to make it more neutral.
- Allow students to explore and play with color mixing. Not all colors mixed will be needed in the painting, but a great deal can be learned through experimenting. It is also helpful to have a color chart or mixing guide available.

National Core Arts Standards

Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Responding

Anchor Standard 8: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

