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Utrecht

ASK THE EXPERTS

Product Profiles: “Pure Pigments” Explained

Ask the Expert: "I notice you use the term "Pure Pigments" in describing some of your paints. Are they not all equally pure? What would make a pigment 'impure'?"

A: Selecting the highest quality pigments has always been key to our formulas. Pigments, like most materials, come in different grades of quality and purity. The purest pigments cost more but offer the best performance, while colors diluted with fillers have a lower bulk cost but perform much less well in paint. Only Pure Pigments are selected for use in Utrecht Professional Artist's Colors.

Fillers and Co-precipitates
In "student grade" paints, fillers may be added in the manufacturing process, but they can also be present in the raw pigment. Cadmium-based colors, for example, can be manufactured in a process that simultaneously produces barium (a chalky filler) as a co-precipitate. The final product contains enough cadmium to impart color, but compared to a pure pigment with no barium, color intensity, tint strength and covering power are significantly less. According to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston materials database:

> **"Cadmium barium yellow is a permanent color that has poorer hiding power and lower tinting strength than pure cadmium yellow pigment. "**

We use the word "Pure" in the names of specific premium colors to communicate our choice to use only top quality raw materials, but we also apply this standard across all our Professional Artist's Color lines. For example, we still use real hydrous chromic oxide for Viridian, as opposed to phthalo-based mixtures. Utrecht genuine Raw Umber still offers the characteristic, subtle undertones of the historical color because, unlike some manufacturers we do not add black to produce a darker, more generic "brown".

The recent introduction of our Cadmium Free paint lines underscores the importance- and obvious benefits- of using top quality pure pigments, even in blended colors. Earlier-generation synthetic-organic pigments could be combined to offer a functionally similar cadmium "hue", but these mixtures, while offering economical, non-toxic alternatives to real cadmiums, came far short of the genuine pigments in terms of tint strength, covering power and lightfastness. The introduction of newer, premium-quality synthetics made it possible to formulate full-fledged cadmium replacements which, despite being composed of multiple pigments, offer virtually the same appearance, performance and durability as original cadmiums. The Cadmium Free assortment is just the latest example of our continuing commitment to using pure, authentic pigments and bringing each one to its best advantage.