



Utrecht Art Supplies

Utrecht History: Simple Tests

How do you objectively evaluate professional artists' colors? These instructions from the Utrecht Linens Catalog ca. 1960 explain it all!

This is a very clear demonstration of the great confidence we at Utrecht have in the high professional quality of the artists colors we manufacture. We will outline some significant but simple tests you can easily perform. These tests are accepted by artists and experts as useful aids in judging the quality of permanent artists colors. An important part of this procedure is to make comparative tests with any other brand regardless of their selling price.



(1.) MASS TONE: Mass tone is the color quality of the paint as it comes out of the tube or jar. Spread the paint out smoothly with a palette knife and visually examine it for the intensity, brilliance and cleanness of color quality.

(2.) UNDERTONE: The undertone of a color can be revealed in two ways: Tinting the color with white or scraping the paint with a stiff palette knife very thinly over the surface of white paper. The whiteness of the surface should be partly visible through the paint. Examine the undertone also for its brilliance, intensity and cleanness of color quality. The color of the undertone can appear somewhat different than the mass tone. The importance of the mass and undertone of a paint is obvious- that is one of the color qualities with which the artist will express himself.



(3.) WORKING QUALITY: The consistency of the paint as it comes out of the tube or jar should be tested for its working qualities. Use a brush, knife or even your fingertips. Oil colors have a different feel or texture from acrylic color. If the paint is too fluid it will limit the range of painterly effects. If the paint is too sticky or tacky, it may be difficult to brush it out. An artists' paint of the proper consistency can be applied from the smoothest paint layer to the thickest impasto in a controlled manner.



(4.) COLOR STRENGTH TEST: We suggest you make a color or tint strength comparison of Utrecht Professional Acrylic Colors and Utrecht Professional Oil Colors against any other brand imported or domestic regardless of its selling price. The consistency of an artists paint is no certain clue to its color strength. This can only be determined by tinting it with white. For example, the excessive vehicle in the student grade color can be stiffened with improper

use of stabilizers to mask the smaller amount of pigment in its formulation. Pigment shortage in an artists' color can be easily discovered with the simple color strength test.

a) Begin by noting the color name or color index name and the pigment composition printed on the label of the color to be tested. For example, Cadmium Yellow Pale should not be compared with Cadmium Yellow Deep or Hansa Yellow. Only colors of the same color name and pigment composition should be compared.

b) Carefully measure out one level teaspoon of the color to be tested and three level tablespoons of white. Use the same tube of white throughout the test. Make sure that there are no air pockets in the paint caused by careless placement in the spoon.

c) Thoroughly mix the color and white with a stiff palette knife until all streaking has disappeared.



d) First spread smoothly with a palette knife the tinted mixtures of Utrecht Oil or Acrylic color on half of a piece of canvas or paper. Next spread the other brand tinted color next to it. The brand which is stronger or richer in color has the greater amount of pigment in the formula and is of higher quality. The batch which has the paler tint has a smaller percentage of pigment in the formula and is of poorer quality.

It is important to remember that tint strength of different colors (and different pigment composition) are not necessarily equal. There can be variations. For example: a high grade Phthalocyanine Blue has a stronger tint strength than a high grade Pure Cobalt Blue. What is significant is the comparative tint strengths of two or more brands of same color name and pigment composition.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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