

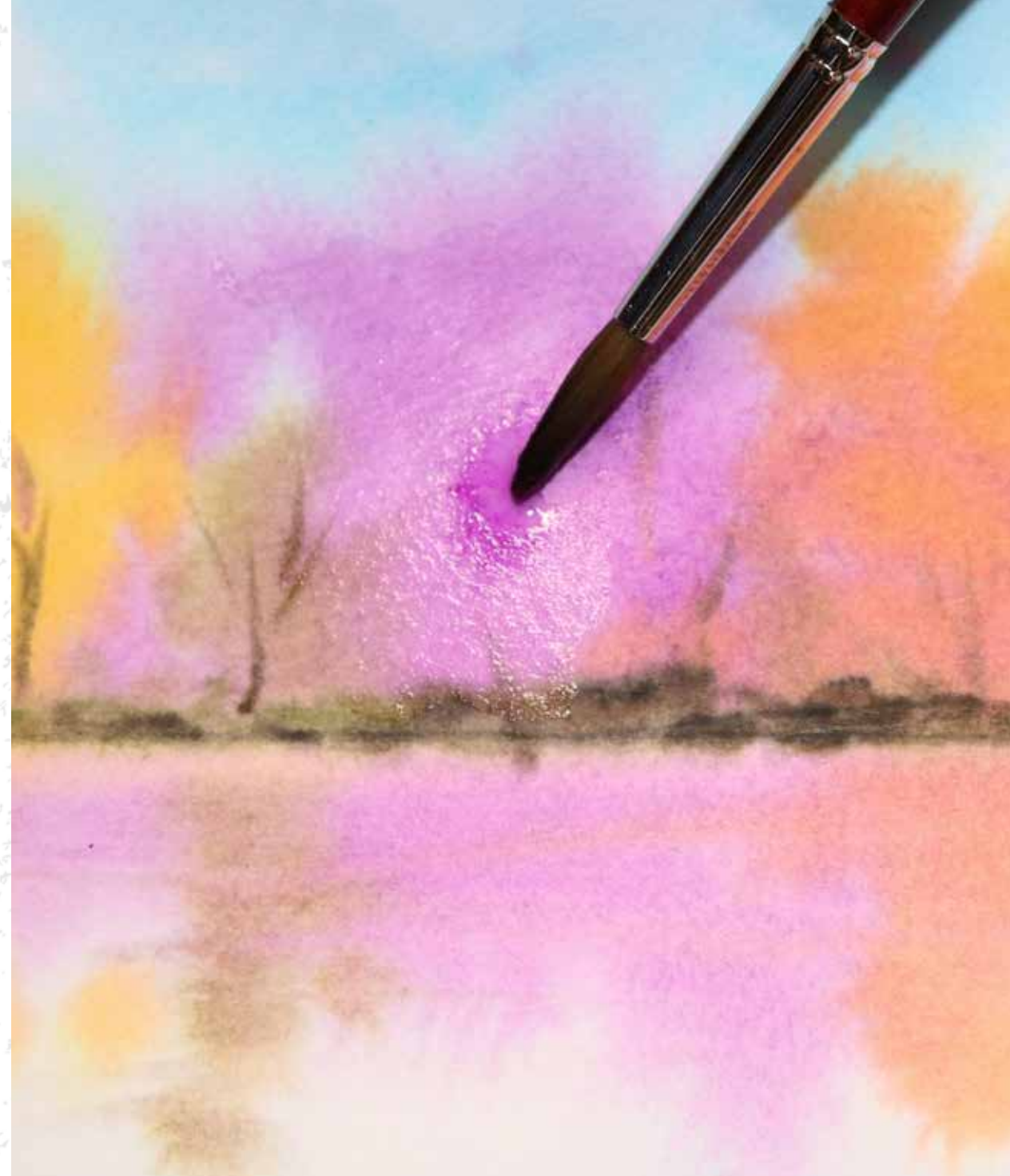
Which Paint is Right for You?

You want to paint. Great! Do you know what kind of paint you want to use? Exploring the different paint types can be a little intimidating, so I'd like to remove some of the mystery for you and show you the three major types of paint that artists use. You'll learn what is good about them, what's not so good about them, and I'll show you how they behave so that you can make an informed decision.

Every art material starts with pigment, the most valuable part of any medium. What makes each of these paints different is its binder – that is what holds the pigment and allows you to attach it to a surface. For watercolor, it is a water-soluble binder, usually gum arabic. For oil paint, it is a drying oil, like linseed oil. And for acrylics, the binder is a liquid polymer – essentially liquid plastic.

The best, most expensive paints have the highest concentration of pigment. This means that you can judge their quality by price.

Watercolor



The two most popular forms are pans and tubes. Usually applied to watercolor paper.

I would call this the most transportable paint. When I travel, it's watercolors that go into my bag.

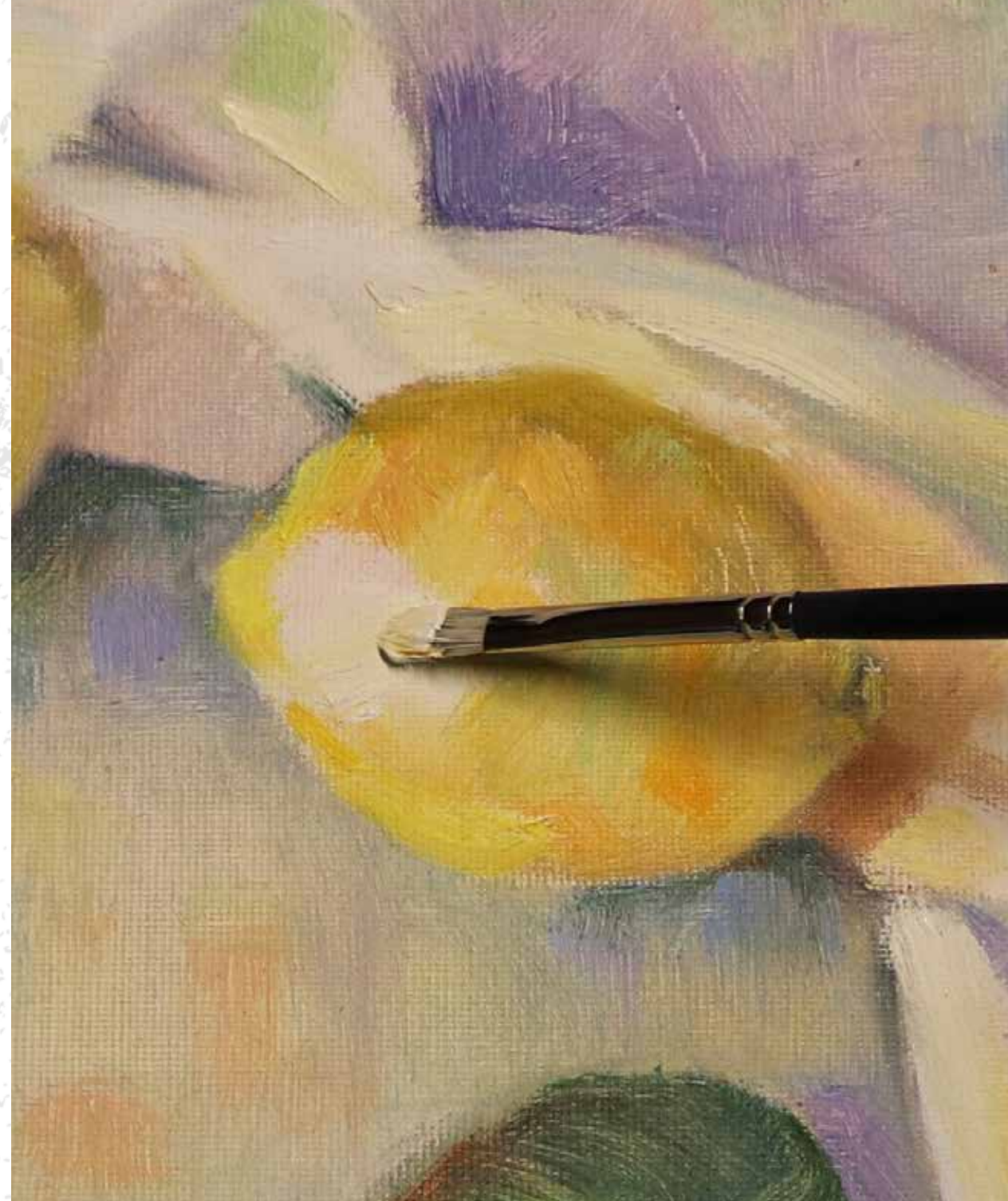
Watercolor is different from the other two paints because it is transparent. When using the paint, the white paper becomes a major part of your painting – how strong your color appears depends on how much of the white paper we can see. The way this paint behaves depends on how much water is mixed with it and how wet or dry the paper is. Watercolor has its own little quirks - I call working with this medium a "dance." There are effects that you can get with watercolor that are almost impossible to get with any other type of paint. It's an easy medium to use, but depending on your subject matter, you usually plan each layer of your painting, because watercolor can be difficult to correct once you get it on your surface.

The finished painting must be protected, because the paint is considered "active" even when dry. Usually a watercolor painting is framed with glass over it.

- Comes in tubes and pans (also liquid, stick, marker and pencil)
- Must be mixed with water to vary intensity
- Usually applied to watercolor paper
- Easy to transport
- Transparent
- Beautiful, unique effects
- Paint dries a little lighter than it looks when applied
- Artist must plan wet and dry layers
- Difficult to correct any mistakes
- Finished painting must be protected (framed under glass)



Oil



Comes in a tube. Usually applied to canvas, but it can also be used on other surfaces if they are sealed first.

Oil paint is a creamy medium and the wonderful thing about it is that it takes a long time to dry. So, it's very popular with portrait artists, for example. They can mix a number of different skin tones and blend them and work in great detail to get the contours of the face worked out because the paint is not going to dry quickly. It's also very popular with plein-air painters because they can work outside for a couple of hours and the paint won't dry out. In the studio you can work on a painting over days and have time to use paint that hasn't dried.

Some consider it a bad thing that it takes a long time for the paint to dry. There are mediums that you can mix with the paint to make it dry faster, but typically a painting is going to take anywhere between a couple of days and a couple of weeks to dry depending how thick the paint is on the surface.

The paint can't be cleaned up with soap and water. You have to clean it up with solvents and some of those solvents are toxic. New to the market are water soluble oils that can be cleaned up with soap and water - I haven't tried them. There are also solvents that are not toxic.

There are ways around the traditional way of painting with oils. But they do still take a while to dry.

- Comes in tubes
- Can be mixed with mediums to vary consistency (thick or thin)
- Usually applied to canvas or a sealed surface
- Long working time (paint dries slowly)
- Ideal for outdoor painting and portraits
- Paint dries the same color as when it is applied
- For corrections, paint can be scraped off if wet, and painted over if dry
- Solvents can be toxic (less toxic are available) and must be used for cleaning brushes
- Finished art is durable, some artists varnish after the paint has dried
- Considered a "classic" painting medium - Valued and respected



Acrylic



Artist grade paint comes in tubes or a highly pigmented liquid. Craft paint and most house paints are acrylic, and all acrylic paints work together.

It comes in a number of different consistencies - it can be thin and watery or very thick. Acrylic can be used on many different surfaces.

It has mediums that can be mixed with it to cause different effects. There are thick gels that make the paint thick for impasto work, and thin mediums that make the paint drier to blend, and even retarding mediums that make the paint dry slower.

The wonderful thing about acrylic paint, and the bad thing about acrylic paint, is that it dries very quickly. Often during a painting session, the paint will already have formed a skin on the top of it within 30 minutes. And the painting can dry within an hour. This can be frustrating if you blend the perfect color and you go to use it again twenty minutes later and it's already dried on your palette. Acrylic painting has an immediacy to it. You have to move fast, but if you don't like what you've painted, you can paint right over it once it is dry.

- Comes in a tube if thick, and in a bottle if a liquid
- Liquid craft paint and house paint are lesser grades
- Can be applied to many different surfaces
- Many mediums are available to modify the texture and effects
- Dries very quickly, so not ideal for outdoor painting
- Can be painted over, so corrections are easy
- Acrylic paintings are durable, some artists seal the painting afterwards



All three of these paints are fun to use, and with any of them, you can create beautiful art!

Have you decided which type of paint is right for you? Learn more at StartInArt.com

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