**Glossary of painting terms**

**Alla Prima**– A painting created entirely in one sitting.

**Alkyd mediums** – Alkyd is a synthetic resin that can be added to oil paint to speed up the drying time of the paints.

**Alkyd Paints –** these paints are commonly known as fast drying oil colour. They were mostly developed for the hobby market.

**Binder** – the substance mixed with the dry pigment which holds together. For oil paint, the binder is usually cold-pressed Linseed oil.

**Brunaille -**  Is a painting executed entirely or primarily in shades of brown

**Chroma** - The amount of identifiable hue in a colour. A colour without hue is achromatic or monochromatic and will appear grey. Polychrome is a picture painted in several colours.

**Colour wheel** - A circular diagram showing the relationships between primary, secondary, tertiary and complementary colours. An indispensable tool for anyone working with colour. It is from the colour wheel that colour schemes are defined. with chroma, luminance and value etc.

**Complementary colours** - These colours sit directly opposite each other in the colour wheel: such as blue and orange, and red and green, violet and yellow. Each primary colour - red, yellow, blue - has its own, exclusive, complementary colour - green, purple, orange. These are made by mixing the other two primaries. When the corresponding pair of primary and complementary colours are placed side by side, they cause an optical vibration in the eye and activate each other.  
**Cool Colours** - These commonly include colours like green, blue and violet: they are termed cool because they evoke images of cool things like the sea or a winter landscape. Receding Colours.

**Couche** – a thin layer of medium or oil that you can paint thin glazes into whilst the medium is still wet, commonly called ‘laying down a couche’

**Dry Brush** – An effect when you have very little moisture on your brush to apply the paint.

**Fat** – This describes the oil content in paints,

**Fat over lean** – Means that each succeeding layer of paint should have more ‘fat – oil’ than the preceding layer.

**Gesso** – Traditional oil gesso is a mixture of glue (usually rabbit skin) water, and chalk (calcium carbonate) used to create a flexible, yet absorbent surface for the oil paint to be applied onto.

**Glazes/Glazing** – The term used for a thin, transparent layer of paint. Glazes are used on top of one another to build up depth and modify colours in a painting. The best paints to use for glazes are pigments that have a translucent quality.

**Grisaille** – (Pronounced: griz-zai) A monochromatic oil painting which is often used in underpaintings or as a black & white painting technique.

**Hue** - Commonly described as colour. This term describes the distinct characteristic of colour that separates (eg) red from yellow, from blue.

**Impasto –** The texture created in a paint surface by the movement of the brush.

**Laying out** – Refers to either ‘laying out your colours’ on to palette (setting the paint out) or, laying out your composition, which was traditionally done with cut out drawings on paper.

**Lean** – A term used to describe the low oil content in paints and mediums. Thinning with solvent results in a lower oil content to the paint mix, therefore a leaner mix.

**Lean paint –**A paint layer or paint that has a reduced oil (fat) content.

**Mahl stick** – (Pronounced: mar-hl) A wooden stick used to lean on when painting fine details.

**Medium** – the mixture that you add to your paint to dilute it, or to change consistency, drying time & working properties. We used an AS odourless lean medium.

**Oiling out** – This is where you paint a very thin coat of medium over the painting to bring the colours back to how they looked when you first painted them.

**Opaque** - A term which refers to the covering ability of a paint, known as opacity.

**Palette knives** - Used to mix colours on a palette

**Palette** - Slab of wood, metal or glass used by the artist for mixing paint. Also: figuratively: the range of colours used by the artist.

**Plein air** – (Pronounced: plen-air) A painting created outside rather than in a studio. The term comes from the French ‘en plein air’ meaning ‘in the open air’.

**Pigment** – Is the substance or powder that makes up the colour of a paint. Pigments are either organic (carbon-based) or inorganic (mineral based).

**Priming** – the application of sizes and/or [grounds to a support to prepare the painting’s surface](http://willkempartschool.com/how-to-prime-a-canvas-with-gesso-for-an-acrylic-painting/), modify its absorbency, texture and colour, before you start painting.

**Saturation**/**Intensity** - Describe the strength of a colour with respect to its value or lightness.

**Secondary Colours** - The colours produced by mixing primary colours: blue + yellow = green; yellow + red = orange; blue + red = purple.  
**Scumble –** Very thin layer of opaque or semi-opaque paint that partially hides the under-layer. It can be done with a dry brush, or by removing bits of paint with a cloth.

**Shade** - Is the mixture of a colour with black, which reduces lightness

**Sight-size –**to see both the canvas and the subject in one glance, so they both appear the same size. This makes it easier to flick your eyes between the subject and your painting for judging shape, proportions and colours.

**Solvent -** Odourless Mineral Spirit such as Gamsol, a safe solvent that allows oil painters to use most traditional painting techniques without compromising on the vapors.Used to clean brushes. Not best used as a medium as there is no binder to hold the pigment together.

**Sinking in** – this happens when the paint medium is absorbed by the underlying layer of paint, this could be due to a too absorbent or unevenly applied absorbent ground. The resulting appearance is a visually inconsistent surface, some parts shiny, some parts matte.

**Tertiary Colours** - the result of mixing a primary and a secondary colour (such as red and green) or two secondary colours (such as green and orange). The latter results in muddy colours - browns, greys and blacks.  
**Tint –** colour plus white which increases lightness.

**Tone** - describes the lightness or darkness of a colour, as opposed to the actual colour (yellow, blue, red, green etc.) itself. Colour plus grey.

**Underpainting** – the initial stage or first layer of an oil painting commonly executed using a monochrome or dead colour as a base for the composition.

**Value** – the lightness or darkness of a colour, rather than the actual colour.

**Varnish** – a final layer that can be applied over a finished painting. Painting must be completely dry. Drying time for oils is 6 months to a year. Retouch varnish can be used when oil paint is touch dry.

**Warm Colours** -These traditionally encompass colours like red, orange and yellow, because they appear warm and evoke images of warm things like the sun, sunshine or fire. Advancing colours.

**Suggested Starter kit**

**(all series 1 - Art Spectrum paints and mediums)**

Titanium White

Yellow Ochre or Spectrum Yellow

Lemon yellow

Spectrum Crimson

Spectrum Vermillion

Ultramarine Blue

Spectrum Cerulean

Raw Umber

Burnt Sienna

Sap Green

PLUS

Odourless Lean Medium

Odourless Solvent

Brushes

Palette Knife

Palette