

Open Foundations

# Painting



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# Welcome

Welcome to the Open College of the Arts and to your Open Foundation in Painting.

## About The Open College of the Arts (OCA)

OCA is a leading provider of flexible, open learning courses, a thriving educational charity, and part of the University for the Creative Arts (UCA).

Founded in 1987 by Michael Young, Lord Young of Dartington, OCA's charitable purpose is to widen participation in arts education. We achieve this through embedding our values of openness and flexibility into how our courses are designed, structured and taught. This means producing high quality learning materials that are open and flexible enough for all students to have meaningful learning experiences, and a teaching model that allows you to work flexibly, where and when you want. Supporting this approach are tutors, who are experienced educators and creative practitioners, also working flexibly, and at a distance.

UCA are a leading specialist arts institution that have validated the educational quality of OCA courses for many years. While your foundation course is not currently validated, UCA are still involved in ensuring the quality of the support you receive.

## About your Open Foundation course

OCA's Open Foundations courses are designed for students who want to develop their skills and understanding before embarking onto higher education (HE) study, but they can also be studied as interesting courses in their own right.

The idea of the Foundation course has a long history in art colleges, from their development at the Bauhaus in 1920s Germany and 1940s USA, to the 'Basic Design Course' within UK art colleges from the 1950s onwards. In line with this tradition, OCA's Open Foundation aims to provide a broad introduction to creative disciplines through which you can make informed decisions about your creative direction, build your confidence, and familiarise yourself with the study skills needed to progress.

The Foundation is a pre-degree course that equates to HE Level 3. It encourages you to take an exploratory approach to how you develop, and test your skills, knowledge and understanding to an introductory level, as well as providing a diagnostic experience that allows you to test out a range of different ways of working. It has been designed to be an achievable course for those new to the subject, but equally should be challenging enough to make the experience meaningful to you.

## Course aims

The Open Foundation: Painting course aims to help you explore the possibilities of painting. You are encouraged to be experimental and to enjoy the process of learning about a range of painting media and techniques. You will also gain confidence in your ability to work from observation and to understand different approaches to subject matter. You will begin to use research as a way of enhancing the development of your own practice.

## Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this course, you'll be able to:

- Employ a range of painting techniques, processes and media.
- Creatively explore different subject matter
- Have a greater awareness of what painting is, in both historical and contemporary terms.
- Gain confidence in your potential as an artist

By the end of the course your tutor will help you judge whether you have gained sufficient skills and enough confidence to go on to further study at HE level with OCA, or elsewhere, and be able to decide on the nature and direction of your studies or practice.

## Getting started

This section introduces you to studying at OCA and helps you get started by undertaking a series of seven short exercises. These are designed to help you establish a learning log, set up your working space, and study schedule. They also prepare you for your initial contact with your tutor and to say hello to fellow students. You should be able to work through these reasonably quickly, and the time invested will help you throughout your studies.

As a distance learning student you receive learning materials that take you through the content of the Foundation. These have been developed by experienced academics and creative practitioners in collaboration with OCA. Your materials provide case studies and visual examples, links to resources and suggested research, and are typically structured into five parts covering a number of different topics. Each part contains research tasks, exercises, and topics that encourages you to undertake your own research, make work, and reflect on your progress. You will work through one part at a time, undertaking any tasks and documenting your work as you go in your learning log. Once you complete a given part, you will submit a selection of your work and your learning log to your tutor, who will review it and provide you with feedback.

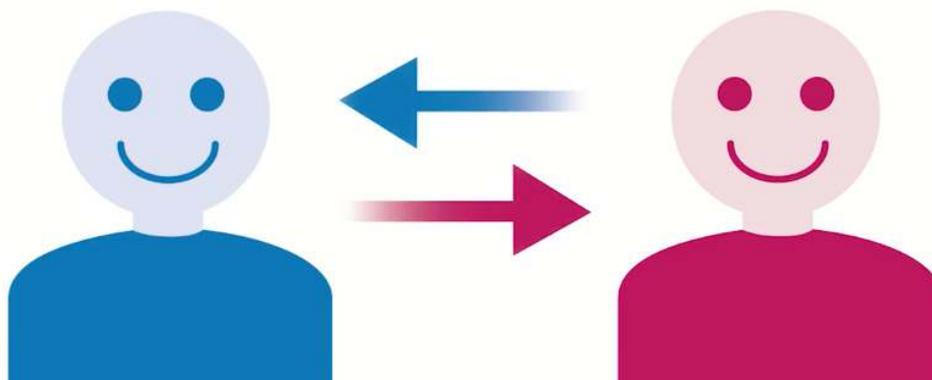


### Research task: The role of the tutor

You can find out more about the role of your tutor through watching this short video:

<https://vimeo.com/180282269>

Tutor feedback can be written or verbal (provided online through Google Meet or by telephone with brief notes), depending on what you would rather receive. Tutor feedback will be timely, well-grounded, constructive, and challenging. It will reflect on the work you have produced, and provide pointers on how you can improve.





### **Tip: Reflecting on your feedback**

It's really useful for you to reflect on this feedback in your learning log, identifying what you feel are the key themes and areas for development. This will help provide a better understanding of what you are taking from your feedback, and help you develop a reflective approach to your studies. If you are using a public facing blog, and want to quote from the feedback, please refer to 'your tutor' rather than by naming them personally.

Alongside providing learning materials and access to a tutor, OCA supports your learning by providing additional resources and opportunities to talk to fellow students on our discuss forums.



### **Research task: Accessing OCA's student website**

The OCA student site [[www.oca-student.com](http://www.oca-student.com)] will be a key resource for you during your studies with OCA, so take some time to familiarise yourself with it. Log onto the OCA student website and find the video guide to using the website. Watch the video and make some notes in your learning log.



## Exercise 0.1: What do you want/need to gain from the Open Foundation?

As a Foundation, the course aims to introduce you to some of the main ideas and practices of your creative discipline. You may already be bringing some skills, knowledge and understanding with you, based on previous experiences or other courses. Equally you may be aware of gaps in your knowledge that you want to develop, or areas you are keen to explore for the first time.

To help support your learning it's useful for your tutor to get a sense of your own creative background, your expectations of the Foundation and any other information you'd like to share. To help you think about this, respond to the following two questions that ask what you want and what you might need from the course. Write a short paragraph or around 5 bullet points for each question.

Write down the key things you would like to gain from doing the Open Foundation course. These might be based on what's motivating you to study - for example, a desire to progress into higher education, wanting to develop your work, a love of your subject, or wishing to engage with other creative practitioners. In other words, what do you want to gain from the course?

Write down the key things you feel might need to develop to gain these things. These might be practical considerations, such as developing your IT skills, thoughts on how you adapt to flexible learning, or other areas you feel you need to develop.

As an OCA student you need to keep a learning log as a way of documenting your creative responses to this course, your reflections on your progress, and as a way of sharing your work with your tutor.

A learning log should be a summary of your creative process, documenting the various stages you have gone through, with visual examples, and a brief narrative explaining or reflecting on your creative process and outcomes. It is helpful if your learning log makes reference to each part of the course including any exercise titles or research tasks.

Some OCA students choose to keep their learning log as an online blog, a notebook or a combination of these. One advantage of using a blog is that it allows your tutor to follow your work as it develops and makes sharing your work simple, especially if you have a lot of digital elements. You may also find it useful to have notebooks as well as a blog. For example, to take notes at gallery visits so things are fresh in your mind, but then allows you to type up your notes and add any photos onto your blog afterwards. Some students use their mobile phones to flick through sketchbooks to add to their blogs, rather than posting them. In addition to blogs, some students produce a series of short audio or video logs (vlogs) to record their reflections.

You may find that you start out using one method but feel you may prefer the other. Don't worry this is perfectly normal and all part of your learning journey - simply let your tutor know which method works best for you.



### **Tip: summarising your learning**

Whatever form of learning log you decide to use, get into the habit of going through what you've produced and summarising your key learning for your tutor. See this summary as a signpost to your learning, so you're pointing out key moments or blog posts. This will save them having to read, watch, or listen to your entire log to find out what's been important to you. It also encourages you to be more reflective in your approach.



### **Research task: Looking at learning logs**

There are many blog posts on [weareoca.com](https://weareoca.com/?s=learning+log) about learning logs. Do some research to see how other students have approached theirs. <https://weareoca.com/?s=learning+log>

### **Exercise 0.2: Setting up your learning log**

If you want to set up your learning log as an online blog follow these steps and use the OCA blog template to help you get started:

[www.oca-student.com/resource-type/study-guide/oca-wordpress-blog-template](http://www.oca-student.com/resource-type/study-guide/oca-wordpress-blog-template)

If you're not using a blog, establish how you might use folders, sketchbooks, or a digital file as your learning log.

You can find more guides on the OCA student website on [Introducing Learning logs](#) and [Keeping an Online Blog](#).

[www.oca-student.com/](http://www.oca-student.com/)

Throughout the Foundation you will be asked to undertake research into the work of other creative practitioners. Creative practitioners could be those currently involved in your subject area, famous or historic practitioners, or more generally, those artists, designers, musicians, filmmakers or writers that help to inform your creative approach. Some of the time this will involve looking at people's work, reading about their practice, or delving into theories and debates surrounding your discipline by reading articles or books. You can do this by searching online or via any local library you have access to. Some key texts will be provided by OCA. Get into the habit of referencing any research you undertake in your learning log by clearly naming the artist, designer, or writer; the name of the work cited and when it was produced; and where you accessed the resource - from a website (citing a URL or web address), a book (citing the author, date, title and publisher), or from an exhibition (citing title, gallery, and dates), etc. University students often use the Harvard system for doing academic references, as outlined in this resource: [www.oca-student.com/resource-type/academic-referencing](http://www.oca-student.com/resource-type/academic-referencing)

Don't worry if you're not using Harvard fully at this stage but it is good practice to get into the habit of using Harvard especially if you go on to study at HE; make sure you can name, date, title, and reference where you accessed the work, where possible.



## Research task: Study tips

WeAreOCA have a regular blog thread focusing on study tips and hearing from students' experiences of studying. Visit the blog and read through some of the posts:

<https://weareoca.com/category/students/study-tips/>

**#weareoca**  
The Open College of the Arts' blog

SUBJECT ▾ STUDENTS ▾ STUDY VISITS ▾ TUTORS OCASA Q



### BROWSING CATEGORY

## Study tips



### Confessions of an art student: Sustaining practice

CREATIVE ARTS CREATIVE WRITING EDUCATION  
FILM FINE ART INTERIOR DESIGN MUSIC  
PHOTOGRAPHY STUDENT WORK STUDY TIPS  
TEXTILES VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS 2 AUGUST  
2018 SHARE

And when someone in the future asks you to talk about sustaining your practice, you are OBVIOUSLY going to say YES, not just because you have anxiety issues about letting people down... but because you have made so much damn work you have no space in your house anymore: that is 'sustained as hell!'

READ MORE

### Exercise 0.3: Analysing and reflecting

This exercise is designed to introduce the idea of analysing and reflecting on the work of others, and to give you some material for your first learning log entry or blogpost. It shouldn't take long to complete.

Here's a selection of creative practitioners that you will encounter during this foundation:

- Henri Matisse
- Lucian Freud
- Jasper Johns
- Georgia O'Keeffe
- Gerhard Richter
- Helen Frankenthaler
- Marlene Dumas
- Jenny Saville

1. Choose one of these names and find a piece of work they've produced.

Remember to reference the works you have chosen, so it's clear what you are looking at, who made it, and when.

2. Pick one of the pieces and briefly describe it.

Consider its appearance by looking at it and trying to describe what you see. What are the different elements within the work and how do these elements work together. What do you think the work is trying to communicate? Imagine you're describing the work to somebody over the telephone. Try to do this in no more than 50 words.

Technically, what you're doing here is analysing the formal visual language of an image. This is known as visual research or, sometimes visual analysis. Writing can be a useful tool in visual analysis, but you can also annotate images with notes.

3. Using the same piece, briefly write about how you relate to this work.

Do you like it or hate it, find it intriguing, influential or outdated, and if so, why? Does the work connect to wider ideas or other creative practitioners? In other words, what's your opinion on this work. Again, try to do this in no more than 50 words.

What you're doing here is being reflective by considering your own relationship to the work, as well as contextualising their work by thinking about how it might connect to wider ideas or practices in some way. Don't worry about 'getting it wrong' or 'missing the point'. Perhaps your reflection raises more questions than answers. Remember that in the arts there are no definitively right or wrong answers, just different opinions – some more authoritative than others.

4. Use the text you've generated to create your first blog post or learning log entry.

Finally, you may want to be self-reflective by considering your experience of doing the exercise. Did you find this an easy or difficult task? Did it raise any interesting issues or areas you want to develop further? Write a sentence or two picking up on any points in your learning log.

Your Foundation course requires around 400 learning hours and can be undertaken flexibly, part-time, or full-time, depending on how quickly you want to learn. You have a maximum of two years to complete these learning hours, but if you spread your learning over too long a timeframe it's easy to lose momentum. With this in mind, you might want to aim to complete this course within 12 months (working approximately 8 hours per week), 8 months (at 14 hours per week) or at a full time rate of 4 months (at 28 hours per week).

Allow around 20% of your learning hours for reflection and keeping your learning log up to date.

During the course your tutor will suggest dates by which your next assignment is due based on which of these time frames you want to work within. Deadlines can be renegotiated if needed in discussion with your tutor, so long as they fit within the overall maximum time frame for the course.



### **Tip: Additional support**

Remember that if you have difficulty with any of your deadlines please get in touch with your tutor. They can discuss how quickly you want to work and set a suggested deadline during your Google Meet/phone conversation.

Additional support is available from the OCA Head Office in the form of Course Support, Student Services and Learner Support. You can email Course Support [[coursesupport@oca.ac.uk](mailto:coursesupport@oca.ac.uk)] for answers to course content or subject related questions. Student Services [[studentadvice@oca.ac.uk](mailto:studentadvice@oca.ac.uk)] if you have queries around study resources, time frames, finance and funding, or any general enquiries. Or contact Learner Support [[learnersupport@oca.ac.uk](mailto:learnersupport@oca.ac.uk)] if any personal circumstances or disabilities begin to impact on your ability to study.

Allocating regular time for your studies will help you balance your course work with the rest of your life. It's important to be realistic about what you can achieve. For example, don't try to undertake the course full-time, while working full-time, and juggling everything else you do. You'll end up seeing the course as 'another thing to do' which won't be useful for your motivation or creativity. It's much better to give yourself some breathing space to enjoy the challenge of your studies.



## Tip: Pomodoro technique

The Pomodoro references the popular tomato-shaped food timer. Developed by Francesco Cirillo as a technique to help manage working time, the technique simply structures your focus on a task into 25 minute blocks with short breaks in-between. In other words:

1. Identify the task to be done. For example, doing a drawing or reading a text
2. Set a timer for 20-25 minutes (it doesn't have to be a Pomodoro!)
3. Work on the task
4. When the timer goes, have a short break.
5. Then set the timer and start again

After more than four cycles, take a longer break

It can help with concentration and focus, and helps to see what can be achieved in a short period of time.

Depending on your circumstances, you might allocate time in different ways - a day a week, an hour a day, larger blocks of time such as weekends or holidays, or a combination of approaches.



## Exercise 0.4: Managing your time

Ask yourself the following questions.

- How much time you can allocate to your studies each week?
- What is my most/least productive time of the day?
- How well do I manage time?

If your Foundation course requires around 400 hours learning, you can break this down further by allocating 80 hours for each part of the course. Within each part you might want to subdivide your 80 hours by the number of topics, exercises or other tasks. Look at the contents page of this course to see how many there are. This should give you a rough idea of how long you need to spend on activities. Of course, it's hard to know how long things take until you've done them. Perhaps use this Getting Started section as a benchmark - how long will it take you to get through all of the exercises? Make a note in your learning log.

Once you have answered these questions, make a rough weekly study plan that is realistic and you can stick to. This will help you meet your deadlines you set with your tutor, share this plan when you introduce yourself to your tutor.

Finding a space to study is equally important. You will need a space to make your work, be it the kitchen table, a spare room or an existing studio space; a space to work on your learning log - if you have opted for a blog for your learning log, then you will need access to a computer; and space to read and reflect which could be much more flexible and also slot into other times, for example reading on the train on the way to work.

In order to study you will also need some resources. These will differ depending on what you're studying. At a basic level you will need drawing and writing tools, paper, sketchbooks, and access to libraries or digital resources. Think about what other materials, tools, or other resources you might need, as well as any specialist subject-related equipment.

If you are able, you should supplement your practical studies with regular visits to interior spaces, exhibitions, museums and galleries. Seeing the work of others 'in the flesh' is an important aspect of art study and a source of inspiration, a way to pick up new and exciting ideas. Look online and make a note of exhibitions that feature interior design or architecture. Visit as many as you can. If you're travelling some distance, plan your time carefully and try not to cram too much into your day. You should try to join us on OCA study visits too; look out for them on the OCA blog [weareoca.com](http://weareoca.com).

For students who, for whatever reason, are unable to travel, alternatives, such as live webcams, have been indicated as a way to complete exercises.

Some courses require the use of specialist software, so along with a computer, you will also need to download and install these applications. Where possible we have highlighted 'freeware' options, that are available free of charge, as well as industry standard software you may want to purchase.



### **Tip: Student discounts on software**

All students enrolled with OCA are encouraged to register for an NUS card. The card entitles you to discounts on thousands of products including software and apps.

### **Exercise 0.5: Setting up your space**

Prepare a list of the equipment and other resources you might need. What do you currently have and what might you need? Don't worry if you don't have everything now, there's plenty of time to build your resources as you progress through the course. If you're not sure of what you need, then prepare a list of questions to ask your tutor.

Now, choose a space, or spaces, where you will do most of your study, and prepare it so it's an environment you will enjoy working in and you are able to store your equipment and resources. Take a photo of your studio space to share with your tutor via your learning log.

You'll need to check for any specific requirements before starting each part of the course.

## Exercise 0.6: Say hello to your fellow students

It's worth remembering that while you're in your space working, there's lots of other OCA Foundation students doing the same thing. Your fellow students can provide fresh perspectives, feedback and encouragement. Get in touch with other OCA students to say hello, and to share something about you or your practice. For example, by sharing your online learning log URL, your work on Exercise 3, or your photo of your studio space. You can make contact with them through our OCA discuss site: [<https://discuss.oca-student.com/>]. You'll find a welcome section here: <https://discuss.oca-student.com/c/welcome-introduce-yourself-here>

You can also talk to fellow students through your email group, which you were added to when you enrolled. This email group is specific to your course. Its purpose is to make it easier for students studying the same course at the same time to talk to one another, upload images and critique one another's work. Through these groups you have access to the experience of students who are further along in their studies who can offer advice and guidance and you can take comfort in knowing there are others at the same point as you starting off, who may share the same worries or concerns. These course discussion groups utilise 'Google groups' to operate. You can find the groups at: [www.oca-student.com/content/course-discussions-feature-launched](http://www.oca-student.com/content/course-discussions-feature-launched) for more information.

Remember to communicate respectfully and responsibly with other students and OCA staff online. If you would like further information listen to this short piece on Netiquette: [www.oca-student.com/resource-type/online-guide-elements/getting-grips-netiquette](http://www.oca-student.com/resource-type/online-guide-elements/getting-grips-netiquette)



### Research task: OCASA

OCA's Student Association (OCASA) [[www.ocasa.org.uk](http://www.ocasa.org.uk)] is also available to you as a student. Visit their website to find out more.

## Exercise 0.7: Say hello to your tutor

For your final exercise, get in touch with your tutor to arrange a 15-20 min conversation using Google Meet [<https://meet.google.com/>] (if you have the technology available) or over the phone. This is an opportunity to say hello to your tutor and put a voice to a name. It's also a chance to discuss how best to schedule your time, document your work, and share it. The previous exercises and research tasks will have helped you prepare for this conversation and identified any questions you'd like to ask.

You may want to reflect on this conversation in your learning log as a way to identify any key points and as a starting point to refer back to later on.

Finally, you may want to reflect on doing this introduction as a whole. Has it been useful and are things we could do differently? Feel free to get in touch with OCA directly or use the forums to help us improve our support if you have any ideas.

Well done. You should now be ready to start Part One of your course. Don't worry if you are still getting to grips with using your blog, adjusting to this form of learning, or don't have all the resources you need. There's plenty of time to develop these as you progress. Don't forget, that if you get stuck along the way the plenty of support available from OCA and encouragement from your fellow students.

Enjoy the rest of your studies!

# A brief history of painting

**Some images have been removed from this sample due to copyright.**

Sarah Pickstone, *Sylvia Googled*, watercolour on paper, 2010

## A brief history of painting

The first paintings were made about 40,000 years ago in the Ice Age caves of France and Spain. Depictions of hunting scenes with dynamic horses and bison were made rubbing earth pigments into the rocky surfaces.

### The Ancient World

Although cave painting is the first evidence of image making with a form of paint, it is not the beginning of what would be considered a linear history of painting - where we make connections between art forms and cultures. This started many decades later in Ancient Egypt, where artists were employed to decorate the walls of tombs with images of the deceased. The Egyptians used a strict pictorial language that included the 'rule of proportion', a grid system that allowed them to represent an idealised human form on any scale. Even their depictions of animals were subject to a standardisation of form. This could not be considered a time for artistic development as the artists strove to replicate rather than interpret, but it did have an influence on other cultures.

The artists of classical Greece took more risks and questioned ideas about painting. A preoccupation with the human figure led them to reject the Egyptian formulas and strive to represent a more convincing form. They didn't quite achieve full perspective in painting but they did start to suggest three dimensionality.

The illusion of space was developed further by the Roman painters, with more refinement and attention to detail.

With the rise of Christianity in the sixth century, Byzantine art emerged with its solemn and austere style and emphasis on faith and iconography. Classical naturalistic depictions were disregarded in favour of more remote representations, intended to inspire devotion. But just as the Egyptians had inspired the Greeks, the Byzantine style that persisted in modified form up until the twelfth century, was an important influence on early Renaissance art.

## The Italian Renaissance

Renaissance means 'rebirth' and this is how the artists of the fourteenth century saw their role - to rebuild what the Ancients had stood for and elevate painting into a serious concern. Their study of classical images was alongside the advances in science that were influencing art. The use of perspective and the study of human anatomy added to this significant refinement in painting and drawing techniques.

This cultural movement begins in the fourteenth century and ends in the mid sixteenth century but probably the most significant period is the High Renaissance, when artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Raffaello Sanzio (known as Raphael) were active.

In Leonardo's *Last Supper*, the artist explored new ways to interpret realistic space in the picture plane while also using his scientific discoveries about the effect of colour on perspective.

Michelangelo's depiction of the human figure in the Sistine Chapel had a profound influence on painting while Raphael created balance and harmony with a subtle use of lighting and chiaroscuro.

Michelangelo, *Sistine Chapel* detail 16th century Fresco

## The Renaissance in Northern Europe

While all these artistic innovations were happening in Italy, a separate Renaissance was running parallel to this, in the Netherlands.

The painters here sought to imitate nature in great detail, using the now quite popular oil paints that allowed them to carefully build up layers of colour. Jan Van Eyck and his highly detailed style is probably the most successful of Northern painters to really exploit the possibilities of this technique. His ability to describe the human face so well made him a popular portrait painter, not just in Holland but also in Italy. To some extent, the artists working in different parts of Europe influenced each other due to economic and cultural links between cities, but there are still distinct differences between the Northern and Southern Renaissance.

Jan Van Eyck, *Portrait of a man*, oil on panel  
1433

## The seventeenth century

The Baroque style was a new direction in painting that emerged in Rome at the turn of the seventeenth century. It emphasised emotion, often with theatrical gestures, ornate details and rich colour combinations. The most pioneering artist working with these ideas was Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. His later work in particular looked at ways of interpreting the realities of human existence, in reaction to the late Renaissance mannerism and its idealised figures. He often employed bold chiaroscuro with figures appearing out of the shadows.

Caravaggio, *Supper at Emmaus*, oil on canvas, 1606

Meanwhile in The Netherlands, Rembrandt was also using light and colour to add meaning to his subjects. His deeply sensuous and expressive use of oil paint was shared with his Spanish contemporary Velazquez.

## Neoclassicism and Romanticism

Neoclassicism began in the middle of the eighteenth century, as a rejection of the late Baroque styles. Neoclassical artists wanted to convey more serious and moral ideas in a simple, dignified style. As a movement, it was most significant in France with the painters Jacques-Louis David and Jean Auguste Ingres being the leading exponents.

Romanticism began in the same era as Neoclassicism but was more concerned with expression and movement, rather than control. The rise of the artist as individual, willing to question established ideals and judgements was now happening. This collection of individuals included Goya Y Luciente, JMW Turner and Eugene Delacroix. In different ways, these artists reflected human emotions and anxieties at a time of radical changes in artistic creation.

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Head of The Grande Odalisque*, 1814

Goya Y Luciente, *The Marquesa de Santa Cruz*, oil on canvas 1805

JMW Turner *Wreckers, Coast of Northumberland*, oil on canvas 1834

Joseph Mallord William Turner is perhaps the most famous of English Romantic painters. Known as a 'painter of light' he explored the atmospheric effects of weather, often depicting turbulent storms or shimmering sunsets. He developed great skill both in watercolour and oil paint. Spending much of his life living near the Thames Estuary, he was fascinated by the movement of the tides and made many sketches by the banks of the river as well as on location in the north of England. He developed these sketches and studies into larger pieces in his studio in London.

## Realism and the Pre-Raphaelites

Not all artists working in the eighteenth century believed in the emotional leanings of Romanticism, or the academic rigour of Neoclassicism. Realism was a reaction against both styles, in favour of objectivity without exaggeration or artifice.

French Realist painters such as Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet and Jean-Francois Millet wanted to paint modern life and everyday activities with an almost humble truthfulness.

Jean-Francois Millet, *The gleaners*, oil on canvas 1857

In England, in 1848 a group of painters and poets formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, to paint a greater 'truth to nature' but their idea of realism was fundamentally different from the French painters. These artists included John Everett Millais, William Holman-Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Their work often contained high levels of sharply focused detail, and a luminosity of colour that at times looked almost otherworldly. They often referred to religion and myth in their subject matter rather than the world around them, though they did also paint from direct observation.

William Holman-Hunt painted most of *The Scapegoat* on the shore of the Dead Sea though it was completed in his studio in London. He visited the locations of biblical narratives to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and truth. This intensely saturated colour is typical of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and was achieved by working in oils on top of a non-absorbent white ground.

William Holman Hunt, *The Scapegoat* oil on canvas 1854

## The age of Impressionism

The Impressionists rejected academic rules in painting and instead sought to capture overall 'impressions' rather than closely rendered detail. Although their approach seemed radical at the time (1865-1910) they were inspired and influenced by many artists that came before them - the gestural brushstrokes of Delacroix, the changing light captured by Turner, and the direct observations of Courbet.

Working quickly, with broken brush marks they focused on the shifting qualities of light and creating a sense of movement, just as photography was beginning to do at this time.

This desire to paint fleeting moments and the optical effects of colour was shared by Claude Monet, Eduardo Manet, and Edgar Degas.

Eduardo Manet, *The Monet family in their garden*, oil on canvas 1874

Colour was also what led Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne to explore new territory, all in diverse ways. There isn't a set style to Post -Impressionism - the period between 1886-1910. These artists rejected the limitations of Impressionism in a desire to combine observed reality with emotional responses. Experimenting with new techniques and subject matter, they moved painting towards abstraction and less tangible realities.

Paul Gauguin, *Aurearea*, oil on canvas, 1892

## Modernism to Contemporary Art

The term modernism is generally used to describe the art movements that began with Impressionism and culminated in the abstract art of the 1960's. Although many different styles are included in this term, the exploration of new ideas alongside a rejection of conservative, academic art of the past is what unites the artists. The role of painting as a means of describing events had become increasingly irrelevant since the advent of photography and artists were becoming more interested in materials, techniques and processes. Modernism embraced everything that was avant-garde in fine art, literature, music and design. Some modernists deliberately broke away from the past and its established customs while others found ways of re-interpreting tradition to express new ideas.

The beginning of the twentieth century was an explosion of ideas. The late works of Cezanne inspired the young Picasso and Braque to invent Cubism, which rejected conventional perspective bringing different viewpoints together in one painting.

Pablo Picasso, *Still life*, oil on canvas 1912

Matisse was also breaking from traditional methods of perception. He was amongst a group of painters known as Fauvists, who used vivid, pure colours and expressive brush marks to describe form.

Alongside Picasso, Matisse redefined the language of painting and is one of the twentieth century's most influential artists.

In Germany from 1905, the use of colour became slightly darker with artists looking to the Fauves but adding harsher outlines. Expressionism can be identified as art that emphasises emotional and psychological states, often with exaggerated imagery. There are two key Expressionist movements in the early part of the twentieth century. The first was Die Brücke (the bridge) which was a group of painters including Ernst Kirchner and Erich Heckel. These artists wanted to depict a hostile world of distorted figures and unsettling colours.

Henri Matisse, *Modesty (The Italian)* 1906  
(oil on panel)

A few years later Der Blaue Reiter (the blue rider) was formed with less emphasis on alienation but more on the possibilities of free expression.

The most influential figure in this movement was Wassily Kandinsky who began abstracting the representational image, using colour to create harmony and balance, often relating painting to music.

Wassily Kandinsky, *Impression no3 (Concert)* oil on linen 1911

At the same time, Piet Mondrian was taking abstraction even further, imposing rigorous constraints in terms of colour and composition - limiting his palette to primary colours, plus black and white and using grid patterns. He was an important member of the De Stijl (the style) movement which was a group of Dutch artists and designers who explored ideas about art and an underlying spiritual order that they believed could re-shape society.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Italian Futurists such as Gino Severini and Umberto Boccioni were fascinated by the speed and motion of modern technology. Like the Die Brücke group, they want to be free of the constraints of the past and celebrate the modern age - painting pictures of dynamism and power.

Between the two world wars, the modern energy that dominated much of painting practice at the turn of the century, was replaced by a more inward looking and reflective approach.

Dada was a European artistic movement that expressed absurd and irrational principles in response to the futility of war. It was short lived, only active between 1919-1922 but it was the precursor of Surrealism which combined the absurdity of Dada with subconscious dream imagery.

Artists such as Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte painted deliberately contradictory elements in meticulous detail, in an attempt to interpret psychological theories.

Umberto Boccioni, *Elasticity*,  
oil on canvas 1912

Other artists that were active between the wars but were making very different work were Alberto Giacometti and Giorgio Morandi. Although very different in terms of style, both artists were obsessively driven to return to the same subject and pursue it in their own distinct ways. For Morandi, the still life offered a contemplative experience while Giacometti continuously explored the human form in space - both in painting and sculpture.

Giorgio Morandi, *Still life*, oil on canvas  
1929

The artist Georgia O'Keeffe was a major figure in twentieth century art in America. Her work has Surrealist leanings that she referred to as 'magical realism'.

She is best known for her large scale flower paintings but also made a series of works inspired by the New Mexico desert landscape, where she lived for many years. By getting close-up to her subject, she blended the figurative and the abstract, using flowing lines and vibrant colours.

The Abstract Expressionist movement of 1940's and 1950's America has had a lasting influence on modern art. The painters were united in their outlook more than their style and believed in freedom of expression and individuality. Jackson Pollock pursued his vision with an intensity that other painters followed. His Action painting led the way for artists such as Willem De Kooning, Barnett Newman and Rothko - though they all worked in very different ways.

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Pattern of leaves*, oil on canvas 1923

Barnett Newman produced huge 'colour field' canvases, often with a single block of colour, interrupted with what he called 'zips'. Rothko also worked with expanses of colour, placing emphasis on stillness rather than action and gesture.

This more restrained approach to Abstract Expressionism was an influence on Minimalism, which

Jackson Pollock, *Silver over black, white, yellow and red*, Oil and enamel on canvas 1948

became dominant in the 1960's. It refers to the removal of visual variation within a painting, with the intention of creating a pure and absolute image. Unlike Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism rejected subjectivity and emotion in favour of pure aesthetics.

Frank Stella, *Labyrinth*, oil on canvas 1960

Frank Stella was a pivotal figure of 1960's American art. He explored simple geometric forms, dissecting areas of flat colour with areas of raw canvas. His painting process was systematic and devoid of gesture - reducing the idea of illusion.

Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn)*, Screenprint 1967

Alongside the American Minimalists and Abstract Expressionists came a counter movement that embraced popular culture. Pop Art rejected the epic intensity of these abstract painters to instead celebrate mass produced material realities. The most famous pop artist was Andy Warhol who used commercial printmaking processes to produce series of prints of film stars and Brillo pad boxes. His studio, known as 'The Factory' was a meeting place for the New York Avant-garde. Warhol himself having reached the celebrity status that had fascinated him.

Jasper Johns, *Flag above white*, encaustic on canvas 1954

Another leading figure in the Pop Art movement was Jasper Johns. His American flag paintings were intended to make the viewer consider the nature of art and reality. Painting a very familiar symbol that 'the mind already knows' using a time consuming method of encaustic (mixing pigment with hot wax), he was considering how the way a work is executed can alter the reading of the image.

A Pop Art movement was also happening in Britain and included artists such as Richard Hamilton and Peter Blake. These artists also referred to mass culture and consumerism but with a greater degree of detachment and irony than the American artists who were fully immersed in that culture.

Lucian Freud, *Francis Bacon*, oil on canvas 1956

While many American painters continued to explore abstraction towards the end of the twentieth century, in Europe a strong figurative tradition continued. Painters such as Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon were part of the 1970's London school of painting. Many of Bacon's paintings deal with themes such as isolation, violence and despair - often distorting the human figure to emphasise tension within the work. He proclaimed that violence was inherent in the act of painting itself - in the struggle to interpret reality using paint.

Lucian Freud began his career painting quite tightly controlled portraits but over the years his style became much more free with the rich, texture of the oil paint being used to give skin tones a real fleshy quality. He explored the raw vulnerability of the human form with an obsessive intensity.

Gerhard Richter, *Sea Piece*, oil on canvas 1969

German painter Gerhard Richter has avoided working in a consistent style. Instead he shifts between abstraction and realism, often referring to photographic sources. In this photorealist seascape painting, he appears to be recalling the subdued palette of the Northern Romantic tradition, however, he arrived at the image using very different processes. Using his own photographs, Richter made a photomontage of sea and sky which he then painstakingly copied using oil paints. He believed that the objectivity of photographs enabled him to be more detached from the landscape tradition of painting. Not unlike Jasper Johns and his flag paintings, Richter wanted the painterly technique to be appreciated for its own qualities.

## Painting Now

Over the last hundred years there have been many movements and styles in painting but now more than ever is a time when Art seems to expand beyond its historical limitations. Painting was once the dominant and acceptable medium of expression - now it sits alongside video, installation, sound and performance. But with that expanded arena comes exciting possibilities and many artists are continuing to investigate the language of painting.

Image description: Abstract work with geometric and expressive lines with orange circles and yellow triangles. Image credit: Julie Mehretu, *Transients*, acrylic, ink, gesso on canvas, 2006

Julie Mehretu combines architectural features and abstract elements that interact to create a sense of movement and shifting space. Discussing her work she says 'My aim is to have a picture that appears one way from a distance - almost like a cosmology, city or universe. But when you approach the work, the overall image shatters into numerous other pictures, stories and events.'

Cecily Brown makes paintings which are highly visceral, using oil paint to suggest figurative elements. Influenced by Abstract Expressionism, she exploits the qualities of the paint using brush marks and gestures that are at times almost violent. Like Mehretu, she is interested in different viewpoints and disrupting the reading of the image, though the results have a more tactile surface quality.

Cecily Brown, *Untitled*, oil on canvas 1996

Clare Woods also has an interest in the physicality of paint, using it almost sculpturally to describe unusual, overlooked elements of the landscape.

Clare Woods, *Cemetery bends*, oil & enamel on aluminium 2009 (Image courtesy of Simon Lee Gallery London/Hong Kong)

Luc Tuymans makes paintings that often refer to photography and film and like Richter he is questioning the 'truth' of the photographic document - making paintings that appear to have elements missing or out of focus. Building up and removing paint, he is disrupting the narrative and questioning representation.

Image description: Muted tone painting of a group or Pigeons. Image credit: Luc Tuymans, *Pigeons*, oil on canvas 2001

Referring to her process Lynette Yiadom-Boakye says 'They're composites constructed from found images, life drawings and my imagination. My method allows me to think freely about a person, a life, a place or a feeling through the act of painting itself.

Oil paint, canvas, linen and rabbit-skin glue have a life of their own. There's something visceral and inherently alive about using them to create a painting.'

Image description: Full body portrait of a seated woman. Image credit: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *Obelisk*, oil on canvas 2005

Another artist who uses photography and film as source material is Marlene Dumas. Highly evocative and charged with an emotional intensity, Dumas works with themes such as sexuality, race and gender.

For this painting she used an image of Ingrid Bergman in the film *For whom the bell tolls*. Employing experimental techniques with oil paints, she emphasises the feeling of loss and mourning, allowing the paint to run in places while the surface of the skin has a distressed quality.

These artists, and many others that are currently working within painting, are interested in exploring its boundaries as well as its possibilities. As you develop your own understanding of what painting is, keep an open minded, inquisitive approach - and enjoy the journey.

Image description: Close up portrait. Image credit: Marlene Dumas, *For whom the bell tolls*, oil on canvas 2007

## Which paints to use?

For this course you can choose between acrylic or oil paints though you may want to experiment with both. They have different qualities and handling properties but either type of paint will be suitable for the topic exercises.

You will also need a small set of watercolours for preparatory work.

### Acrylic Paints

Acrylic paint is quick drying and water based which makes them quite convenient and versatile. They have brilliant colour and can be diluted with water to achieve very fluid washes or can be used straight from the tube if you want thicker passages of paint. There are also many mediums available that can be added to acrylic to increase the gloss and the flow of the colour or to add more texture.

One of the advantage of this quick drying paint is that a painting can be completed in one sitting as the layers will be dry enough to paint over in 20-30 minutes if the paint has been applied quite thinly. It can be a little more difficult to blend the colour as it is drying, unlike slow drying oil paint. However, there are mediums that can be added - 'retarders' that will allow you to manipulate the colour for longer.

Acrylic paint is also a good option if you have limited space and are working from home. As they are water mixable, there aren't the toxic fumes that can be present if using oil paint and turpentine.

Acrylic paints have a relatively short history, certainly in comparison to oils and watercolours. The first artists quality acrylic paints were introduced in the 1950's and their popularity soon grew amongst artists who enjoyed the versatile qualities and brilliant colour of the paint.

Now there is an extensive range of acrylics that come in various consistencies from fluid and creamy to super heavy bodied.

If you decide to use acrylics, try using paint that has some body to it with a rich enough consistency to be used expressively but that can also be thinned down for washes or for areas of fine detail.



## Oil Paints

Oil paints offer depth and richness of colour and consistency. They are oil-based with the pigment usually suspended in linseed oil. Oil paints are slow drying and although there are quick-drying mediums available that will speed up the drying time if added to the colour, they will still not dry as quickly as water based paints such as acrylic.

There are many different manufacturers of oil paint and most of these produce a 'student' and an 'artist' range of colours. The artists quality paints contain more pigment and tend to be more lightfast, whereas the more economical student quality contains more fillers to bulk out the paint. Both types can produce good results but if you decide to try oil paints, it is recommended that at least some of the colours you buy are artists quality so that you can see the difference.

Mediums that can be added to oil paint include:

- Linseed oil (slow drying)
- Linseed stand oil ( a thicker version - also slow drying)
- Poppy oil ( a paler oil, good for mixing with white)
- Glaze medium - most manufacturers will make a quick drying and a slow drying version.
- Turpentine - can be added to linseed oil to reduce gloss and enhance flow (make a 50/50 mix in a glass or metal container and then add small amounts to oil colour.
- Odourless solvents can be used instead of turpentine, such as Shellsol T or Sansador.

There are also water soluble oil paints available, that contain oils that have been modified to mix with water. They have some of the characteristics of conventional oil colour though they dry a lot quicker.

## Watercolour

Watercolour paints are popular because they have fluidity and translucency that can add a sense of light to a painting. They are available in small tubes of wet paint or dry pans of colour that becomes fluid as soon as you add water. Their compactness makes them quite portable, and an ideal paint to use when outside studying the landscape.

It is important to consider the type of paper that is used with watercolour. A thin cartridge paper will not be able to absorb the fluid paint whereas a heavier paper made specifically for use with watercolour is more suitable and will give you better results.

It is recommended that you use a small set of watercolours alongside your acrylic or oil paints. You are encouraged to make quick studies in a range of media as you work through the course and there is an emphasis on watercolour sketches in part three.

You will find it more convenient to use a small set of half pans as this will be easy to carry and set up outside. You will also need a small bottle of water, a selection of brushes and watercolour sketch pads.



To get the most out of your watercolour studies, use watercolour paper as it is specially prepared to absorb the fluid paint. Any weight from 200gsm - 400gsm will be suitable and does come in sketchbooks, blocks and pads as well as loose sheets. Avoid using cartridge paper for watercolour as the paint will sit on the surface and when it dries, cause the paper to buckle.

## Types of watercolour paper

### Hot pressed paper

This is very smooth and favoured by artists that like to work delicately with a lot of subtle detail.

### Cold pressed (or NOT) paper

NOT is essentially a cold pressed paper with a slight tooth to it. It is a popular surface for watercolour painters as the paint settles into the slight texture of the paper, but it will also allow some detail to be possible.

### Rough paper

This is the roughest texture paper available. The heavier texture means that granulating (irregular colour application) effects are enhanced. The paper surface is not recommended for those interested in detailed work and is more suitable for bolder, expressive painting techniques.

## Painting supports and other surfaces

There are many different surfaces that you can paint on, from cartridge paper to fine Irish linen.

For this course, you will be experimenting and making lots of quick studies as you get to know the handling properties of paint and colour mixing. Therefore, it will be useful to try a range of supports to include relatively inexpensive papers though you could also try working on stretched canvas.

Canvas boards are a good option because they are more substantial than paper but lighter and more economical than a stretched canvas. They can be used with acrylic or oil paints and come in many different sizes. As they are reasonably light and portable, they would be useful for some of the studies you will be making outside.

You can use a heavy cartridge paper for some of your work - at least 200gsm - 400gsm. This is available in large sheets, pads or blocks.

Watercolour paper is better for using with watercolour or with dilute acrylics as it is able to absorb the fluid paint.

There is also paper that has been specially prepared for oil paint - Arches 300gsm is a good option.

Sheets of primed canvas are also available in pads and a good way to try working on canvas if you have a limited amount of space.

For some of your paintings you might want to work on stretched canvas or linen. This is available pre-primed with acrylic primer but can be worked on with either oil or acrylic paints.

To help you develop your understanding of how paint behaves on different surfaces, it is recommended that you experiment with a range of supports.



Stretched, primed canvas and canvas boards



Canvas pad, watercolour and oil paper pads, cartridge paper

## Your Brushes

From left to right:

- Hog Fan Brush
- Synthetic Filbert
- Hog Flat
- Synthetic Round
- Synthetic Flat
- Squirrel Mop Brush
- Sable Round

### Round brushes

Depending on size and type of hair, a round brush will form fine points. Can be used with dilute paint to create fluid lines or large brushes can be used to apply heavier paint with expressive gestures. Small, soft round brushes are ideal for areas of developing detail or for direct, linear marks.

### Flat brushes

A very useful brush, suitable for laying down washes if quite wide, also suitable for glazing or blending. When used for impasto techniques, it creates a slightly angular mark. The end or side of brush can be used for fine lines.



## **Filbert**

The filbert has a flat ferrule (the metal section that holds the hairs in place) and an oval shaped tip that makes it possible to create a smooth stroke with a pointed end. A good brush for wet in wet technique and blending.

## **Fan**

Useful for gentle blending of acrylic or oil colours. Can also be used to create textured effects with watercolour.

## **Types of hair**

### **Hog/Bristle**

Robust and usually fairly thick - a lively, decisive brush mark can be created so it works well for an expressive style. The softness of the bristle does vary but can be a little too coarse for fine detail. An acrylic or sable hair tends to work better when needing a fine point.

### **Synthetic**

Flexible and quite soft, suitable for long strokes. Good for techniques that involve using dilute paint as well as for gentle colour transitions and blending. Less suitable for heavy impasto work, especially on a large scale. They hold their shape well and are long lasting. Particular suitable for use with acrylic paint.

### **Natural hair**

The range of natural hair brushes is varied and includes, sable, squirrel, ox and badger. They tend to be quite soft and can hold a lot of water, making them most suitable for watercolour painting. A small round sable brush is also useful for adding fine detail to an oil or acrylic painting. These brushes are generally quite expensive but it is perfectly possible to have enough variety of brushes if you only use hog and synthetic hair.

## Other equipment

### Palettes

A palette can come in many forms. The traditional artists' palette is kidney shaped oiled wood with a thumb hole. Most painters working today are more likely to use a piece of thick glass with curved edges, lying flat on a table. You can use other non-absorbent surfaces such as ceramic plates and dishes, or a piece of perspex. There are also disposable palettes available, which are tear-off sheets of waxed paper that keep the paint wet while you are working.

If you are using acrylic paints with a glass or ceramic palette, make sure you cover the palette with cling film or plastic if you are going to leave it for a few hours, otherwise the paint will dry out.

### Palette knives

A trowel shaped palette knife is the most suitable for mixing colour on your palette. You might also like to experiment with applying paint with a palette knife - a trowel or flat shaped one can be used for this.

### Drawing materials

Alongside your experiments with paint, you will be making quick studies in your sketchbook.

Try using a range of media, including:

- Charcoal
- Pastels
- Graphite sticks
- Pencils
- Drawing pens
- Ink
- Pigment sticks
- Gouache

## Your sketchbook

To get the most out of your studies and to support and enhance your progress, you need to regularly use your sketchbook.

Use it as a place to make quick sketches, colour studies, ideas for compositions and experiments with different materials. The more you use it, the more confident you will become with your painting. When you work on the topic exercises throughout the course, use your sketchbook to try out different ideas. This might just be a few quick sketches in pencil to work out a composition, or it might be a watercolour study to try out different colour combinations. But don't just use it for the course material, sketch anything that inspires you. And if you see a photograph in a newspaper or magazine that you find interesting stick that in your sketchbook. It might spark an idea for a painting. Your sketchbook should be a fluid and evolving resource for you - not a place where you worry about making perfect pictures. Don't be afraid to make mistakes - it could lead somewhere interesting.



OCA Student Sketchbook

## Your work space

The space you use to work in is very important. It doesn't have to be a purpose built studio, it may be a small spare room or even the end of the kitchen table.

You will find it easier to work if it is well organised, with your materials readily available and accessible.

You might also like to arrange it so that there are inspiring images or objects that motivate you to make work.

Cleaning your palette and clearing the surface after a painting session is good practice so that when you next walk into the space you can start on your next topic or exercise without being distracted by any mess. Make your workspace somewhere you enjoy being and that works for you.



## Looking at other artists

Alongside your sketchbook which will contain your visual research, you are also expected to keep a learning log. This is where you write your thoughts about your own work as well as reflections on the work of other artists. You should look at the suggested reading list and websites for images but try to see as much work 'in the flesh' as possible. Visiting museums and galleries should become part of your development as an artist as it will help you formulate ideas about current concerns in painting.

When looking at work by other artists, adopt a questioning approach. You could consider the following:

- How is the medium (oil / acrylic/ watercolour) being used and how is the artist exploring its qualities?
- How does the work make you feel? If there is something unpleasant or challenging about it, why do you think that is?
- Or if you respond positively to the work - what is it that resonates with you?
- Has the composition been used effectively?
- How has the use of colour had an impact on the overall effect?
- Does it remind you of any other art works you have seen?
- Can you imagine trying to adopt a similar style with your own work?

Throughout the course there are **Research Points** which are there to encourage you to look at specific artists that are relevant to the different projects. Make notes in your learning log about these artists but also carry out your own research into painting - both historical and contemporary.



Foundations

# Part one

## The possibilities of paint

Joan Mitchell Diablo, *Snow and flowers*, Oil on canvas

Use the table below to keep track of your progress.

<b>Exercise</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Complete</b>
Exercise 1.1: Exploring mark making	56	
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Research Point - Impressionism	63	

## Introduction

The dialogue between the subject and the way paint is applied and manipulated is an endlessly fascinating area to explore that is full of possibilities. The marks that are made with a paint brush can be both descriptive and expressive, reflecting the artist's response to the subject matter. The extent to which these brush marks are used as an integral part of a painting can vary according to approach and intention.

In this first part of the course you will be getting to know the qualities of your brushes and the different types of marks they make. You will be working quite quickly, using your choice of oil or acrylic paint. These exercises are designed to introduce you to the materials of painting and to help you begin your journey of exploration. Don't worry about making highly finished pieces of work, these are experiments - but do start thinking about how you might use some of these techniques in future projects. You will find it helpful to make notes in your learning log about any ideas or observations that arise as you complete the exercises. Looking at some of the artists that have been used to illustrate the projects, alongside those referred to in the research points will also support your progress.

Susie Hamilton, *Rider*, Acrylic on canvas 2012

## Topic 1: Ways of applying paint

In this first topic you will be getting to know the tools of painting and different ways of applying paint to a surface. This is an essential aspect of painting as you can interpret a subject in so many ways with the type of mark you use. A bold, angular brush mark can suggest a landscape that is intense and dynamic. The same subject described using softly blended colours gives a very different impression.

Alongside conventional brushes you can experiment with other tools and begin to find ways of manipulating the paint to create different effects.



### Exercise 1.1: Exploring mark making

On several sheets of paper you will be trying out your different brushes, experimenting with mark making. For this exercise you can use a colour or combination of colours of your choice but keep it simple - perhaps two shades of blue such as a deep ultramarine and a pale cobalt. Work freely and quite quickly. You are not trying to make a painting or represent anything around you, you are just getting used to the different qualities of the essential tools for painting. Spend 5 - 10 minutes on each.

You can experiment with any combination of brush and type of mark but here are some suggestions:

- Broad, flat hog brush with dilute acrylic - flat wash
- Small flat hog - dry brush marks
- Small round synthetic with dilute acrylic - long fluid lines
- Small flat hog brush with heavy acrylic - long and short marks
- Medium round hog - dots and dabs
- Filbert - broken lines
- Palette knife with undiluted acrylic or oil - angular marks
- Fan brush with oil or acrylic - textured, dry feathery marks
- Sponge roller - layering one colour.
- Wide flat synthetic with fluid acrylic - splatters and drips



Dry brush, medium bristle



Synthetic round, dilute acrylic



Dots and dabs, synthetic round



Filbert with heavy acrylic over wash



Flat bristle brush with acrylic



Synthetic flat and round brushes



Synthetic flat brush, water splashes



Flat bristle brush, palette knife

## Topic 2: Translucency

For these experiments you can use watercolour, acrylic or oil paint, however you might find the quick drying time of the water based media more appropriate and convenient.

Flat and graded acrylic washes are made in a similar way to watercolour washes but they allow for more layers and more variation in the paint consistency than watercolours. And because the paint is stable once dry, the overpainted washes will not disturb or move previous washes.

If you decide to use oil colour, a mixture of linseed oil and turpentine or a quick drying glaze medium will allow you to thin down the paint and increase the transparency of the colour.



### Exercise 1.2: Flat and graded washes

When applying a flat wash, make sure you have mixed enough dilute colour that will cover the page. Keeping your brush well loaded with paint, sweep it quickly and horizontally across the paper - starting from the top. Re-dip your brush for each consecutive band of colour, working from left to right and catching the edges of the wet paint from the previous brush mark so that they merge together. It also helps to use a large soft brush as the fewer and broader the strokes, the flatter the wash will be.

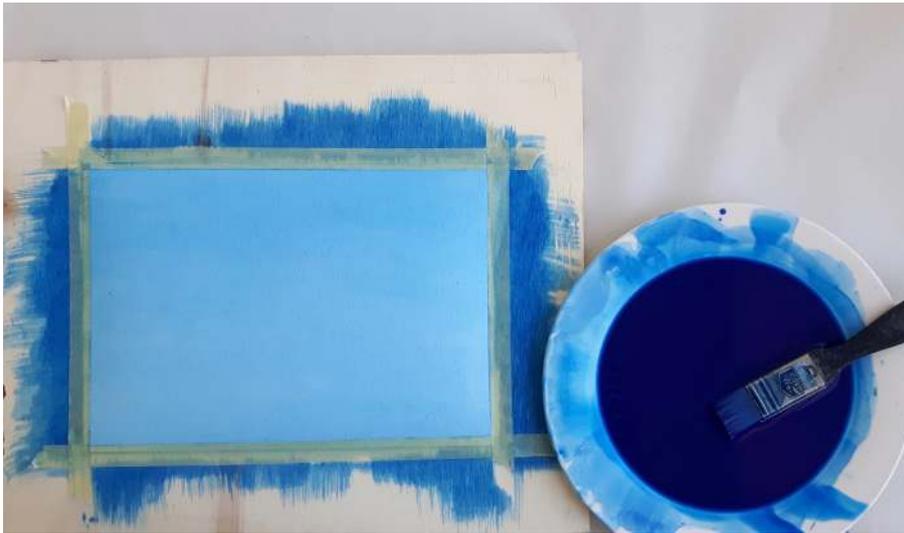
Don't worry if the colour isn't completely even, some slight variation is to be expected and this is a technique that does become easier with practice. And you will also find that because of the unique characteristics of particular pigments, some colours are easier to handle than others.

You might find it helpful to work on a slightly tilted board so that the wet paint is very slowly running down the paper, making it easier for each band of colour to blend together.

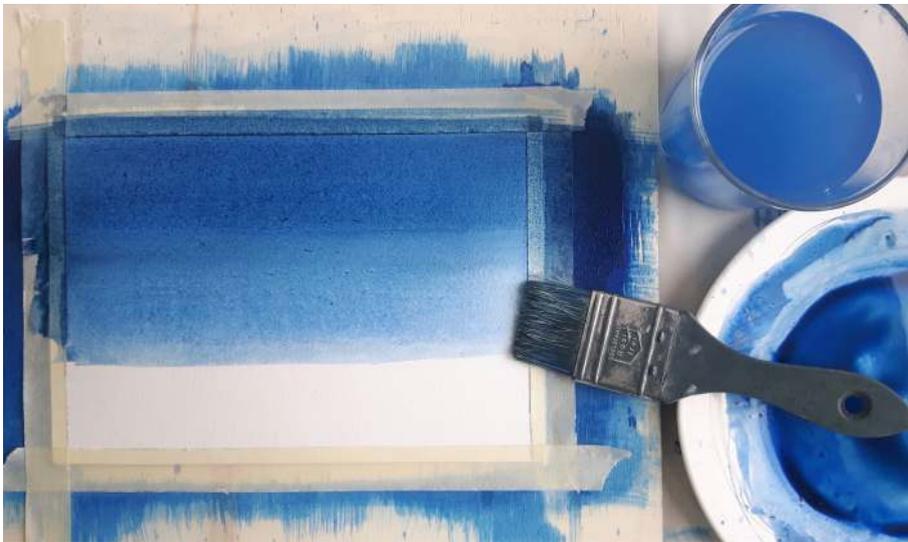
To lay a graded wash, one that becomes lighter or darker from top to bottom, apply the first brush stroke as before but this time, dip your brush into clean water between each stroke of colour. This will make it proportionately paler each time.

If you wish to work from light to dark you can reverse this by starting with very pale dilute wash then adding more colour with each brush stroke. It can be easier to mix several cups of wash in advance, each with different concentrations of colour. You can also use this technique when making a wash that consists of different colours.

Leave your washes to dry flat.



Flat wash with dilute acrylic



Laying a graded wash



Final Graded Wash



### Exercise 1.3: Variegated washes

With any media, exciting effects can be obtained by laying different coloured washes side by side so that they blend into each other wet in wet.

Variegated washes can be manipulated by tipping the paper or board at various angles to encourage the colours to bleed together in a certain way.

You can also try blotting the wet paint with a sponge or paper towel to create an uneven surface. Another technique to experiment with is dropping colour into the still damp wash. Try adding intense colour to your wash and let it bleed into the paler, dilute colour.

Back-runs or 'blooms' can appear when adding dilute colour or water to a damp wash. The liquid pushes the original pigment into irregular, cloud-like shapes.

If you are using oil paint, add a few drops of turpentine and allow the colour to disperse in places, creating a subtle texture.

Look at your experiments - are there any shapes appearing that remind you of recognisable forms? Perhaps elements of a landscape - a winter tree, or the pattern and texture of moss covered walls.

Variegated washes can be an interesting starting point or background for a painting. Leave your washes to dry - you will be returning to them for the next exercise.

Emil Nolde, *Steamer in the sunset*, Watercolour on Japanese paper



### Exercise 1.4: Working on top of a background wash

Select two of your washes that have the most interesting and uneven surface quality.

Using photographs, your imagination or the view from your window as inspiration, add a few shapes with less dilute, more intense colour so that you are getting a darker tone.

You are beginning to explore the idea of creating an illusion with paint but not getting absorbed in detail. Try using some of the types of brush marks you experimented with earlier.

For example, you might use a small round brush to add the outlines of the shape of a plant - allowing the mark to have a graceful fluidity. Or you could use a wide flat brush to describe shadows across a garden path. Perhaps you could suggest a stormy sky by adding the darker colour with a dry brush. Try not to obliterate the background wash completely but allow some areas to provide an interesting pattern and texture. Again, this is an experiment, you are not aiming to create a finished painting.

Elizabeth Magill, *Close*, oil on canvas 2000

## Alla Prima

Alla Prima means 'at the first try' and is the rapid execution of a painting, usually completed in a single sitting. It does not refer to a specific technique but it does work better if brushstrokes are clean and fresh. Impressionists such as Monet, Pissarro and Renoir favoured this approach in their desire to capture the fleeting effects of light.

Because you are dealing with shape, tone, colour and texture all at once, it is best to avoid complicated colour mixing and to have your palette well organised. Often, there is no underpainting or drawing - the idea being to capture the essence of the subject matter as boldly as possible. However, it is important to set out with a clear idea of what you want to convey in your painting and the impression you want to create.

Claude Monet, *Sunset at Lavacourt*, oil on canvas 1880



## Research Point - Impressionism

Impressionism was born out of a desire to paint modern life on the spot, in front of the subject rather than in the studio. Breaking away from traditional methods and subjects, the impressionists employed lively brushwork and bright colours to capture the fleeting light and colour of natural scenes. Using short strokes of paint and placing colours side by side rather than mixed and blended, the colour appeared more vivid.

Paris in the late nineteenth century was a centre of entertainment and excitement like no other European city at that time. The impressionists tried to depict this modern city with its theatres, bars and dance halls. And taking advantage of the new railways they could travel to the more rural suburbs to capture the movement of changing light by painting en plein air (outdoors).

The term Impressionism was originally used negatively by an art critic in 1874 in response to their first group exhibition in Paris. This new style of work was frequently dismissed by the art establishment for looking 'too unfinished' but the public began to embrace this fresh new vision and the group of artists continued to develop their ideas.

The diverse group of artists includes Edouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassat, Alfred Sisley, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot and Pierre Auguste Renoir.

All of these artists vary in terms of style but they were united in their desire to disrupt conventional forms of painting and interpret the world around them in new ways.

Edgar Degas, *Dancers in a studio*, oil on canvas, 1900-1905

Look at the work of two of the Impressionist artists. Compare their ways of using brush marks to convey a sense of movement and an 'Impression' of a scene. Also look at how they used their mark making to suggest the changing qualities of light. Make notes in your learning log.

## Topic 3: Developing your mark making

Giorgio Morandi (1890 - 1964) was an Italian painter who specialised in still life. His paintings are noted for their limited palette and tonal subtlety in depicting simple subjects such as vases, bottles and flowers.

*One can travel this world and see nothing. To achieve understanding it is necessary not to see many things, but to look hard at what you do see.*

Giorgio Morandi

Set up a simple still life of one or two objects. Choose simple forms with a limited amount of detail or pattern. For instance, a red pepper and teacup, or a candle and a pear.

Do think about objects that you like, that sit well together or have interesting contrasts. You will enjoy painting more if you find your subject engaging in some way.

For the following four exercises you will be using a limited range of primary colours such as cadmium yellow, ultramarine blue and cadmium red as well as zinc white and an earth colour such as raw umber. You will be exploring the different possibilities of colour mixing and combining in more detail as you progress through the course but for now keep it quite simple as you will be focusing on how you apply the paint.

Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*,  
oil on canvas 1952

You are not attempting to accurately depict the objects in detail, you are just beginning to use paint to describe form and suggest surface texture. Don't forget to notice the shadows that fall across the surface and any highlights. Work on A4 or A3 size paper or board. Spend approximately 30-45 minutes on each study.



## Exercise 1.5: Drawing with paint

Paint can be used in a very similar way to drawing materials such as charcoal in that it can be used to explore the simple shapes and outlines of a subject in a linear way. Often painters might sketch out a composition using a loose, dry brush technique with a single colour rather than using pencil or charcoal. But they might also decide to keep the painting as a very simple sketch.

For this first exercise you are making a drawing with paint so look at the outlines of your objects and where they meet the shadows. Try holding the brush quite loosely to allow for a more fluid line. Vary the amount of pressure you are applying to the surface and notice how this affects the quality of the line. A more rigid hold on the brush can produce a more decisive mark while a gentle hold, lower down the brush can give a more gestural quality.

Georges Braque, *Still life*, oil on canvas



## Exercise 1.6: Blending wet into wet

Blending can be achieved by dragging one colour over the edge of the next with a flat or round brush so that they are softly merging together. This is easier to achieve with oil paints because of the slow drying time but it is also possible with acrylics if you work quite quickly or if you add slow drying medium. Subtle brush marks may remain visible and add a very delicate texture to the surface. Alternatively, a soft, dry brush or blender can be used to gently stroke the surface of the paint to make the brush marks invisible. You could try both approaches in different sections of the painting and compare the effects.

It may seem like a challenging method but the level of precision involved can vary. Sometimes sections of a painting are blended but have quite strong contrasts and visible brush marks while other areas are more delicately described.

You are just starting to move paint around a surface and getting used to how it behaves so don't worry too much about the finished painting.

Lucian Freud, *Still life with horns*, 1954, oil on panel



## Exercise 1.7: Flat brush to form

Now you will use a small and medium sized flat brush to suggest the shape, form and contours of your still life set up.

Flat brush strokes can enhance and emphasise form, even if the object is soft and curved. The direction, length and weight of a mark can help to describe the planes of an object. Three dimensional form being suggested without blending the paint but with tone and colour contrasts.

You are working quickly so even with acrylic paint there will be time for you to soften some of the edges but you are allowing brush marks to remain visible, keeping the paint quite thick in places.

Loading the brush with paint and keeping the colours clean, try to apply your marks with confidence. Don't be afraid to sometimes exaggerate the contrast between the light and dark areas and allow the rich texture of the paint itself to enhance the results.

Paul Cezanne, *Still life with apples*, oil on canvas, 1878



## Exercise 1.8: Expressive marks

For your final study you will work quickly and expressively with bold gestures. A vase of flowers is a good subject matter with the fluid shapes and vibrant colours. Even for the soft folds of petals, a dramatic brush mark can add the illusion of form and add a dynamic quality to a painting. You might want to refer to some of your earlier experiments with mark making and add some splatters or drips. Perhaps scratch into the surface of the wet paint with a palette knife to suggest outlines. Or combine a background wash with angular mark making. This is your opportunity to experiment and explore so try a new way of working and enjoy the process.

Henri Matisse, *Flowers in a Pitcher*, oil on canvas 1908

## Impasto

Thick, opaque paint applied heavily with a brush or knife is called Impasto. The paint is laid on thickly, usually with short movements of the brush so that the paint stands away from the support and creates a slightly raised surface. An entire painting can be built up with heavy impasto to create a lively surface. For this reason Impasto works well with the Alla Prima method of painting. And like that method, it is important to try and avoid over mixing colours on the painting and allow the colour to retain its vibrancy. Thick paint and rapid brushstrokes allow the picture to be built up quickly and in a spontaneous manner. Van Gogh is perhaps the most famous user of the expressive Impasto technique, creating swirling lines and strokes that emphasised a sense of movement.

Impasto can also be used in combination with glazing to suggest depth. Titian and Rembrandt painted their shadows with thin, dark glazes to make them recede, while modelling the highlights on skin and fabric with thick impasto to make them appear three dimensional and to catch the light. An impasto passage that is dry can be painted over with a transparent glaze which sinks into the crevices of the paint and accentuates the texture.

Vincent Van Gogh, *Olive Orchard Mid-June*, oil on Canvas 1889



## Exercise 1.9: Impasto study

As a final exercise for part one, try making a study that incorporates impasto technique. Heavy paper or board works best because of the weight of the paint but this is just a quick experiment so you don't need to be too precious.

Because it is important to try and keep the colours fresh, it can be helpful to plan the composition with thin underpainting or a sketch with paint - as you did in an earlier exercise. This doesn't prevent you from being expressive with the paint when you apply it more thickly, but it does mean you have some structure in place that then allows you to be more confident with your mark making. It is easy to run into difficulty with thick paint if there isn't at least a loose plan for what you hope to achieve.

For this exercise, choose your own subject matter - it could be a corner of the room where you are working or another still life set up. You might want to refer to a photograph or memory of a seascape - this technique lends itself to the movement and energy of the outside elements.

You can continue to use the limited palette but you could try exploring different mixtures.

Spend no more than an hour on this piece so that you aren't tempted to start adding detail - keep your brush marks looking clean and fresh.

Frank Auerbach, *Mornington Crescent Winter*, oil on board, 1969

## Feedback Points

Send a selection of work from the exercises in Part one to your tutor for review, together with your notes and any questions you may have. Some of your work may be sent by email provided that you've agreed this with your tutor in advance.

Put your name, student number and name of exercise on the back of each piece of work. Include a selection of pages from your sketchbook and learning log. Don't worry if you haven't got much in your learning log yet - it will be useful for your tutor to see how it's developing.

Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so carry on with the course while you are waiting.

Well done, you have now completed the first part of the course.